

# Ansible



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From Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU. Web news.ansible.co.uk. Fax 0705 080 1534. ISSN 0265-9816 (print) 1740-942X (e). Logo: Dan Steffan. Cartoon: Sue Mason. Available for SAE, cider or the small stones of Tu Fu.

## The Prize of Peril

**Brian Aldiss** remains in demand. 'Great excitement! I am just off to Oxford's immemorial Bodleian Library to talk to the BBC's *Today* programme for a broadcast tomorrow [7 October]. Because tomorrow is FRANKENSTEIN DAY at the Bod. Mary Shelley's original MS will be on display all day. Talks in the evening, in particular by US scholar Charles Robinson, whose book on the subject is published tomorrow (well worth reading). I shall be talking too, possibly claiming that *Frankenstein* was not written by Hugo Gernsback but is nevertheless the first SF novel (life bestowed by science, not by God, etc. etc. ...)

**Peter David** is delighted that his comic *Fallen Angel* has been banned by a US prison as 'detrimental to the security and good order of the institution and the rehabilitation of inmates.' He wrote 'We are SO using this as a pull quote on the next trade paperback.' [DKMK]

**Paul Krugman**, winner of this year's Nobel Prize for Economics, is an unashamed fan who earlier in the year said of Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* series: 'It's somewhat embarrassing, but that's how I got into economics: I wanted to be a psychohistorian when I grew up, and economics was as close as I could get.' (*New York Times*, 8 May)

**J M G Le Clézio**, this year's Nobel Prize for Literature winner, has long had an *Encyclopedia of SF* entry on the strength of *Les géants* (1973), set in 'a nightmare shopping complex in a futuristic city.'

**John Norman** plugs his new Gor novel: 'What man, in his deepest heart, does not want to own a female, to have her for his own, utterly, as a devoted, passionate, vulnerable, mastered slave, and what woman, in her deepest heart, does not want to be so intensely desired, so unqualifiedly and fiercely desired, that nothing less than her absolute ownership will satisfy a male, her master?' [GW] Answers on a postcard.

**Andre Norton's** copyrights were reassigned by the Tennessee Court of Appeals, reversing a lower-court ruling that favoured the fan Victor Horadam over Norton's final carer and residual legatee Sue Stewart. The ambiguous will gave posthumous royalties to Horadam, but did that mean (a) only work newly published after Norton's death, or (b) all reprints too? The lower court decided (b); the appeal court revised this to (a). A Supreme Court appeal remains possible. (AP, 9 October)

**Kim Stanley Robinson** was hailed as a Hero of the Environment, Leaders & Visionaries category, by *Time* magazine on 6 October. [SFAW]

**J.K. Rowling** was the only fiction writer in an *Independent* list of 50 UK National Treasures (11 October). The compiler Simon Carr enthused: 'Her writing is second-hand rubbish, but the children love it.'

**David Tennant** is stepping down from his *Doctor Who* title role after another four special episodes in 2009: 'I don't ever want it to feel like a job, so I want to move on when it still feels exciting and fresh and that means I'll miss it.' (BBC, 29 October) BBC television news hilariously announced that 'the *Tardis* is seeking a new tenant.' [JL]

**Howard Waldrop**, post-bypass, is well enough to go fishing. [ED]

## Consisture

3-9 Nov • **Shipping Lines** (Liverpool Literary Festival) includes Philip Pullman on 'The Elementary Particles of Narrative', 7 Nov, 6:30-7:30pm, Sherrington Lecture Theatre Two: £5 (£3 concessions). Pullman reappears 'In Conversation', 8 Nov, 8-9pm, same venue and cost.

7-9 Nov • **Alt.Fiction Horror Writing Weekend**, Dove Valley Centre, nr Buxton. Workshop: £150 reg including 2 nights full board. Contact Alex, 07768 635293, or alexdavisevents at hotmail co uk

7-9 Nov • **ArmadaCon XX**, Royal Fleet Club, 9-12 Morrice Square, Devonport, Plymouth, PL1 4PQ. £35 reg; £30 concessions. Contact 20 Pinewood Close, Plympton, Devon, PL7 2DW

8 Nov • **Music from the 21st Century**. Barry Gray (*Thunderbirds* and other Gerry Anderson music) centenary concert, Royal Festival Hall, South Bank, London. Tickets: www.southbankcentre.co.uk

11 Nov 08 - 4 Jan 09 • **Science Fact & Science Fiction** exhibition, National Space Centre, Exploration Drive, Leicester, LE4 5NS. Contact info at spacecentre.co.uk; phone 0116 261 0261.

14-16 Nov • **Novacon 38**, Quality Hotel, Bentley, Walsall £38 reg; £42 at the door. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ

19-21 Jun 09 • **Aetherica** (fantasy), Crowne Plaza Hotel, Chester. £35 reg until 16 Nov; £20 supp; under-18s £25; under-5s £5. Contact membership at aetherica dot org for booking form, or join online.

