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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: **Grant Canfield**. Available for SAE, Mephitoline or oil of scallatine.

The Welsh Holly Data

Ramsey Campbell was named by the International Horror Guild as this year's Living Legend—the IHG life achievement award.

Ellen Datlow's Hugo-winning *Sci Fiction*, which was reduced to a static archive at Scifi.com in late 2005, vanished altogether on 15 June. Craig Engler of Scifi.com says that *Sci Fiction* attracted few visitors and that keeping track of the rights to its stories was too much trouble.

Jonathan Lethem was asked whether he could 'take' Martin Amis: 'Do I get to choose weapons? Because we could go at it at snooker, and I would probably get my ass kicked. But if I got to pick, I would go with schoolyard basketball, one-on-one, in which case I could kick Martin Amis's ass up and down the block.' (Nicholas Clee, *Times*, 28 April) [TW]

Robert Rankin announced his and Rachel's wedding (invitation only) on 28 July in the Brentford area: 'The dress code is strictly Victorian, but this includes Victorian/gothic/fetish/fantasy. And I am assured that there will be at least one Jack the Ripper and the Elephant Man, so GO OVER THE TOP. Think about the group photos. Look fabulous!'

J.K. Rowling mania continues, and has even infected virus writers. The 'Hairy-A' worm spreads via tainted USB memory drives which tempt the unwary with a file called HarryPotter-TheDeathlyHallows.doc—a Word document containing only the phrase 'Harry Potter is dead'. [F]

Salman Rushdie was knighted in the Queen's Birthday honours. Some easily outraged pundits made noises of outrage: what a surprise.

Concours

5 Jul • **Arthur Machen: Master of Holy Terrors**, The Boardroom, University of Wales, Caerleon, Newport, Gwent. From 6:30pm, with Lionel Fanthorpe in the chair. £5 inc glass of wine. Linked to unveiling of local Machen sculpture on the 60th anniversary of his death.

7 Jul • **British Fantasy Society** Awards Showcase'. Ye Olde Cock Tavern, 22 Fleet St, London, EC4. 6.30pm onwards. All welcome.

19-22 Jul • **Sectus 2007** (Harry Potter), U of Westminster, Cavendish Campus, 115 New Cavendish St, London; but Thursday evening at Camden Centre, Judd St, from 5pm. *Advance booking now closed*. Day: £20 Thur or Fri, £25 Sat (10pm Fri to 5pm Sat), £15 Sun. Contact 251 Reddip Heath Rd, Sutton Coldfield, W Midlands, B75 7ES. Your editor's 'Hogwarts Proctology Class' is scheduled for 3pm on Friday.

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

25 Jul • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Star pub, West Halkin Mews, London, SW1. 6pm on; fans present from 5pm. With Anne Sudworth.

27 Jul • **Robert Rankin** exhibition opening and book launch on his birthday: The Museum, Gunnersbury Park, Popes Lane, Ealing, London W5. 6pm for 7pm, continuing 9pm-midnight at the Princess Royal Pub next to Brentford Football Ground.

3-5 Aug • **Discworld Jamboree**, Wincanton, Somerset. GoH Terry Pratchett. £40 reg; £30 students; under-15s free. Contact 41 High St, Wincanton, BA9 9JU. 01963 824686; fax 01963 824671.

3-5 Aug • **MeCon 10**, Queen's Elms Centre, 78 Malone Rd, Belfast. GoH Iain M. Banks. £18/€27 reg; student £14/€21. Payments to QUB SF & Fantasy Society. Contact 115 Malone Road, Belfast, BT9 6SP.

10-12 Aug • **Recombination/HarmUni III** (Unicon 21/RPG/filk), New Hall, Cambridge. £28 reg; under-18s half price. Contact: 1 Mays Way, Cambridge, CB4 1UB.

31 Aug - 2 Sep • **Wadfest** (Discworld), Trentfield Farm Camp Site Church Laneham, Retford, Notts, DN22 0NJ. Campers £15 (2 nights), visitors £5. Online booking only? See www.wadfest.co.uk.

