

# Ansible



## Ansible 229 August 2006

From **Dave Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. Web [ansible.co.uk](http://ansible.co.uk). Fax 0705 080 1534. ISSN 0265-9816 (print) 1740-942X (online). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Atom**. Available for SAE or data on the Worp reaction.

### The Burning World

**Stephen R. Donaldson** and freelance writer Jennifer Dunstan were married on 10 June in Albuquerque, New Mexico. [JF]

**Michael Gove MP** has mastered the difficult art of judging a book by its cover. As he explained on BBC Radio: 'I think in the same way there are things that men can read which can send out signals which are deeply, I think, unattractive to women.' *John Humphries*: 'Such as?' *Gove*: 'Well, sci-fi and fantasy. I think if you're the sort of man who's reading one of those lurid books with, sort of, triple-breasted Amazonian women on the front cover, and inside it's all about swords and sorcery, and so on, then I think what you're communicating to any woman is that you're still an adolescent.' (*Today*, 1 Aug) [NJ]

**Diana Wynne Jones** was miffed to find herself and others praised in terms that suggest they are long retired if not actually dead: 'The best children's writers of the pre-Potter generation—Joan Aiken, Alan Garner, Peter Dickinson, Diana Wynne-Jones, Susan Cooper, Lloyd Alexander among them—were prose stylists and plot architects as much as imaginative miracle-workers. Each of them knew, as Philip Pullman knows today, that it is not enough to bargain on the richness of children's minds ...' (Tim Martin, *Independent*, 9 Jul) Philip Pullman, grumbles Diana, is 'presumably, poor man, tottering around on his zimmer, because the fellow (this Martin) goes on to talk about all the young, lively, upcoming folk, who, of course, can't measure up to the dead (or moribund, in Pullman's case). Can you please print in *Ansible* a notice to the effect that "I ATEN'T DEAD"? The only one listed who is Joan Aiken. The rest of us are all alive, and writing, and in my case kicking and spitting too.' *Later*: 'Sharyn November at Penguin USA is on the warpath about this article, since she happens to publish three of the non-deceased and hates to think people will assume she's printing post-humous works. Lloyd Alexander is always writing new books for her.'

**Mike Moorcock** has an award announcement of stupefying import. How can mere Hugos compare to glory like this? 'Le Grand Prix de Jack Trevor Story, otherwise known as the Jack Trevor Story Memorial Cup, was voted on by a panel of judges meeting at the traditional brasserie, L'Horizon, rue St Placide, on the last Friday in July. Judges included Jeff VanderMeer, Jean-Luc Fromental, Martin Stone, John Coulthart and Michael Moorcock. The cup and the cash prize of \$1000 will be sent to the unanimous winner, who can best be relied upon to meet the condition of the prize that it must be spent in a week to a fortnight and the author have nothing to show for it, Mr Steve Aylett.' [AC] • *Mr Aylett responds*: 'Other than humour and imagination, I think the Prize is index-linked to authors who, no matter how many books they have published and in print, manage to have no money or exist in massive debt. Amazon's "Buy Used" facility means more authors than ever meet these criteria. I just put money on a table and watch as it becomes gauzy and then disappears. I'll enjoy watching the Prize evaporate.'

**Teresa Nielsen Hayden** reveals that there is hope and glory even for vanity-press authors: 'InConJunction 26 has chosen as their 2006 Author GoH Ms. Lori Skov-Jansen, who's had exactly one novel published—by PublishAmerica. It's called *Twin Dagger*, and its Amazon sales rank today is 1,526,555. (An apocryphal rule of thumb for judging Amazon sales rankings holds that seven digits = one copy per year, six digits = one copy per month, and five digits = one copy per week.)'

### Consulta

4-6 Aug • **MeCon 9**, Queen's Elms Centre, Malone Rd, Belfast. £20/€30 at the door. Too late to book: just turn up...

7-13 Aug • **Gatecon UK** (*Stargate*), Cheltenham. £120 reg; £55 per day. Online booking only, it seems: [www.gatecon.com](http://www.gatecon.com).

CANCELLED 14 Aug • **Reading at Borders**, Oxford St, London. *Pat Cadigan* writes: 'Borders has informed me that they are no longer willing to host the monthly meetings. We are welcome to go elsewhere. [...] In any case, effective immediately, no more Borders events.'

18-21 Aug • **Discworld Convention IV**, Hanover International

Hotel, Hinckley. *Registration has closed and the hotel is fully booked.* Any queries to [info@dwcon.org](mailto:info@dwcon.org). The committee assures *Ansible* that there will be another DW convention in 2008. (Apologies to all concerned, by the way: I was billed as one of the 2006 guests but had to cancel.)

