

# Ansible



## Ansible 272 March 2010

From David Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU, UK. Web [news.ansible.co.uk](http://news.ansible.co.uk). ISSN 0265-9816 (print); 1740-942X (e). Logo: Dan Steffan. Cartoon: Bruce Townley. Available for SAE, berp-nuts, Centauran [llba1111@vitalols.com](mailto:llba1111@vitalols.com).

### The Days of March

Neil Gaiman's *New Yorker* profile revealed the secret of his allure: 'Pictures of his library, which contains some five thousand volumes, circulate on the Internet, propagating brainy crushes: "How could I not fall for this guy?? Honestly ... look at the sheer size of his ... library!"' (Dana Goodyear, 25 January) [MMW] *Ansible* dares not afflict John Clute with swarming gropies by flaunting his far vaster library size here.

Adrian Jacobs's *Willy the Wizard: Livid Land* (see A264) was in the news once more when his family (fronted by a dodgy Australian publicist) added J.K. Rowling's name to their plagiarism suit against Bloomsbury and *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. This case relies on several fallacies: that vague ideas like a wizard learning something in a bathroom are protected by copyright; that coincidence never happens; and that the appearance of any widespread fantasy motif in both *Willy* and *Goblet* is a smoking gun. *Willy* was poorly written, universally rejected, and appeared in 1987 from a seeming vanity press that never got it into bookshops. The unlikelihood of Rowling's having seen a copy is dealt with by an interestingly libellous claim that her agent Christopher Little, whom Jacobs is said to have approached but who never represented him, must obviously have slipped her the 36 epic pages of *Willy* with instructions to steal all those hot ideas like wizardly bathrooms, chess, food and drink, trains etc, that no other author could have invented. (NB: Adrian Jacobs died in 1997 and is not to blame for this greedfest.)

Maura McHugh blew the whistle again (see A267), pointing out the near-total invisibility of women in February's *SFX* horror special—ironically published during Women in Horror Recognition Month.

Sigourney Weaver was amazed to learn the true nature of *Avatar*: 'Jim [Cameron] was telling someone about how sci-fi had always gotten a bad rap, and that maybe now that would change [...] And I thought, "Science fiction? Really? Is that what this movie is?" Because to me it's just a great story that happens to take place in another time.' (*USA Today*, 23 February) [NA] What are its Oscar chances? 'With that label, "sci-fi," I think it'll be tough [...] But of course, to look at these movies with that label is to miss the points they are trying to make. These movies ask us to look at what it means to be human.' No talking squid?

### Concafactory

Until 1 Apr • **Crash: Homage to J.G. Ballard** (art show), Gagosian Gallery, 6-24 Britannia St, London, WC1X 9JD. 10am-6pm Tue-Sat.

5-6 Mar • **Microcon**, Devonshire House, University of Exeter. Several guests as usual. Doors open 9:30am Sat, 7:20:30am Sun. £10 reg at the door; XSF (Exeter U SF Soc) members £4, other students £7.

5-7 Mar • **Phoenix Con (P-Con)**, 7 Central Hotel, Exchequer St, Dublin. €30 reg, students €15; €35 at door or €20/day. Cheques to Peter McClean. Contact c/o 6 Weston Ave, Lucan, Co. Dublin, Ireland.

7 Mar • **The Early Days of a Better Future**, sf event at Aye Writel book festival, Mitchell Library, Glasgow, G3 7DN. Ken MacLeod, Richard Morgan, others. 8-9:30pm. £7/£6. Bookings 0844 847 1683.

19-21 Mar • **Corflu Cobalt**, Winchester Hotel, Winchester. £50/\$75 reg. £10/\$15 supp. Advance booking closes 13 March. Day rates £10 Fri, £25 Sat, £20 Sun (not including brunch banquet). Sterling to 45 Kimberley Gardens, London, N4 1LD. USS: Robert Lichtman, 11037 Broadway Tce, Oakland, CA 94611-1948, USA.

24 Mar • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Antelope, 22 Eaton Tce, London, SW1W 8EZ. 5pm for 6pm. BSFA Awards discussion panel.

