

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: **Brad Foster**. Available for SAE or netligluk ende firseigle blears.

Not This August

Greg Egan has been misrepresented: 'Powered only by two self-evident memes—(a) that only one person in 20 million could possibly have a name as exotic as "Greg Egan", and (b) anything found on the web is true and should be copied without question—photographs of an illustrious professor of electrical engineering from Monash University have been popping up on obscure fannish web sites recently, next to articles about my books. I thought this harmless replicator would soon burn itself out, but little did I know: it turns out that as far back as 2006, it had already crossed into a new host and infected the dust jacket of a Spanish translation of *Axiomatic*. I'm now dreading the day my passport's biometric chip succumbs, and I'm arrested at the airport for identity theft. Several family members have already hinted that they suspect I'm an impostor, since I lack the beard and other distinguishing features of the official, Web 2.0-approved Greg Egan.'

Justine Larbaestier got a traditional whitewash treatment from Bloomsbury, with the short-haired black protagonist of her novel *Liar* shown on the cover as long-tressed and white. Er um, said Bloomsbury, the character's a compulsive liar, might be lying about her appearance, and (presumably) even deceived the author... (*PW*, 23 July) [AIP]

Sam J. Lundwall is even more retiring than before: 'Just a little final notice: I am folding my sf magazine *Jules Verne-Magasinet* in October this year with No. 542, after 38 years of publication. (53 if counting *Science Fiction Nytt*, which for the past 30 years or so has been a part of *JVM*) Much too few readers, and I am losing my eyesight. I still enjoy esseff (although not the yankee scifi or syfy sort), and I intend to continue doing so as best as I can. But as of October I am leaving the esseff field and the esseff community completely. (I have already left most of it, so there won't be a very big change.)'

Philip Pullman, Quentin Blake and other children's authors are incensed by the UK Home Office's 'guilty until proven innocent' policy which requires them to pay £64 to be vetted and found free of all trace of paedophilia before the hideous risk of allowing them to give a talk to, say, 40 children in the presence of teachers. Because, you know, in such inflamed surroundings authors notoriously run amok. Rather than submit to a policy so 'corrosive and poisonous to every kind of healthy social interaction', Pullman & Co. intend to give up visiting schools. Meanwhile clowns, conjurers and other children's entertainers who *already* pay for rigorous Criminal Records Bureau vetting will have to cough up again for the new scheme because ... well, just because.

Conject

3-31 Aug • **Alba ad Astra**, Transreal Fiction, 7 Cowgatehead, The Grassmarket, Edinburgh, EH1 1JY. Free exhibition by Madeleine Shepherd, 'revealing Scotland's forgotten history of space exploration'.

6-10 Aug • **Anticipation** (67th Worldcon), Palais des congrès de Montréal, Montréal, Canada. *Advance booking closed*. At-the-door rates: \$CA275/SUS250; child \$CA80/SUS70. Weekend (Fri evening to Sun) \$CA195/SUS175; child \$CA60/SUS55. Family (2 adults, 2 children 6-13) \$CA600/SUS540; weekend \$CA425/SUS380. Day: see website. Contact PO Box 105, Station NDG, Montréal, QC, H4A 3P4, Canada.

14-16 Aug • **PhantasmaGoria** (genre film festival), Arts Centre, 6 Devizes Rd, Swindon, SN1 4BJ. £35 reg, or £20/day, or £4.50/film. Bookings www.phantasma-goria.co.uk or 01793 614837.

15-16 Aug • **Caption** (small-press comics), East Oxford Community Centre, corner of Princes St & Cowley Rd. £10 reg; £5 day.

21-23 Aug • **Wadfest** (Discworld), Trentfield Farm Camp Site, Church Laneham, Retford, Notts, DN22 0NJ. Campers £20 (2 nights), visitors £10 (daytime only), kids free with adults. Contact 35 Crane Ley Rd, Groby, Leics, LE6 0FD, or www.wadfest.co.uk

26 Aug • **BFA Open Meeting**, The Antelope, 22 Eaton Terrace, London, SW1W 8EZ. 6pm on; fans present from 5pm. With Ian Watson.

27-31 Aug • **Frightfest** (film), Empire Cinema, Leicester Square, London. Tickets £140; or day rates. Bookings: www.frightfest.co.uk.

11-13 Sep • **The Asylum** (steampunk), Lincoln. Now £39 reg or various day rates; there will probably be no memberships available at the door. Online booking (£1 surcharge): steampunk.synthasite.com.

11-13 Sep • **Reunion 7** (media), De Vere Staverton Park, Daventry. Advance tickets £87 standard, £120 priority, plus usual day and child rates (all may rise at the door). Bookings: www.sfball.com/reunion/.