23 Aug • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Star pub, West Halkin Wells, London, SW1. 6pm on; fans present from 5pm. With Juliet McKenna.

23-27 Aug • **L.A.con IV** (64th Worldcon), Anaheim, California. Now \$200 reg; same at door. Day: \$75 (\$50 Wed, \$60 Sun). Contact L.A.con IV, c/o SCIFI Inc, PO Box 8442, Van Nuys, CA 91409, USA.

1 Sep • **British Fantasy Society** open night, Devereux pub, Essex St, off Strand, London. 6.30pm onwards. All welcome. Next: 8 Dec.

1-3 Sep • **Festival of Fantastic Films**, Manchester. £70 reg; £30 day. Contact 95 Meadowgate Rd, Salford, Manchester, M6 8EN.

23-25 Feb 07 • **Redemption 07** (B7/B5), Hinckley Island Hotel, Leics. £50 reg, rising to £55 after the end of August; £60 at door. Day: £35, £40 at door. Contact 26 Kings Meadow View, Wetherby, LS22 7FX.

28 Apr 07 • **Alt.Fiction 2007** sf event, Derby. Details TBA.

20-22 Jul 07 • **Year of the Teledu**, Stage Hotel, Leicester. £35 reg. Contact 14 Endsleigh Gdns, Beeston, Nottingham, NG9 2HJ,

30 Aug - 3 Sep 07 • **Nippon 2007** (65th Worldcon), Yokohama, Japan. Now \$220 reg, \$50 supp; \$165/\$35 age 13-19; \$80 7-12 (no child supp). Rates good until 30 Jun 07. UK agent is now Sparks, 68 Crichton Avenue, York, YO30 6EE; 07815 767273. (Andrew A. Adams had to drop out since he'll be working in Japan for most of 2007.)

### Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See Us.** We are slans: 'A lone clairvoyant among morons is often how a science fiction fan feels. Maybe he finds a sidekick or two to take the edge off his isolation, but when you're in the throes of fandom, the real world can become an imprecise blur. / Science fiction is, after all, a much better place to live than the standard American town: it is not only stacked with clearheaded fellow travelers—Vulcans, say—but it also gives up its secrets only to those with your particular set of interpretive skills. It's irresistible. Just as certain novels make heroes of bookish, melancholy, know-it-all types and thereby endear themselves to literary critics, certain television shows make heroes of obsessive, techy, alienated types, and thus endear themselves to sci-fi fans.' (*New York Times*, reviewing the tv show *Eureka*, 18 Jul) [MS]

**R.I.P.** rich brown (1942-2006), US sf fan active since the 1950s, died on 6 July aged 64. His many fanzines included the 1960s and 70s *Focal Point* (edited with Mike McInerney and then Arnie Katz) and the solo *Beardmutterings* (1970s and 80s); in 1988, again with Arnie Katz, he published the notable memorial fanzine *The Incomplete Terry Carr*. More recently his fanwriting appeared in online forums, including Trufen.net. • *Tom Frame* (?-2006), UK comics letterer whose speech balloons appeared in most of the *Judge Dredd* strips and many other 2000 AD stories since 1977, died on 14 July. Gary Wilkinson writes: 'an unsung hero of British comics, he was the main letterer of 2000 AD throughout its history.' • *David Gemmell* (1948-2006), UK author of 30 popular heroic fantasy novels beginning with *Legend* (1984), died at his word processor on 28 July. He was 57 and had seemed to be making a good recovery from his quadruple heart bypass two weeks before. John Clute wrote in the *Encyclopedia of Fantasy*: 'He is one of the central entertainers of the genre.' James Barclay adds: 'David was a giant in the fantasy genre as we all know and appreciate. But he was so much more than a great author. To me, he was a true friend and he was a mentor without peer. He helped me through very difficult times in my writing at the beginning of 2006. His support and advice, his friendship and selflessness were unstinting. David always found time to call or email. I spent long hours sitting with him in his house talking and sorting out the "authorly" problems we faced. It was a pleasure always. David was an immensely amusing man as any of us who heard his stories and anecdotes will testify. His strength of character and belief shone through in everything he said and in everything he wrote. David Gemmell is a very sad loss. I will miss him terribly.' • *Peter*