26 Nov • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Melton Mowbray, 18 Holborn, London, EC1N 2LE. Note the venue change for this month only. 5pm/6pm on. BSFA 50th-anniversary party. (As usual, no December meeting.)

3 Dec • **Christmas Spirits** (ghost story reading), The Voicebox, Forman St, Derby. 7pm for 7:30. With Mark Chadbourn and others. £5 inc glass of mulled wine. Contact alexdavisevents at hotmail co uk

5 Dec • **British Fantasy Society Open Night**, Ye Olde Cock Tavern, 22 Fleet St, London, EC4 1AA. From 6pm. All welcome.

5-7 Dec 08 • **Battlestar Starfury** (BSG), Thistle Hotel, Heathrow. £78.50 reg; £33.50 under-15s; under-8s free. Booking 07930 319 119.

31 Jul - 2 Aug 09 • **Constitution** (sf, fantasy, RPG, Unicorn) is now hosting **HarmUni 4** (filk), Murray Edwards College, Cambridge. This isn't a venue change. New Hall has been renamed. £20 reg; under-18s £10; under-11s £5; under-5s free; rates to rise before the con. Contact 207 Camplin Rd, Cambridge, CB4 2LE; info at constitution-con.org.uk

16-18 Oct 09 • **Festival of Fantastic Films**, Day's Hotel, Sackville St, Manchester. Huests and Membership details TBA. Contact 95 Meadowgate Rd, Salford, Manchester, M6 8EN.

16-17 Jan 10 • **ConRunner 2**, Mercure St Paul's Hotel, Sheffield. £30 reg, rising to £35 in Jan 2009; £40 mid-2009; £45 in 2010 and at the door. Contact 56 Jackmans Place, Letchworth GC, Herts, SG6 1RH.

2-6 Sep 10 • **Aussiecon 4** (68th Worldcon), Melbourne. SA160/SUS155/SCAN155/€100/£80 reg, initially to 3 Nov 08 but now held until further notice, discounts at www.aussiecon4.org.au. Contact GPO Box 1212, Melbourne, Vic 3001, Australia; info at aussiecon4.org.au

**Rumblings • Euro Worldcon Bid 2014/15**: possible sites in Amsterdam, the Hague, Liverpool and London have been visited, with (surprise!) the Glasgow SECC to follow. Expect further updates as a programme item at LxCon (Eastercon 2009). [JB] • **World Fantasy Con 2009**, San José: dates changed from 5-8 Nov to 29 Oct - 1 Nov.

## Infinitely Improbable

**Darwin Award Bid**. UK lorry driver Benjamin 'Troisman' was sentenced to 225 hours' community work and banned for 15 months after he pleaded guilty to dangerous driving—that is, veering alarmingly to and fro as he watched *Battlestar Galactica* at the wheel. A fellow-driver 'pulled alongside to see Troisman's cab lit up and figures acting on the laptop screen, which was propped on the dashboard.' (BBC) [BJ]

**Awards**. *Gaylactic Spectrum*: NOVEL Ginn Hale, *Wicked Gentlemen*. SHORT Joshua Lewis, 'Ever So Much More Than Twenty' (*So Fey*). • *International Horror Guild*: NOVEL Dan Simmons, *The Terror*. COLLECTION Lucius Shepard, *Dagger Key*. LONG FICTION Lucius Shepard, *Softspoken*. MID-LENGTH Lisa Tuttle, 'Closet Dreams', (*Postscripts 10*). SHORT Nancy Eichenmeyer, 'Honey in the Whoom' (*The Restless Dead*) ANTHOLOGY Ellen Datlow, *Inferno*. NONFICTION Tim Lucas, *Mario Bava: All the Colors of Dark*. PERIODICAL *Postscripts*. ILLUSTRATED NARRATIVE Thomas Ligotti et al, *The Nightmare Factory*. ART Elizabeth McGrath for 'The Incurable Disorder'. [SFAW] • *World Fantasy*: NOVEL Guy Gavriel Kay, *Ysabel*. NOVELLA Elizabeth Hand, *Ilyria*. SHORT Theodora Goss, 'Singing of Mount Abora' (*Logorhœa*) ANTHOLOGY Ellen Datlow, *Inferno*. COLLECTION Robert Shearman, *Tiny Deaths*. ARTIST Edward Miller SPECIAL—PROFESSIONAL Peter Crowther, PS Publishing SPECIAL—NON-PROFESSIONAL Midori Snyder & Terri Windling, Edibcott Studios website. [L]

**We Are Everywhere**. Michael Chabon explains the mood of the US Democratic National Convention in easy-to-understand terms as 'like the change that might occur between the first and second volumes of some spectacular science fiction fantasy epic.' / At the end of the first volume, after bitter struggle, Obama had claimed the presumptive nomination. We Fremden had done the impossible, against Sardaukar and imperial shock troops alike. We had brought water to Arrakis. Now the



gathered tribes of the Democratic Party [...] had assembled on the plains of Denver to attempt to vanquish old Saruman McCain' (*New York Review of Books*, 9 October) (MMW) At least it wasn't Voldemort.