21-23 Sep • **FantasyCon**, Britannia Hotel, Nottingham. Now £55 reg; students and British Fantasy Society members £45; day £25. Contact 3 Tamworth Close, Lower Earley, Reading, Berks, RG6 4EQ.

23-27 Oct • **Black Maria** 'ballet+film+electronic music' by Green Box Productions at the Lilian-Baylis Theatre, Sadler's Wells, Islington, London EC1R. Based on the novel by Diana Wynne Jones, who is 'supposed to be there after the matinee on the 24th to answer questions,

argue with the composer and sign books, and again in the evening. (I think it is all going swimmingly. That is to say, my agent and the Rod Hall Agency are currently in acerbic argument with Green Box about rights. Also the company claim that the book is out of print and HarperCollins say it isn't. And the choreographer wants me to obtain 20 copies for the cast whether the book exists or not. As I say, all go.)'

19-22 October • **Cult TV 2007**, Heythrop Park Hotel, Chipping Norton, Oxon. £89 reg, £44 child 10-15, under-10s free. Contact PO Box 1701, Wolverhampton, WV4 4WT.

Infinitely Improbable

Squidnight's Children. Margaret Atwood's favourite sf theme returns once again in *Umbrella Academy*, a comic scripted by rock singer Gerard Way: 'Basically, it starts off with a wrestler. And the wrestler, he knocks out this space squid. And when he does that—and it's completely a matter of coincidence—extraordinary children are born, on Earth, instantly.' (*Entertainment Weekly* interview, 20 June) [TMcD]

Award Shortlists. *Mythopoeic* (fiction only): ADULT Peter S. Beagle, *The Line Between*; Susanna Clarke, *The Ladies of Grace Adieu*; Keith Donohue, *The Stolen Child*; Patricia A. McKillip, *Solstice Wood*; Susan Palwick, *The Necessary Beggar*; Tim Powers, *Three Days to Never*. CHILDREN Catherine Fisher, *Corbenic*; Nina Kiriki Hoffman, *Spirits That Walk in Shadow*; Diana Wynne Jones, *The Pinhoe Egg*; Martine Leavitt, *Keturah and Lord Death*; Terry Pratchett, *Wintersmith*. • *International Horror Guild* (novel only): Keith Donohue, *The Stolen Child*; Will Elliott, *The Pilo Family Circus*; Brian Evenson, *The Open Curtain*; Stephen King, *Lisey's Story*; Conrad Williams, *The Unblemished*.

Skiffy Science Masterclass. 'As Breeders Test DNA, Dogs Become Guinea Pigs.' (*New York Times* headline, 12 June) [ML]