Hawkins (1924-2006), UK actor who in the 1960s first voiced *Dr Who's* Daleks (in films as well as tv) and Cybermen, died on 7 July aged 82. His voice was also heard in *Billy Bean and His Funny Machine*, *Captain Pugwash*, *Bleep and Booster* (as narrator) and *Doomwatch* (as a computer). [GW] • *Mako* (1933-2006), Japanese-born US actor whose genre credits included the 1982 and 1984 *Conan* films, died on 21 July. He was 72. [GW] • *David Maloney* (?-2006), UK tv director/producer who directed 46 episodes of *Dr Who* (between 1968 and 1977) and produced 39 of *Blake's 7* plus the 1981 *Day of the Triffids*, died on 18 July. [SR] • *Peter Mottley* (1935-2006), for many years a cheery presence at Pangbourne pub gatherings, died on 16 July; he was 71. Martin Hoare writes: 'He had been a novelist, playwright, actor, producer and philosopher as well as having a career in advertising. His contribution to sf was the comic novel *The Sex Bar* (1972), about an aphrodisiac and contraceptive chocolate bar. His best known play was *After Agincourt* (BBC Radio 3, 1988).' Goodbye, Peter, and thanks for all the birthday parties. • *Barnard Hughes* (1915-2006), US actor who starred in the 1980s tv series *Mr Merlin* and whose genre films included *Tron* and *The Lost Boys*, died on 11 July. He was 90. [GW] • *Mickey Spillane* (1918-2006), notorious US thriller author who created PI Mike Hammer, died on 17 July aged 88. Genre links were the radioactive McGuffin introduced in the 1955 film of his *Kiss Me, Deadly* (1952), and a 1952 *Fantastic sf* novella bylined Spillane but actually ghosted by editor Howard Browne when the submission proved unusable.

**As Others See Us II.** Richard Linklater, maker of the latest Dick-based film, seems to have read a lot of peculiar sf: 'What appealed to me about *A Scanner Darkly* [...] is that it's not really about "the future." It's about Joe Everyman and his pals, worrying about money and sex and being frustrated. A lot of sci-fi deals with these amazing futuristic worlds where humans have suddenly lost all their humor and become emotionless automatons.' (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, 9 Jul) [TM] • Carlton Cuse, executive producer of *Lost*, bows to the King: 'One of my biggest influences was *The Stand* [...] The brilliance was the way it took a sci-fi premise and told a character story.' (*TV Guide*, 24 Jul) [TM]

**Awards.** *Campbell Memorial*: Robert Sawyer, *Mindscan*. (To the delight of Andrew I. Porter, who bought a role in this book at a 2002 fan charity auction.) • *Heinleins* for sf achievement (total body of work): Greg Bear and Jack Williamson. [SD] • *Rhyslings* for sf poetry, announced 8 July: LONG Kendall Evans & David C. Kopaska-Merkel, 'The Tin Men' (*Magazine of Speculative Poetry* Winter 2004/5). SHORT Mike Allen, 'The Strip Search' (*Strange Horizons* 10/05). • *Sturgeon* for short story: Paolo Bacigalupi, 'The Calorie Man' (*F&SF* 10/05).

**Thog's Orbital Mechanics Masterclass.** 'But another satellite was accidentally discovered, then another and another ... each about three hundred miles above the earth, moving north-northeast at a constant speed of 120 miles per hour, and each maintaining a distance of four hundred miles from the other.' (John Grisham, *The Broker*, 2005) [PW] Alas, the speed of an object in circular orbit at that height is about 4.8 miles per second. *Stop Press: Grisham's Afterword Explains!* 'I know very little about spies, electronic surveillance, satellite phones ...'

**Random Fandom.** *Bridget Bradshaw* is on her US TAFF trip: 'very busy, no downtime—and when I get home I'll be sidling up to you previous winners and asking "So, did you too write a Secret Trip Report of the things which can never be said?" Such as this black moment in Boulder, CO: 'Attempted a drive-by viewing of the *Mork & Mindy* house but we were on the wrong road.' • *Cheryl Morgan* announced on 1 Aug that her e-fanzine *Emerald City* (a 2004 Hugo winner, and currently shortlisted as Best Fanzine) 'will be ceasing publication over the next couple of months.' Too much work, too little time. I know the feeling.

**As Others See Us III.** There is speculation, and on the other hand there is speculation: 'All fiction begins with the question, "What if?"—as in, "What if a bunch of pilgrims set out on the road to Canterbury and told stories along the way?" or "What if a governess has discovered that her handsome, brooding boss has stashed his crazy wife in the attic?" or (unfortunately) "What if Adam Sandler got his hands on a remote control that could fast-forward time itself?" ...' (Sara Sklaroff's sf review column, *Washington Post Book World*, 30 July) [MMW]

**Media News.** A possible BBC 4 programme on parallel universes is in the 'initial research' phase—i.e. picking sf people's brains.

**C.o.A.** *Andrew A. Adams*, 27 Westerham Walk, Reading, RG2 0BA. • *Cuddles* (and Electrical Eggs UK), The Batcave, 7 Hazel Dene, Bishopbriggs, Glasgow, G64 1TZ. Phone & email unchanged.