**R.I.P. Barrington J. Bayley** (1937-2008), UK author whose first sf story was published in 1954 and whose best work combines space-operatic vigour with Borgesian intellectual fireworks, died on 14 October as a result of bowel cancer. He was 71. Many notable shorts appeared in *New Worlds*—mostly collected in *The Knights of the Limits* (1978)—and *Interzone*, his novels include *Collision Course* (1973, aka *Collision with Chronos*), *The Fall of Chronopolis* (1974), *The Soul of the Robot* (1974) and *The Zen Gun* (1983). Barry was a wildly inventive and much underrated sf author. • **Mark Buck**, artist who provided visual effects (models) for the later *Star Wars* films, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *War of the Worlds* and the forthcoming *Terminator Salvation*, died in a road accident on 16 October; he was 41. [PDF] • **Peter Gardena** (1939-2008), singer and dancer who played Captain Peter Carlin in Gerry Anderson's 1970-1973 live-action sf series *UFO*, died on 18 October aged 69. [KW] • **Neal Hefti** (1922-2008), US jazz musician and composer whose great financial success was the 1960s *Batman* TV series theme tune, died on 11 October; he was 85. [I] • **James Killus** (1950-2008), US author of *Book of Shadows* (1983) and *Sunsmoke* (1985), died on 23 September. [SFS] • **Peter Vansittart** (1920-2008), UK historical novelist whose first book *I Am the World* (1942) was sf and who wrote several unusual timeslip fantasies, died on 4 October; he was 88. [JC] • **Christopher Wicking** (1943-2008), UK screenwriter long associated with Hammer, died on 13 October aged 65. Film script credits include *Scream* and *Scream Again* (1969), *Blood from the Mummy's Tomb* (1971) and *To the Devil—a Daughter* (1976).

**Chog's Nalower'n Mastetclass. Pumpkin Paradise.** 'By anyone's standards, Nina was a big woman with breasts as round and large as pumpkins in the Autonomous Region of the Ukraine, if pumpkins grew there indeed, which Vitrio would not have doubted. And even whether or not the Ukraine, known to the world primarily for its wealth of grain, was autonomous was also a matter upon which Vitrio would not have liked to be questioned. But that Nina's breasts were large as pumpkins—any region's, anybody's pumpkins—that could not be doubted [...] Like her great namesake, the Soviet discus thrower, the psychic Nina Dunhatse had shoulders to match her pumpkins, and she now shrugged them ...' (Uri Geller, *Shawn*, 1990) [PB]

**Tainted Money.** The US games con GenCon 2008, held in honour of the late Gary Gygax, raised \$17,398 for his favourite charity the Christian Children's Fund. On learning that the money came partly from sale and auction of Dungeons & Dragons material, the CCF refused the donation. Another charity benefited, but how dreadfully petty. [SHS]

**As Others See Us.** As usual, if it's good it can't be sf, except maybe superficially. 'This [AI-related] scenario is dealt with magnificently in the Emmy award-winning television series *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-2008). The series (only superficially in the sci-fi genre) ...' (Andrew Stephens, *The Age* [Australia], 11 October) [DB]

**Outraged Letters.** Charles Platt (quoted in *Ansible* 254) sends an update: 'The only thing I have done in the past decade, remotely relating to science fiction, was take a zero-gravity flight a couple of weeks ago. (See [www.zerogz.com](http://www.zerogz.com) for details.) Horrendously expensive but, it was the fulfillment of my lifelong desire to know what it's like to be weightless and the answer is: Even better than I could have imagined. Effortless, delightful, fun, and above all liberating. My only concern about hanging upside-down like a bat was the knowledge that within a few more seconds the aircraft would pull out of its dive, causing everything within it to regain its weight rather abruptly—indeed, at the bottom of the dive, we experienced 1.8 gravities, which was not nice at all, especially when I was foolish enough to turn my head from side to side. But the zero gravity part was pure pleasure, with not the faintest trace of nausea during any of the dozen parabolas. Indeed, I would like to live in that state.' (2 October)

**Cultural Pervasion.** Anne Robinson on BBC1's *The Weakest Link*: 'The 17th-century physician who discovered the true nature of the circulation of blood within the human body was William who? The hapless contestant: 'Shatner' (*Private Eye*, 31 October)

