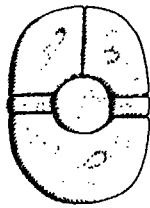


# ansible



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## Ansible 218 September 2005

From **Dave Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. <http://ansible.co.uk>. Fax 0705 080 1534. ISSN 0265-9816 (print) 1740-942X (online). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **William Rotsler**. Available for SAE, or a sufficiency of Whuffie.

**Interthingy!** So much for my hubristic plans to rush out a special, triumphalist *Ansible* straight after the Glasgow Worldcon. In the event I felt too exhausted—or blissfully languorous, if you prefer. The con seemed to go very well, with praise showered on normally thankless efforts like Masquerade and Hugo organization, while the *Plokta* cabal's fan bar achieved the cosmic feat of drinking the brewery dry. The final membership count was approximately 4,200. You read it here last. A personal moment of glory and terror: the breakfast signing of contracts for a third edition of *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, with co-editors John Clute and myself doing the 'shop-floor work' while Peter Nicholls broods over the enterprise as Editor Emeritus...

**Hugos** were presented at record speed in a ceremony hosted by Paul McAuley and Kim Newman, whose alternate-history jape was that these trophies commemorated the pioneering *Fiction-Scientifique* author Victor Hugo, remembered for such FS masterworks as *The Jet-Pack of Notre Dame*. NOVEL Susanna Clarke, *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*. NOVELLA Charles Stross, 'The Concrete Jungle'. NOVELETTE Kelly Link, 'The Faery Handbag'. SHORT Mike Resnick, 'Travels with My Cats'. RELATED BOOK *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction* ed. Edward James & Farah Mendlesohn. DRAMATIC, LONG *The Incredibles*. SHORT '33' (*Battlestar Galactica*). PRO EDITOR Ellen Datlow. PRO ARTIST Jim Burns. SEMIPROZINE *Ansible*. FANZINE *Plokta*. FAN WRITER er um well. FAN ARTIST Sue Mason. WEB SITE *SciFiction* ([www.scifi.com/scifiction](http://www.scifi.com/scifiction)). JOHN W. CAMPBELL AWARD (not a Hugo): Elizabeth Bear. Special Committee Award (ditto): David Pringle, for long toil on *Interzone*.

The *Ansible* win was a genuine shock: I'd cunningly manoeuvred it from *Fanzine* to *Semiprozine* in the belief that *Ansible* could never defeat the juggernaut of *Locus* (which in fact placed third, behind *Interzone*). Oh dearie me, this means that at last I've drawn level with the great Charles N. Brown's tally of 26 Hugos. • The Novella winner enlivened the event by appearing awesomely kilted as The McStross Of That ilk. His later LiveJournal comment has an eloquent dignity: 'OMG! I WON A HUGO!!! WOOT!!!!!!' • Reading the nominations for Best Novel, GoH Christopher Priest naughtily pretended his eyesight was failing and offered unlikely versions of shortlisted titles, such as Mr Stross's cult novel *L. Ron Sunrise*. • Traditional tinkering with Hugo rules continues. That proposal to split Best Editor into magazine and book categories was debated, and morphed into a slightly different split: Editor (Short Fiction) for work on magazines and anthologies, and Editor (Long Fiction) for books. This proposal was passed for ratification at the 2006 Worldcon. • For those not in the know, there was further bogglement when nomination statistics revealed that Terry Pratchett would have been a novel finalist—pushing Iain Banks off the ballot—if he hadn't declined his nomination for *Going Postal*.

**Accident & Emergency.** Poor old *Forrest J Ackerman* spent the Worldcon in Glasgow Royal Infirmary. Reportedly he had an accident while showering in his hotel before Interaction began, and was kept under observation by concerned medics. Not wanting to cause alarm, he asked for this to be kept quiet; word didn't get around until the last day. • *Chris Priest* had a bad fall on the escalator at the Scottish Exhibition and Convention Centre. Though suffering cuts, bruises, torn trousers and shock in what he called 'my John Brunner moment', he went on to give a scheduled reading before summoning first aid. His well-received GoH speech can now be read on the *Ansible* website.