25-28 Mar • **World Horror Convention**, Royal Albion Hotel, Brighton. £100 reg, but sold out. No at-door/day memberships, no press passes. Waiting list for membership transfers: info at whc2010 dot org.

26-28 Mar • **Festival in the Shire** (Tolkien art show) preview, Wynnstay Hotel, Machynlleth. Noon-8pm. Free, but numbers are limited so check first: info at festivalinthewildshire dot com.

1-30 Apr • **Dublin: One City, One Book** events. The 2010 book is *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. See [www.dublinonecityonebook.ie](http://www.dublinonecityonebook.ie).

1 Apr • **Life on the Sun**, Lecture Theatre, National Maritime

Museum, Greenwich, SE10 9NF. 7:30-8:30pm. 'Lighthearted lecture'. £8 (£6 concessions) from bookings at nmcc am uk or 020 8312 6608

2-5 Apr • **Odyssey 2010** (Eastercon), Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow, London. £65 reg, £55 unwaged (£60 and £50 for BSFA members), £30 supporting and under-17s; £75, £65 and £30 at the door. £5 child (<11), £1 infant (<5). Contact: Fiona Marshall c/o Cotton House, Conference Centre, Rugby, CV23 0AA.

28 Apr • **Clarke Award** ceremony, London—by invitation. (To avoid a clash, April's BSFA meeting will be on the 21st, not the 28th.)

28 Apr - 3 May • **Sci-Fi London** (film), Apollo Piccadilly Cinema, 19 Regent St, London, SW1Y 4LX. Enquiries 020 3239 9277.

8 May • **Write Fantastic** event, Jacqueline Du Pré Bldg, St Hilda's Coll, Oxford. £15 reg; students £12. Contact/cheques: Write Fantastic c/o Newcon Press, 41 Wheatsheaf Rd, Alconbury Weston, PE28 4LF. POSTPONED FROM MARCH: 13-29 Aug • **Edge of the Wild** (Tolkien art exhibition), Redesdale Hall, Moreton-in-Marsh, GL56 0AW. GoH Ted Nasmith, others. 9am-5pm. Free. Contact malcx at adcbbooks co uk.

27-30 Aug • **Discworld Convention**. Now £60 reg, £39 concessions. £20 supp as before. Contact PO Box 4101, Shepton Mallett, Somerset, BA4 9AJ; info at dwcon dot org.

17-19 Sep • **Fantasycon**, Britannia Hotel, 1 St James St, Nottingham. £55 reg, rising to £65 on 1 April (BFS members £10 less); £45 Sat only. Online booking only: [www.fantasycon.org.uk](http://www.fantasycon.org.uk). Contact fcon at britishfantasycommunity dot org.

24-26 Sep • **Oxonmoot** (Tolkien Society), Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. Cost TBA. Details to follow at [www.oxonmoot.org](http://www.oxonmoot.org).

16-17 Oct • **British International Comics Show**, Think Tank, Millennium Point, Curzon St, Birmingham, B4 7XG. 10:30am-5:30pm. £20 reg; £12/day. Contact info at thecomicsshow dot co dot uk.

4-6 Feb 11 • **Cre2c3ndo** (film), Ramada Hotel, Grantham. £32/\$50 reg; £20/\$30 unwaged; 5-18s £1/\$1.50 per year of age on joining; <5 £1. Cheques to UK Filk Con, 16 Ann's Rd, Cambridge, CB5 8TN.

17-21 Aug 11 • **Renovation** (69th Worldcon), Reno Sparks Convention Center, Reno, NV, USA. \$140 reg to 30 April 2010; \$50 supp; under-21s \$100 (new YA rate); under-17s \$75; under-7s free. See [www.renovationsf.org](http://www.renovationsf.org) for presupp/voter discounts. Contact PO Box 13278, Portland, OR 97213-0278, USA; or info at renovationsf dot org.

**Rumblings** • *Eastercon 2012*: two bids emerged in mid-February. Olympicon (name may change owing to famous IOC litigiousness) plans a Brighton venue; the London-based Olympus 2012 (safer?) includes Orbital and Odyssey veterans and is presumably aiming for Heathrow.

### Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us, Worriedly. *The New Yorker* on the company kept by Paul Krugman: 'Last August, Krugman decided that [...] he would take a couple of days to speak at the sixty-seventh world science-fiction convention, to be held in Montreal. (Krugman has been a science-fiction fan since he was a boy.) At the convention, there was a lot of extremely long hair, a lot of blue hair, and a lot of capes. There was a woman dressed as a cat, there was a woman with a green brain attached to her head with wire, there was a person in a green face mask, there was a young woman spinning wool. There was a Jedi and a Storm Trooper. Those participants who were not dressed as cats were wearing T-shirts with something written on them [...] Sitting up onstage at the science-fiction convention, Krugman looked happy to be there. It seemed that these were, in some worrying sense, his people.' (1 March) [GF]

**Awards**. BAFTA. Genre winners: *Avatar*, special Effects, production design; Duncan Jones/*Moon*, outstanding UK debut; *UP*, animated film, music. Orange Rising Star award: Kirsten Stewart of *Twilight* etc. [MPJ] • *Dwarf Star* (SFPA short verse): Geoffrey A. Landis, 'Fireflies' (*Astmov's 6/08*). • *Bram Stoker* (HWA life achievement): Brian Lumley and William F. Nolan. Also HWA Specialty Press Award: Tartarus Press. • *London Film Critics Circle*: best film maker Duncan Jones for *Moon*; foreign language film *Let The Right One In*. [MPJ] • *Shortlists* see below. **Confound Their Politicks**. As UK parties vie to collect celebrity

endorsements, Labour is wooing the sf/fantasy vote with J.K. Rowling and David Tennant. (*Telegraph*, 15 February) But apparently the chap who plays Harry Potter on screen favours the Lib Dems... (*Mail*, 2009) [MPJ] H'm'm: how would Albus Dumbledore vote? Meanwhile, fanish harassment of George R.R. Martin for not writing fast enough inspired another spoof David Cameron poster: 'Vote for us and we will ensure *A Dance with Dragons* is released in 2010.' (*Guardian*, 16 February) [AJP]

**R.I.P. Hisashi Asakura** (real name Zenji Otani), Japanese sf translator whose translations included *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, died on 14 February aged 79. [GVG] • **Ian Carmichael** (1920-2010), veteran UK actor whose genre films include *Ghost Ship* (1952) and *From Beyond the Grave* (1973), died on 5 February aged 89. [AW] • **Cy Grant** (1919-2010), Guyana-born actor who was the first black person to be a familiar face on UK television, died on 13 February; he was 90. Genre appearances included *Captain Scarlet* and *The Mysterons* (30 episodes as Lt Green), *Doppelgänger*, *At the Earth's Core* and *Blake's 7*. [MPJ] • **Jim Harmon** (1933-2010), US fan, author and radio producer who published some 40 sf stories, mostly for *Galaxy* and *If* in the 1950s-60s, died on 16 February; he was 76. His nonfiction included *The Great Radio Heroes* (1967) and other studies in genre nostalgia. [PDF] • **Lionel Jeffries** (1926-2010), UK actor whose genre roles ranged from *The Quatermass Experiment* (1955) through *First Men in the Moon* (1964) and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (1968) to *Lexx* (2001), died on 19 February; he was 83. He directed *The Amazing Mr Blunden* (1972) and *The Water Babies* (1978). [O] • **Mervyn Jones** (1922-2010), UK author and journalist whose 29 novels include the sf future-war story *On the Last Day* (1958), died on 23 February aged 87. [JC] • **Richard Jones** (1945-2009), scientist, artist and occasional film extra—the four-foot man inside R2D2 in *Return of the Jedi*—died on 18 November aged 64. [JE] Other genre credits included *Dreamchild* (1985), *Labyrinth and Willow*. • **Robert McCall** (1919-2010), US artist who did much NASA work and painted posters for *2001*, *Star Trek: TMP* and other sf films, died on February 26 aged 90. • **Donald Pickering** (1933-2009), UK character actor seen in *Doctor Who* (three times, with different Doctors), *The Avengers*, *The Champions* and *Truffaut's Fahrenheit 451* (1966), died on 19 December; he was 76. [MPJ] • **David Severn** (David Storr Unwin, 1918-2010), author of YA novels of which several—like the dystopian *The Future Took Us* (1957)—involved timeslips, died on 11 February; he was 91. [JC] • **William Tenn** (Philip Klass, 1920-2010), US author of many fine satirical sf stories—collected in several volumes—and two novels including *Of Men and Monsters* (1968), died on 7 February. He was 89. Unforgettably iconoclastic shorts include 'Brooklyn Project' (1948) and the prescient 'The Liberation of Earth' (1953). SFWA honoured him as Author Emeritus in 1999. Tenn was much loved, a popular convention guest—notably, a GoH at the 2004 Worldcon—with a vast fund of witty anecdotes. • **Eric C. Williams** (1918-2010), old-time UK fan active in the 1930s, and author of ten sf novels 1968-1981 (mostly published by Robert Hale Ltd), has died at the age of 91. [PW]