**C.O.A. William Breiding**, 102 Hilland Ave, Oil City, PA 16301, USA.

**Magazine Scene.** Wendy Bradley has an exciting new distribution deal: 'Yesterday a nice lady from Support Our Soldiers arrived at Farthing HQ (well, OK, my dad's garden shed) and took away around a thousand copies of *Farthing* issue 1 to be included in gift parcels to be sent out to servicepeople in Iraq and Afghanistan. Cue the usual jokes about dropping them on enemy forces...' (3 October)

**Celebrity Plug.** Brian Blessed, asked 'What's your indulgence?' for a *Weekend Examiner* interview, said in full: 'Good science fiction.' [SS]

**Random Fandom.** Forrest J. Ackerman, who is 91, has reportedly had a serious heart attack following pneumonia and is not expected to survive. [EK] Damn. • Paul Barnett has arranged a suitable distraction on US Election Day: 'the plan is to stent two leg arteries (the arteries themselves are in the iliac region, he said with the cocky swagger of one who is not 100% sure of what he speaks) and a renal artery ... The great joy of all these arterial vivisections is that one is kept conscious throughout' • Soren 'Scraps' de Selby had a stroke on 6 October and has been in intensive care in Brooklyn; no coma or language impairment. [ML] • Joyce Scrivner underwent a hysterectomy and gall bladder removal but, despite some complications, has been sending occasional cheerful email. • Taryl Wayne is this year's winner of the Rotzler Award (\$300 plus eternal glory) for long-time achievement in fanzine artwork.

**Another Genre Prediction.** 'Mr. Darling used to boast to Wendy that her mother not only loved him but respected him. He was one of those deep ones who know about stocks and shares. Of course no one really knows, but he quite seemed to know, and he often said stocks were up and shares were down in a way that would have made any woman respect him' (J.M. Barrie, *Peter and Wendy*, 1911)

**Scribd.com Again.** Jonathan Cowic reports that the selected *Nature* 'Futures' sf squibs on the Concatenation.org site were pirated by a Scribd user who bravely put them on line under a pseudonym. 'We knew it was our posting as we have a standard Concatenation-Futures logo to replace the artwork *Nature* use with the original pieces, as we always seek the authors' permission before we post in addition to our having a standard agreement with *Nature*. However we do not go to the hassle of getting the artists' permission and hence replace the illustration with the logo. [...] Scribd make you jump through many hoops before they will take material down and in the end these were too arduous and so we handed the problem back to the *Nature* publishing team and they sorted it out (apparently Macmillan [who do *Nature*] have had dealings with Scribd before but they too seem to have difficulty getting them to take it down). / Of course why this individual wanted to duplicate our already free access is a mystery?' (9 October)

**The Dead Past.** The last of four UK Eastercons held in the George Hotel, Kettering, was Cytricon IV in 1958. A select few dozen fans returned there last month for Cytricon V, organized by nostalgia master Peter Weston—who wouldn't allow an *Ansible* event listing for fear of attracting *the wrong kind of fan*. Guests of honour were 1958 Cytricon veterans Ina Shorrock and Peter Mabey. All members were expected to dine together, attend all programme items, and pose for a group photo! Since the BSFA was founded at the 1958 event, an inevitable panel was 'The BSFA: was it a good idea?'—where Mark Plumrier's ruthless questioning revealed that, excluding life members and suchlike wimps, the only genuine dues-paying BSFA member present was Greg Pickersgill. In a surprise revival of ancient, blasphemous ritual (partly rugose and partly squamous), Peter Weston and Rog Peyton were initiated into the Knights of St Fantasy. Having smuggled in lethal ingredients for the 'Poleaxe Punch' served at Cytricon III and IV, Mr Weston took fright and decided on grounds of health and safety not to make it. Probably wise. Nobody was quite sure whether to repeat this celebration in 2058 ...

**Chog's Mastetclass. Dept of Skiffy Terminology.** 'I have to counter-act the new claxon recompensators—the fan-out tree's starting to look a bit clumpy, if you ask me.' [The reply.] 'I have no idea what this means.' (Neal Stephenson, *Anathem*, 2008) [JL via MMW] • **Strange Relations Dept.** 'That bite had been deliberate; the walnut had purposely impregnated me, but to what purpose?' (John Russell Fearn, 'Wings Across the Cosmos', *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, June 1938) • **Dept of Expansive Simile.** 'Now at last Vera Verovna knew what she felt like: the mouse before the cat, the bee before the bear, the frog before the snake, the child before the dinosaur, the leaf before the wind, the beauty before the beast.' (Uri Geller, *Shawn*, 1990) [PB] • **Philosophy Dept.** 'We're all toenails on our own bodies.' (*Ibid*) 'Time is flesh and flesh is gravity. Gravity is time and time is velocity.' (*Ibid*) • **Dept of Mucosemantics.** 'There was a tense silence, then a hard voice literally spat into the room: "Yes!"' (A.E. van Vogt, *Masters of Time*, 1950) [DB]

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