**The Dead Past.** *Speculative Finance Dept.* '... now is a bad, bad time to start collecting some modern SF authors, at least if you have any consideration for your wallet. And who knows when the crest

of the wave will curl over, the whole field of SF be "whited out"? In ten years' time the Walker first hardcover edition of LeGuin's *Left Hand of Darkness* which I saw recently catalogued at \$50.00 may fetch only half that ...' (George Locke, *Science Fiction First Editions*, 1978) [BA]

**Pseudonym Horror.** The latest E. Hamilton, Bookseller, catalogue reveals the long-guarded secret: '*The Whisperer and Other Stories*. By Brian Lumley. Collection of dark short stories and a complete vampire novel by the author of the H.P. Lovecraft tales. 333 pp.' [DL/CP]

**Outraged Letters.** *Simon R. Green* rose to the bait: 'So: you've written a book about Harry Potter, then? I have to say, I don't get the appeal. [*Money—Ed.*] I mean, basically it's just Jennings meets the Worst Witch. Only not as well written as that.... Sigh. I am clearly out of touch with Today's Youth. Except for all the intelligent ones who read my books, and send me hand-written letters saying *You are like unto a god, you rock!* With which it is of course hard to argue.' • *Niall Harrison* is bemused by an e-mail ad for Michael Hanlon's *The Science of the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, promising 'an entertaining and authoritative tour of the real science behind Douglas Adams' prescient sci-fi classic ...' *Prescient?* Oo-er. Keep watching the skies! • *Helen Spiral* warns: 'One of my friends attempted to google for "thog langford" and Google asked him if he wanted to search the internet for "thong langford" instead. He decided not to risk it.' • *Jeff Vandermeer* has a word to add about that open letter (see A228) protesting the International Horror Guild awards' lack of any anthology nominations: 'Ha! Re the IHG thing—some notables on the list didn't even know what the petition was about and thought it involved HWA. In another instance, Dark Delicacies bookstore was just passing the petition around and did not explain the full context, for example. A few people are now hoping to get their names taken off the list.'

**Fanfundery.** *JETS* (Japanese Expeditionary Travel Scholarship) is a one-off fund to take a Eurofan to Nippon 2007 in Japan. Rules are based on TAFF: candidates need four nominators, a 100-word platform, £20 bond, and a pledge to travel if elected. The deadline is 13 Nov 06. Voting will run to 13 Apr 07. Interaction has kick-started the fund with a £1,000 grant. Contact: League of Fan Funds ([www.astralpole.org](http://www.astralpole.org)) c/o 59 Shirley Rd, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 7ES; or . The lucky *JETS* winner inherits no administrative work, but a Trip Report Is Expected. • TAFF: the 2007 eastbound race nominations deadline is *midnight, 9 Sep 2006*.

**The Dead Past II.** *How We Used To See Ourselves, 54 Years Ago*: 'The average British fiction reader needs no introduction to "science fiction", although he may not have consciously applied the term to some of the stories he has read in the past, for Britain has been more the home of the scientific romance, pioneered by H.G. Wells, than any other country, despite developments elsewhere. Most of our prominent novelists have entered the fantasy field at some stage of their career, usually with highly successful results, and with the current Hollywood cycle of futuristic films, no doubts can be entertained by the man-in-the-street as to the meaning of the phrase.' (John Carnell, 1952) [BA]

**But Who Can Replace A Man?** Two chaps, it seems, are needed to equal Paul Kincaid as Clarke Award administrator: Paul Billinger chairs the award jury while Tom Hunter handles other administration.

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Double-Entendre Dept.* 'He exhibited his seed, of which Grace had already spoken to her half-sister. / "What do you want done with it?" inquired Virginia, holding it to the light between her thin thumb and finger.' (David Lindsay, *The Violet Apple*, c1924, published 1978) [DF] • *Land of the Giants Dept.* 'He ruled out Mars because the size of the planet—its mass is a tenth of ours—and its low gravity ruled out the possibility of "giants"; Jupiter and Saturn both have sufficient mass—and gravitation pull—to produce "giants".' (And Mesklinites are really huge.) (Colin Wilson, *The Mind Parasites*, 1967) • *Dept of Emotional Drool.* 'Kanna was beaming, but Reyad's expression was hard and unforgiving as suppressed rage leaked from his twitching lips.' (Maria V. Snyder, *Poison Study*, 2005) [HJC] • *Eyeballs in the Sky Dept.* 'Everard finished a night's sleep and a breakfast which Deirdre's eyes had made miserable by standing on deck as they came in to the private pier.' (Poul Anderson, *Guardians of Time*, 1960; *Time Patrol*, 2006) [TP] • 'His eyes roamed around the workshop, knocking over tables and equipment, until they settled on my Master, who had looked up in surprise.' (Matthew Skelton, *Endymion Spring*, 2006) [TW]

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