**Also at Worldcon.** *European SF Awards*. PUBLISHER *Nature*, UK. WRITER Marina & Sergei Dyachenko, Ukraine. ARTIST Sergei Poyarkov, Ukraine. MAGAZINE *Galaktika*, Hungary. PROMOTER Alain Le Bussy, Belgium. TRANSLATOR Kees van Toorn, Netherlands. • *Prometheus* (libertarian sf): Neal Stephenson, *The System of the World*. • *Sidewise* (alternate history): LONG Philip Roth, *The Plot Against America*. SHORT Warren Ellis, *The Ministry of Space*. • *James White* (unpublished shorts by new writers) Elizabeth Hopkinson, 'A Short History of the Dream Library'.

**As Others ...** Press coverage was unusually benign, but food critic Allan Brown restored the balance by reviewing visitors to the nearby Moroccan restaurant Argan: 'Closer inspection, though, revealed a

certain homogeneity among the incomers: long, wispy hair, milk-bottle spectacles, breathable rainwear, mouthfuls of teeth. It could only be a delegation from the world science-fiction convention that was going on down the road. The unmarried of five continents had convened in the same spot at the same time. The upside of this (and it had to be looked for strenuously) was that at least they'd have something positive to tell the citizens of Klaarg-9 about Glasgow's restaurants, having beamed down into a cheerful, affordable neighbourhood eatery with native staff and an intriguing menu.' (*Sunday Times*, 21 Aug) How very original. • A taxi driver quoted in the con newsletter marvelled: 'I've just seen a Klingon in a kilt. You don't see that very often. Not even in Glasgow.'

### Unlikely Stories, Mostly

**David Brin's** weblog deftly avoids the sf-words: he is 'a scientist and best-selling author whose future-oriented novels include ...' [HF]

**Patrick Janson-Smith**, publisher at Transworld since 1981, is to desert Terry Pratchett for J.K. Rowling. He lured Terry P. from Gollancz to Doubleday UK in 1998, and is now moving to the Christopher Little Literary Agency—which represents Rowling. (*Publishers Lunch*)

**Terry Pratchett** on the Hugo: 'When they told me I just thought: I can't handle this, not after all this time, and asked to be let off. That meant I enjoyed the con hugely instead of being a bag of nerves with a blood pressure of 200/95, and when the fateful verdict was given on Sunday night I was eating sushi two miles away. Best worldcon ever!'

**J.K. Rowling** sent an inspirational message to Interaction, with regrets that she couldn't be present and (at last) a confession that she 'was thrilled to receive the Hugo in 2001.' [TPA]

**Jack Williamson** also sent good cheer to the con, via e-mail: 'I'm 97 and feeling the years, but I feel well and have good care.' [TPA]

### Conlatrate

9-11 Sep • **Reunion<sup>3</sup>** (media), Holiday Inn, Leicester City. £75 reg; £40/day Sat or Sun; child £55 or £30/day. Contact Flat 3, Blighwood, 57 Surrey Rd, Poole, Dorset, BH12 1HF.

10 Sep • **Whitchurch Fireworks**, Hardwick House. 5:30-late. £7 at gate; children £5, family £18. Display by the usual fan suspects.

12 Sep • **Reading at Borders**, Oxford St, London. Top floor, 6:30pm. With Pat Cadigan, Paul McAuley and China Miéville.

16-17 Sep • **The Fforde Festival** (Jasper Fforde), Goddard Arms Hotel, Swindon. £25 reg. Tickets: Swindon Tourist Info Centre, 37 Regent St, Swindon, SN1 1JL. 01793 530328 or 466454.