**Tomb It May Concern.** A no doubt particularly curvaceous new road in Derby is, after a public vote, to be named Lara Croft Way. [JC]

**Outraged Letters.** *Harry Harrison* on Philip Klass: 'Phil and I were quite good friends in NY after the war. He was quite clear about his pen name—despite what Jonas [the *NY Times* obituarist] says. He liked SF but was quite critical of it. He felt he would be a mainstream author one day. So used a pen name for SF—saving his real name for his literary success. Alas—he was one of the most original SF writers—who, unhappily, stopped producing. And never published in mainstream...' • *Martyn P. Jackson*: 'I saw a live satellite broadcast at the Tyneside Cinema in Newcastle of the National Theatre adaptation of Terry Pratchett's *Nation*. A lively, enjoyable and thought-provoking production, though I would have opted for a puppet, rather than a bizarrely costumed actor, in the role of Milton the foul-mouthed parrot (before I twigged the actor was meant to be the parrot I mistook him for a cabin boy with Tourette's syndrome). / You would have thought that having worked on this production, Mark Ravenhill (who adapted the novel for the stage) and director Melly Still might also admire the Discworld novels, but no. Asked about Discworld by the *Telegraph*, Still said, "They don't appeal in the slightest I'm afraid, although I admit I don't know very much about them. I'm not a follower." Ravenhill responded, "That fantasy world isn't really my kind of thing." Good to know that *Nation's* giant mystical talking grandfather birds and the death-god Locaha aren't anything to do with fantasy then.'

**Thermodynamics Masterclass.** *Dept of Survival on Venus; or, Maxwell's Demon Lives!* 'The tubes grabbed the rushing air and separated fast and slow molecules; the cooler part went into a refrigeration system which

kept the city at a temperature men could stand—outside, it hovered around the boiling point of water; the smaller volume of super-heated air was conducted to the maintenance plant where it helped run the city's pumps and generators.' (Poul Anderson, 'The Big Rain', *Astounding*, 1954) [TMCd]

**Nebula Shortlist.** SHORT Saladin Ahmed, 'Hooves and the Hovel of Abdel Jameela' (*Clockwork Phoenix* 2); Michael A. Burstein, 'I Remember the Future' (*I Remember the Future*); N.K. Jemisin, 'Non-Zero Probabilities' (*Clarkesworld* 11/09); Kij Johnson, 'Spar' (*Clarkesworld*, 10/09); James Patrick Kelly, 'Going Deep' (*Asimov's* 6/09); Will McIntosh, 'Bridesicle' (*Asimov's* 1/09); • NOVELLETTE Paolo Bacigalupi, 'The Gambler' (*Fast Forward* 2); Michael Bishop, 'Vinegar Peace, or the Wrong-Way Used-Adult Orphanage' (*Asimov's* 7/08); Richard Bowes, 'I Needs Must Part, The Policeman Said' (*F&SF* 12/09); Eugie Foster, 'Sinner, Baker, Pabulist, Priest, Red Mask, Black Mask, Gentleman, Beast' (*Interzone* 2/09); Ted Kosmatka, 'Divining Light' (*Asimov's* 8/08); Rachel Swirsky, 'A Memory of Wind' (*Tor.com* 11/09). • NOVELLA Kage Baker, *The Women of Nell Gwynne's*; Carolyn Ives Gilman, 'Arkfall' (*F&SF* 9/09); Nancy Kress, 'Act One' (*Asimov's* 3/09); James Morrow, *Shambling Towards Hiroshima*; Jason Sanford, 'Sublimation Angels' (*Interzone* 10/09); John Scalzi, *The God Engines*. • NOVEL. Paolo Bacigalupi, *The Windup Girl*; Christopher Barzak, *The Love We Share Without Knowing*; Laura Anne Gilman, *Flesh and Fire*; China ville, *The City & The City*; Cherie Priest, *Boneshaker*; Jeff VanderMeer, *Finch*. • BRADBURY (DRAMATIC) *Star Trek, District 9, Avatar, Moon, Up, Coraline*. • ANDRE NORTON (YA) Kage Baker, *Hotel Under the Sand*; Sarah Beth Durst, *Ice*; Malinda Lo, *Ash*; Lisa Mantchev, *Eyes Like Stars*; John Scalzi, *Zoe's Tale*; Rebecca Stead, *When You Reach Me*; Catherynne M. Valente, *The Girl Who Circumnavigated Fairyland In A Ship Of Her Own Making*; Scott Westerfeld, *Leviathan*. • There were last-minute Twitter pleas for extra nominations to ensure the late Kage Baker appeared on the ballot.