25-27 Sep • **Oxonmoot** (Tolkien Society), Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. £40.50 reg; members £35.50; discount for under-16s. *Advance booking closes 4 September*. Contact 29 Tockley Rd, Burham, Bucks, SL1 7DQ; bookings at tolkiensociety dot org; www.oxonmoot.org.

26 Sep • **Bristolcon** (sf) & **Browncoat Ceilidh** (*Firefly*), Mercure Holland House Hotel, Redcliffe Hill, Bristol, BS1 6SQ. General sf minicon 2:30-5:30pm, with GoH Alastair Reynolds; music, dances etc 5:30pm-1am. Tickets £20 to Kumara Conventions, c/o 5 Manor House Rd, Glastonbury, Somerset, BA6 9DE. See also www.bristolcon.org.

10-11 Oct • **Octocon 2009**, Camden Court Hotel, Camden St, Dublin 2. Membership rates announced: €30 reg, €20 under-18s/students, €10 supp. Contact c/o Apt 56 Shalimar, Monastery Road, Clondalkin, Dublin 22, Ireland; or octocon2009@gmail.com.

6-9 Nov • **IDWcon 09** (first Irish Discworld con), Falls Hotel, Ennistymon, Co. Clare, Ireland. GoH Terry Pratchett. *Rates from 1 August*: €40 reg, €32 under-18s/students, €15 supp/junior (7-12), under-7s free. Contact Church Rd, Tulla, Co. Clare; or idwcon.org.

20-22 Nov • **WexWorlds** (sf/fantasy festival), Wexford, Ireland. With Eoin Colfer. Some 25 events in Arts Centre, Library, hotels etc; most free (3 workshops cost €5). Contact details at WexWorlds dot net.

5-6 Feb 10 • **SFX Weekender**, Pontin's Holiday Park, Camber Sands, East Sussex. With John Barrowman, Paul Cornell, James Marsters, China Miéville, Robert Rankin, more TBA. Charging is by accommodation: the £85/head minimum means 8 people in a 2-room chalet. Minimum for 2 is £290; no singles; see www.sfxweekender.com. Under-12s free (one per paying adult). Contact 08700 110034.

Rumblings • **AKFT 15** (*Trek*), planned for 26 Feb - 1 Mar 2010 in Tintagel, Cornwall, is now looking for a new venue. More TBA.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. That Reynolds/Gollancz deal inspired sophisticated literary badinage, reminiscent of the Algonquin Circle in its heyday, from the *Bookseller's* 'Agent Provocateur', Miss Daisy Frost: 'Twitterers also tell me that the Al Reynolds mega book deal has been misreported too—that doesn't surprise me as no one would give a science fiction writer a million pounds for 10 books. I mean how many anoraks does a geek need? My spy tells me that it was actually an advance of £10 for a million books and not vice versa. Let's hope they are separately accounted although knowing Hachette I doubt it.' [SS] Tut, tut.

Magazine Scene. In July, *Interzone* became the longest-running UK sf magazine by number of issues, with 223 to *New Worlds's* 222. Will Mike Moorcock ('We Try Harder') be stirred to revive *NW* again?

Awards. *Edge Hill Prize* for story collection: Chris Beckett, *The Turing Test*. Since the £5,000 prize has no genre restrictions and a Booker winner and nominees were shortlisted, the victory of an sf collection (mostly taken from *Interzone*) surprised even the judges, 'none of whom knew they were science fiction fans beforehand.' [TB] • **Prometheus** (libertarian): Cory Doctorow, *Little Brother*; hall of fame, J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*. • **RHYSLING** (poetry): LONG Geoffrey A. Landis, 'Search' (*Helix SF 10*). SHORT Amal El-Mohtar, 'Song for an Ancient City' (*Mythic Delirium 19*). • **Mythopoeic** (fantasy): ADULT LITERATURE Carol Berg, *Flesh and Spirit* and *Breath and Bone*. CHILDREN'S Kristin Cashore, *Graceling*. INKLINGS STUDIES John Rateliff, *The History of the Hobbit, Part One: Mr. Baggins; Part Two: Return to Bag-end*. OTHER STUDIES Charles Butler, *Four British Fantasists: Place and Culture in the Children's Fantasies of Penelope Lively, Alan Garner, Diana Wynne Jones, and Susan Cooper*. • **Shirley Jackson** (suspense/horror): NOVEL Jeffrey Ford, *The Shadow Year*. NOVELLA Julia Leigh, *Disquiet*. NOVELLETTE John Kessel, 'Pride and Prometheus' (*Subterranean: Tales of*

Dark Fantasy. SHORT Michael Bishop, 'The Pile' (*Subterranean Online*). COLLECTION Yoko Ogawa, *The Diving Pool*. ANTHOLOGY *The New Uncanny* ed. Sarah Eyre & Ra Page. [ED] ● *RITA* (romance), paranormal romance novel category: Gwyn Cready, *Seducing Mr. Darcy*. (SfScope)

Dowhill Ever Since. Forty years ago this week science fiction writers were celebrities... The whole sci-fi community should have been crying with Ray Bradbury on July 21, 1969. As space exploration disappeared from the front pages, sci-fi lost much of its glamour and most of its readers. I would guess that half of the stories in this genre during this period leading up to the Apollo landing dealt with outer space. How could these same writers adopt to a world where rockets and astronauts had lost their luster? [...] With the benefit of hindsight, we should probably admit that the landing of Apollo 11 was the end of the glory days of sci-fi.' (Ted Gioia, *ConceptualFiction.com*, July) [MMW] Which of us is cruel enough to break this sad news to Al Reynolds?