16-18 Sep • **Oxonmoot 2005** (Tolkien Soc), St Peter's College, Oxford. £35 reg (members £30), closing 6 September. Contact 85 Woad Lane, Great Coates, Grimsby, DN34 9NB.

17-18 Sep • **SF/Fantasy Weekend**, Techniquet science discovery centre, Stuart St, Cardiff, CF10 5BW. Further details unknown.

28 Sep • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Star pub, West Halkin Mews, London, SW1. 6pm on; fans present from 5pm. With Paul McAuley.

30 Sep - 2 Oct • **FantasyCon 2005**, Quality Hotel, Walsall. £50 reg; BFS members £45. Day (Sat only) £20. Contact (with SAE) Beech House, Chapel Lane, Moulton, Cheshire, CW9 8DQ.

1-2 Oct • **NewCon3**, Guildhall, Northampton. GoH Jon Courtenay Grimwood, Liz Williams, Fangorn. £20 reg (£12 Sat, £10 Sun) to Northampton SF Writers Group, 16 Albany Rd, Northampton, NN1 5LZ.

15-16 Oct • **Octocon**, Glenroyal Hotel, Maynooth, Ireland. Guests TBA. €30 reg, student €25, under-18 €15 until 1 Oct, to Octocon, Basement Flat, 26 Longford Tce, Monkstown, Co. Dublin. Sterling £20, £15, £10 to 'Dave Lally #2 A/C', 64 Richborne Tce, London, SW8 1AX.

24-26 Feb 06 • **Distraction 2006** (small sf/fun), Chequers Hotel, Newbury. £30 reg. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

14-17 Apr 06 • **Concussion** (Eastercon), Glasgow Moat House Hotel. Now £50 reg; *supp/concessions* £25; ages 12-18 £15; 5-11 £5; 0-4 free. Contact 23 Ranelagh Rd, Bruce Grove, London, N17 6XY.

4-5 Aug 06 • **McCon 9**, Queen's Elms Centre, Malone Rd, Belfast. Guests and further details TBA.

**Eurocon 2007**, Copenhagen, Denmark; exact venue TBA. There was also an Irish bid, but Denmark won—the country's first Eurocon.

**Rumblings • Recombination** (Aug 2007), the next UK role-playing convention, will also revive the lapsed Unicon tradition. [RBW]

## Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See Us.** *The Guardian* reviews *Primer*: 'If the term science fiction didn't conjure images of overblown special effects and alien make-up, it would be the perfect description for this: a gripping, low-budget thriller with lots of science.' [SG] • **Wired** coverage of that odd clone-claim cult the Raelians identifies likely prey: 'rare video footage of the group taken at one of its Las Vegas seminars [...] brings a fresh, critical slant to the Raelians—replete with allegations that the sect uses sex as a recruitment tool, targeting people most likely to sympathize with its message that aliens populated the world: "Trekkies and what-not," explained Abdullah Hashem, who taped the group in May [...] "There are a lot of people (at these seminars) who believe in aliens, and all these beautiful women who will have sex with you even though you're a dork," he said. "And that's why most people were there." [WP] • Ann Coulter strains to find words harsh enough for Muslim jihadists: 'No wonder they dream of an afterlife with 72 hot teenage girls. These guys are klutzes. Nerds. Dweebs. In the Las Vegas of life they're at the convention center with the other *Star Trek* fans.' (11 August) [TW]

**Closing Down.** *Andromeda Bookshop* closed its doors at 1 Suffolk St, Birmingham, on 26 August. Rog Peyton, original founder of *Andromeda*, wrote: 'All the staff had walked out, the current owners pushing them one step too far. [...] The stock is all in storage in Walsall.' [BGN] • *Clarecraft*, the UK model company best known for official Discworld® figurines, will close at the end of October because 'things have been tough for the British gift industry as a whole [...] Clarecraft in particular has suffered because we have been determined to keep our manufacturing in Britain.' A closing sale is in progress.