**C.o.A. Mike Cule**, 3 Barratt Place, Easton Street, High Wycombe, HP11 1XS. J.N. Fenn is the Novelist Formerly Known As Jaine Fenn.

**Cry Wolf!** An open letter to Universal Studios from a *Twilight* fan exposed the infamy of *The Wolf Man* (1941): '... it was a COMPLETE remaking of the Wolf Pack from the *Twilight* Saga: New Moon. It gives the werewolves a bad name...' Stephanie Meyer was born in 1973. [ML]

**Fanfudery.** *Down Under Fan Fund*: candidates for the 2010 race from North America to the Australian Worldcon are Jeffrey Boman, Terry Fong, John Hertz, Melanie Herz and John Purcell. Online voting and downloadable ballot at [wrevenge.com/duff2010/](http://wrevenge.com/duff2010/). • *GUFF* voting reminder: the deadline is 5 April. See [taff.org.uk/guff.html](http://taff.org.uk/guff.html).

**Batman Defeats Superman** is the inevitable headline, as foretold in *The Dark Knight Returns*: Batman's debut issue, *Detective Comics* 27, sold at auction for \$1,075,000 on 25 February, three days after the Superman debut issue of *Action Comics* went for \$1m. (*Independent*) **Thog's Masterclass.** *Long Drop Dept.* 'The screams of the injured man followed him as he fell to the concrete an infinite distance below' (E.C. Tubb, *Veruchia*, 1973) [AR] • *Still More Historical Research Dept.* It is 1889: "You must give him this note ... He must hurry! ... And for your trouble—" Irene produced a five-pence piece.' Irene was stuffing a formidable roll of pound notes into her reticule.' (both Carole Nelson Douglas, *Irene at Large*, 1993) [BA] • *Dept of Pointy Things.* 'Her interest was as pointed as the breasts on which she gently splashed cold water...' (Robert Holdstock, *Merlin's Wood*, 1994) [SB] • *Violent Imagery Dept.* 'Gabriel didn't hear the shot, but he saw Carter's brains when they jumped from his skull onto the wall.' 'Lydia flapped around on the ground like a wounded fish as Flieg tried to fry her.' 'Riel twirled like a helicopter that had gone out of control, destroying everything in his path.' (all Kris Greene, *The Dark Storm*, 2010) [JB/BS] • *Erotica Dept.* 'My potential for ecstasy was such that the lightest touch of his fingertip on my nipple was pure rape!' 'Penway became keenly aware of his nakedness when he realized he had no place to carry the smallest scrap of food.' 'He sat in the roof garden deliberately training his mind on a chess problem, but Jenka Wale's breasts kept blurring his mental vision. Her public mound was a glowing enticement on the visualised chess-board.' 'Why not lose himself in the ecstasy of her body? But then, realizing the trend of his thoughts, he stiffened and took hold of himself.' (all Paul W. Fairman, *I, The Machine*, 1968) [AR]

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