R.I.P. Wrai Ballard (1924-2009), US fan who was in fandom for over 60 years and wrote extensively in FAPA and SAPS, died on 24 July; he was 85. [AIP] ● **Charles N. Brown** (1937-2009), co-founder and long-time publisher and editor of the leading genre news magazine *Locus* (which has won the Hugo award 29 times) died on 12 July aged 72; he was asleep on a plane returning from Readercon to California. It goes without saying that he had long been a central figure of the sf fan community; in person, his grumpily sardonic conversation was always fun. ● **Barry England** (1932-2009), UK playwright and author of *Figures in a Landscape* (1968) plus the post-holocaust sf novel *No Man's Land* (1997), died on 21 May aged 77. [JE] ● **Eleanor 'Ellie' Frazetta** (1935-2009), wife (since 1956) and business partner of the artist Frank Frazetta, died on 17 July aged 74. [AIP] ● **Phyllis Gotlieb** (1926-2009), Canadian poet and author who began publishing sf in 1959—with her novel debut being *Sunburst* (1964)—died on 14 July; she was 83. In 1982 she received Canada's Aurora Award for sf life achievement. ● **G. Scott Hickenlively** (1963-2009), US genre artist who worked in film, tv, theatre and videogames, died on 26 June aged 45. [SFWA] ● **Brenda Joyce** (1917-2009), US actress who played Jane in *Tarzan and the Amazons* (1945) and four 1940s sequels, died on 4 July aged 92. [PDF] ● **John A. Keel** (1930-2009), UFO/paranormal author whose best-known work *The Mothman Prophecies* (1975, aka *Visitors from Space*) inspired the 2002 sf/horror film of the same title, died on 3 July; he was 79. [BB] ● **Arthur O. Lewis Jr** (1920-2009), US scholar of utopian sf whose books included *American Utopias: Selected Short Fiction* (1971), died on 18 July aged 88. The Penn State University library collection of utopian fiction is named for him. [AIP] ● **Kenneth 'Khen' Moore**, notable member of US Southern Fandom and founder of the Kubla Khan convention, died on 30 June aged 66. [AIP] ● **John Ryan** (1921-2009), UK cartoonist who created Captain Pugwash and the inept 'special agent' Harris Tweed (some of whose exploits were sf) from the 1950s *Eagle* comic, died on 22 July; he was 88. ● **Dave Simons** (1954-2009), US comics artist and animator who worked on *Conan*, *Red Sonja*, *Spider-Man* and other Marvel titles, died on 9 June aged 54. [JHB]

As Others Envy Us. "Every other genre has managed to pull itself up by its bootstraps and be defined by its highest level," says Lynn Coddington, a historical romance writer who also has a PhD in English. Just look at Dan Brown. People brazenly read "The Da Vinci Code" right on the Metro. "But romance is always defined by its dreck." Not like sf at all. (*Washington Post* on Romance Writers' Convention, 18 July) [AL]

Doctors at Large. Philip Pullman and Bryan Talbot both received honorary doctorates, respectively from Oxford on 24 June (DVB) and from Sunderland University on 17 July. The latter, for 'outstanding contribution to the Arts as writer and graphic artist', is apparently the UK's first-ever honorary doctorate for work in the comics medium.

OK Reading Copy. Eleven of the late Fred Saberhagen's novels are excitably described by Fine Edition Books of Greenhithe, Kent, as each having 'a spine as spotless and stiff as a viagra induced rampage in a combative warthog during mating season'. (AbeBooks.co.uk) [AS/LKS]

Outraged Letters. *John Freeman* on that ITV programme cancellation (A264): 'Primeval producer Tim Haines says the CGI costs claim is untrue: apparently it's more to do with ITV "ring fencing" its budgets for post-watershed drama (giving up on making anything for family audiences, just as ITV has almost completely given up on making anything for children).... ITV in its wisdom rejected a CoPro deal that could have saved the show, effectively kiboshing a revenue stream.' ITV is similarly resisting a bid by Gerry Anderson to revive his *Thunderbirds* in CGI, although he's sure he can raise the needed funds. Since ITV—which owns the rights—seems willing to talk to other people about such a remake, Anderson suspects institutional ageism. (*The Register*, June)