**Yet More Awards.** *Mythopoeic*: ADULT Susanna Clarke, *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*. CHILDREN'S Terry Pratchett, *A Hat Full of Sky*. SCHOLARSHIP, INKLINGS Janet Brennan Croft, *War and the Works of J.R.R. Tolkien*. SCHOLARSHIP, GENERAL Stephen Thomas Knight, *Robin Hood: A Mythic Biography*. • **Booker Prize**, for real literary stuff: the most obviously sf item on the longlist is Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*. • **British Fantasy Awards** novel shortlist: Clive Barker, *Abarat: Days of Magic, Nights of War*; Mark Chadbourn, *The Queen of Sinister*; Susanna Clarke, *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*; Christopher Fowler, *The Water Room*; Stephen King, *The Dark Tower VII: The Dark Tower*. • **World Fantasy Awards** novel nominations: Susanna Clarke, *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*; Stephen R. Donaldson, *The Runes of the Earth*; China Miéville, *Iron Council*; Sean Stewart, *Perfect Circle*; Gene Wolfe, *The Wizard Knight (The Knight and The Wizard)*.

**Science Corner.** We can learn even from reality TV. Arcane knowledge from a chap called Craig in *Big Brother*: 'The Egyptians had more advanced star-charts than we have now.... They would have had to have 5-dimensional technology to achieve what they did.' [GW]

**R.I.P.** *Jonathan Adams* (1931-2005), UK actor seen in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975) and other genre productions, died on 13 June aged 74. [RL] • *James Booth* (1927-2005), UK actor and screenwriter who appeared in several episodes of *Twin Peaks* and also in minor genre films, died on 11 August at age 77. [GW] • *Gretchen Franklin* (1911-2005), British actress whose occasional genre appearances included parts in the TV *Quatermass* (1979) and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1981), died on 11 July—four days after her 94th birthday. [GD] • *Philip J. Klass* (1919-2005), US technical journalist and noted debunker of UFO claims, who for 35 years was a senior editor at *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, died on 9 August after long illness. He was 85. Some SF references confused him with the 1920-born Philip Klass who is still with us and writes as William Tenn. • *Robert A. Moog* (1934-2005), inventor of the Moog synthesizer heard on countless sf film soundtracks since the 1960s, died from a brain tumour on 21 August. • *Brock Peters* (1927-2005), US actor who was best known for his part in *To Kill a Mockingbird* but also appeared in *Soylent Green*, two *Star Trek* films and *ST: Deep Space Nine*, died on 24 August aged 78. [GW] • *Joe Ranft* (1960-2005), screenwriter and voice actor who had been with Pixar for over a decade, died in a car accident on 16 August; he was 45. Ranft co-wrote *Toy Story* (which brought him an Oscar nomination) and *A Bug's Life*; in his previous job at Disney he was a writer for *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Lion King*. [PDF] • *Daniel Riche* (1949-2005), leading French sf editor and anthropologist, died from cancer on 23 August. He was 55. [J-MO] • *Michael Sheard* (1938-2005), UK actor

who became a popular figure on the sf convention circuit after appearing as Admiral Ozzel in *The Empire Strikes Back*, died from cancer on 31 August. He was 67. Another well-remembered genre part was that of Hitler—whom he played five times in all—in *Indiana Jones and The Last Crusade*. [BB] • *Mark Simpson*, co-founder of the award-winning Nottingham comics shop Page 45, died unexpectedly on 31 July. [SG] • *Mel Welles* (1924-2005), US actor seen in various genre films including the original 1960 *Little Shop of Horrors*, died on 19 August.