100 Years Ago. G.K. Chesterton satirically predicts today's Home Office attitude to the burden of proof, with the House of Commons accepting the compelling argument that "'Insanity, like forgetfulness, is simply a quality which enters more or less into all human beings; and for practical purposes it is more necessary to know whose mind is really trustworthy than whose has some accidental taint. We have therefore reversed the existing method, and people now have to prove that they are sane." [...] "And you mean to say ... that that proposal was passed in an assembly that calls itself democratic?" [...] "Oh, the assembly calls itself Socialist now ..."' (*The Ball and the Cross*, 1909, chapter 18)

As Others Boost Us. Stuart Jeffries's *Guardian* squib on UK space opera opens well enough, but before long made many sf people (not only in the USA) gibber: 'This is a golden age for British science fiction, chiefly thanks to a wave of writers who are tackling an area their American rivals tend to leave well alone—far-future set, space-operatic, hard sci-fi. Americans tend to set their sci-fi in soft (ie, scientifically unsupported) near futures.' (13 July) Do they indeed? The slobs.

C.o.A. Susie Haynes/Fantast Three, 23 Listers Rd, Upwell, Wisbech, Cambs, PE14 9BW. **David Redd** (not, alas, his wife Meriel, who died on 13 July), 30 Bulford Rd, Johnston, Haverfordwest, Pembro, SA62 3BU.

Oh Dear. When K. Tempest Bradford mocked the naked bosomy mermaid on a *Realms of Fantasy* cover and suggested equal time for sexy men, a commenter on her blog obliged with an RoF mock-up. Male buttock display caused no offence, but the spoof contents did: 'Neil Gaiman: Grocery List. Harlan Ellison: Senile Meanders. Harry Potter: Just Because.' No prize for guessing who threw an abusive hissy fit that made embarrassing play with the fact that Bradford is 'a Woman of Color'. But apologies have since been exchanged; incident over. [DKMK]

Optics Masterclass. 'Perversely, the lower they were, the farther they could see. Light in this part of the Chaos apparently climbed around and over obstructions, then curved down to meet them ... From the bottom of this valley, they might be able to see across the Chaos for many hundreds or thousands of miles.' (Greg Bear, *City at the End of Time*, 2008) Steve Jeffery wonders: 'I'm still trying to puzzle this. Surely if light bends around and about obstacles, these would be invisible, so they would actually see nothing for hundreds or thousands of miles?'

Random Fandom. *Sally Carteret*, short fiction author, proves to be a pseudonym of Lucius Shephard. [PS] ● Neil Gaiman donated a tuckerization (namecheck 'in an unspecified work ... that might not happen for five years') to the Worldcon fan funds auction. ● *Ken Slater's* bequest enabled the SF Foundation library to acquire rare titles including a first of Edwin L. Arnold's *Lieut. Gullivar Jones: His Vacation*. [AS]

In Typo Veritas. *Publishers Weekly* on *The New Space Opera 2* ed. Gardner Dozois & Jonathan Strahan: 'The impressive diversity of stories reaffirms that soap opera is alive and well ...' [sv]

Memory Hole. Amazon caused a stir by exerting its uncanny power to delete downloaded texts, ironically including Orwell's *1984*, from Kindle ebook readers; user accounts were credited with the 99c cost. A decent apology followed, and a promise not to do this again. But, with many sf pundits expecting the abolition of the Sempirozine Hugo to be ratified at this month's Worldcon, I wonder whether I'll wake up to find *Anisble's* 2005 award replaced by a modest payment.

No Frills. TV sf inspires room designers, says Tony Alleyne of 24th Century Interior Design, and offers a memorable poster strapline for the next *Star Trek* film: 'Science fiction interiors explore unconventional but imaginative environments [...] The *Star Trek* variety is minimal but soft, with the greys, whites, pastels, and aluminium suggestive of a luxury liner. It's an ideal living space. There's no clutter. There are no dollies in space.' (Josh Sims interview, *Financial Times*, 18 July) [MMW]

Thog's Masterclass. *Doorphobia Dept.* 'Cray turned away from the unyielding door of the cabin with a feeling that his guts had dissolved, his legs had turned into viable liquid, and where his nerves had once been, icy rivulets of pure fear now surrounded, enmeshed and threatened his entire being.' (Karl Zeigfreid, *Barrier 346*, 1965) ● *Neat Tricks Dept.* 'The old man opened his eyes metaphorically.' (John E. Muller, *The Ultimate Man*, 1961) ● *Loss of Face Dept.* 'I watched him turn from pale to ashen in about two seconds flat; his face tried to drain away but never got past his Adam's apple, which bobbed convulsively as he did his best to swallow it.' (Laurence Payne, *Knight Fall*, 1987) [MD]

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