**Useful Advice.** 'In *Barbara: The Story of a UFO Investigator*, Barbara Bartholic and co-writer Peggy Feilding, address these questions and other universal mysteries by taking the reader down the path of Bartholic's amazing life journey... Best read with the lights on' [DB]

**PublishAmerica** (motto: 'Not Really A Vanity Press, You Bastards') is being sued by the *Encyclopedia Britannica* on counts ranging from trademark infringement to unfair business practices. From the statement of complaint: 'Defendants' use of the **PublishBritannica** mark is without Britannica's consent or permission.' Cease-and-desist letters reportedly had no effect, and hence the lawsuit. What larks! [ML]

**Editorial.** I've always wondered what a real ansible looks like. A recent sighting: 'She pressed the coordinates into the ansible, an iron box fifty centimeters long, ornately painted with a pattern of exploding stars. Typewriter keys protruded from one side, and her stained fingers played on them.' (Paul Park, *A Princess of Roumania*, 2005) [CM]

**SFWA's** grievance committee has publicly denounced Steve Austin of Austin Leather Works, USA. Given limited permission by Anne McCaffrey to sell Pern-themed leatherwork in convention dealers' rooms, he reportedly expanded this into a substantial Internet business with an unauthorized sideline in Pern artwork; continued his operation after permission was explicitly withdrawn; and even tried to sue Anne McCaffrey when she told him to stop. He seems unrepentant.

**Fanfundery.** *TAFF* has received \$100 from SCIFI as reward for the publication of Peter Weston's trip report in *With Stars In My Eyes*. • *The League of Fan Funds* published accounts to 28 July, showing £1,270 passed to Worthy Causes in 2005, plus £700-odd in hand: 'do you think the LFF should hold a reserve, and if so, does the amount sound right?'

**Outraged Letters.** *Simon R. Green* has a dream: 'Now it's back to working on my next magnum opus, *Exploding Talking Squids In Outer Space*.' • *Jonathan Vos Post* brags: 'I mysteriously predicted volcanoes on Io, well before Voyager found them, and before I was Mission Planning Engineer on Voyager 2 for the Uranus flyby.' Thus: 'First of all, I'd like to thank my teacher, the legendary Khan Joel Kroll, who taught me on the rugged Volcanoburg terrain of Io ...' ('Skiing the Methane Snows of Pluto,' *BSFA Focus* 1:1, Autumn 1979)

**Random Fandom.** *Chaz Boston Baden* lost his on-line fan photo gallery in a server failure, and is struggling to rebuild it. • *Bill Burns*, at the close of fan programming at Interaction, received a special award for Efanazines.com as Best Fannish Website ... and the same event saw *Catherine Crockett* honoured for Best Signed Boobs. I couldn't possibly comment. • *Paul Treadaway* suggests that we declare an extra London pub meeting next March to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the first in this long tradition—held at the White Horse in March 1946.

**The Dead Past.** *Ten Years Ago*: remember the Glasgow Worldcon? **C.o.A.** *John Bangsund*, 19/63 Dight St, Collingwood, Vic 3066, Australia (from 20 Aug). *Peter & Eileen Weston*, 53 Wyvern Rd, Sutton Coldfield, W. Midlands, B74 2PS (from 1 Oct). *Kip Williams & Cathy Doyle*, 19 Nelson St, West Springfield, MA 01089, USA.

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Earth Is The Alien Planet Dept.* 'Driving north toward Albany on the Taconic Parkway, Parker watched both dawn and a heavy cloud cover move in from the west.' (Richard Stark [Donald E. Westlake], *Backflash*, 1998) [TmCD] • *Colour Perception Dept.* 'Two incense sticks burned in a little brass holder in front of her, sending wisps of thin blue smoke upwards which were indistinguishable in colour from the rat's nest of gray hair ...' (Eugene Byrne, *ThiGMOO*, 1999) [CH] • *Gastric Beyond Belief Dept.* 'Norman felt his stomach tighten, in a different direction than it had at the sight of Dr. Mitchell.' (Jay Lake and Ruth Nestvold, 'The Rivers of Eden', 2005) [DB] • [CH] *Neat Tricks Dept.* 'The animal seemed to have no face until it twisted its head round. Then it opened two enormous lidless eyes.' (Paul Park, *A Princess of Roumania*, 2005) [TC]

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