R.I.P. *Walter J. Daugherty* (1916-2007), US member of First Fandom who chaired the 1946 Worldcon and was Fan GoH at the 1968 one, died on 14 June; he was 90. [AIP] His phonograph recording of Denvention (Worldcon 1941) was a fannish first. • *Roger P. Elwood* (1943-2007), editor or co-editor of nearly 70 sf anthologies from 1964 to 1968, died on 2 February; he was 64. He was sf editor for Laser Books and other publishers, and wrote several religious fantasy novels 1988-1994. [RS] • *Reginald Hugh Hickling* (1920-2007), lawyer and academic who wrote the future dystopia *The Furious Evangelist* (1950), died on 11 February aged 86. [JE] • *Douglas Hill* (1935-2007), Canadian-born sf author, reviewer and editor long resident in the UK, died on 21 June after being run over by a bus in Palmers Green, London; he was 72. [MJE] Most of his sf novels were for children (he had just completed a new trilogy); anthologies included *Window on the Future* (1966), *The Devil His Due* (1967), and *The Shape of Sex to Come* (1978). Chris Priest writes: 'One of the few people of whom you could say, unequivocally, he was a nice man.' • *Sterling E. Lanier* (1928-2007), US author best known for *Hiero's Journey* (1974) and the stories collected in *The Peculiar Exploits of Brigadier Ffellowes* (1972) and its sequel, died on 28 June; he was 79. While editor at Chilton Books in the 1960s, Lanier successfully urged the publication of Frank Herbert's *Dune*. [SFWA] • *Pat O'Shea* (1931-2007, born Pat Shiels), author of *The Hounds of the Mórrígan* (1985)—a fine, funny children's fantasy saturated with Irish myth—and a few lesser works, died on 3 May. She was 76. • *Fred Saberhagen* (1930-2007), US author and editor famed for his 'Berсерker' killer-machine sequence, died on 29 June aged 77. His first story appeared in *Galaxy* in 1961; also of note are his 'Empire of the East' (science fantasy) and 'Swords' (fantasy) series. As an *Encyclopedia Britannica* editor (1967-73), he wrote the original *EB* sf entry. [JS] • *Steve Swires* (1951/2-2006), US media journalist specializing in sf and fantasy movies, died last October in New York, at age 55. He wrote for such magazines as *Starlog* and *Fangoria*; also British publications. [JB] • *Dave Wood* (1936-2007), popular UK fan who last issue reported a doctor's warning that he 'wouldn't see Christmas,' died suddenly on 5 June; he was 70. All sympathy to his wife Brenda. He will be much missed. Dave was an active fan in the 1950s and early 60s, when he co-

edited *Brenschluss*; he returned to fanzines in 1983 with *Xyster*, which won a 1984 Nova Award and continued into this century.

As Others See Us. From another ostensibly droll 'Brax's Dictionary' feature in *The Bookseller*: 'Seth (n). The Sith are evil, dark, Jedi lords intent on overthrowing the democratic order and imposing their black arts and tyranny onto the galaxy. The Seth, on the other hand, are an equally unwelcome social sub-group who live solely to read sci-fi spin-off novelizations. They're more than happy to sit in your shop and read a book from cover to cover, but curiously less willing to pay for the books they have rendered unsellable once they've broken the spine and got finger-grease all over them.' (*The Bookseller*, 18 May) [JC]

Outraged Letters. Gregory Benford on James Fleming, as quoted in A239: 'The *Wilson Quarterly* piece was yellow dog journalism at its finest.' From his letter to *TWQ*: 'James Fleming's fantasy about the NASA workshop we both attended is rife with errors. He also violates his pledge to not quote participants without their permission. When Fleming says of me, "He, like his fellow geoenigneers, was largely silent on the possible unintended consequences of his plan." I simply point to the Workshop Final Report, which documents much thought on just this. [...] Fleming routinely conflates early rainmaking and meteorology with trying to offset global warming by reflecting sunlight. His talk at the workshop similarly erred, and he was much criticized for this. [...] I found Fleming's irresponsible reporting deplorable.' • Arthur D. Hlavaty knows why Kurt Vonnegut called that nice Mr Geis a cock-sucker (see A239): 'My memory is less corroded than Dick Geis's. In 1974, when Philip José Farmer's *Venus on the Half-Shell* was published, as by "Kilgore Trout," Dick reviewed it on the assumption that it had been written by Vonnegut as a cruel mockery of sf. Having made inaccurate assumptions about Dick Geis's sexual habits, Vonnegut went on to deny Farmer permission to write any more Kilgore Trout books.' • Sam J. Lundwall brags: 'Just got your incredible intelligent & handsome rag, and must immediately and gleefully inform you that if John W. Campbell got an editorial record with 34 years in the saddle, I have recently broken it, for I became editor of *Jules Verne-Magasinet* in January 1972, and I am still at it. So, there!'

Thog's Harry Potter Masterclass. In the month of that seventh book, Thog respectfully presents the *Dept of Many-Armed Slytherins*: "There was a commotion outside and several large Slytherins entered, each gripping Ron, Ginny, Luna and—to Harry's bewilderment—Neville ..." (J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, 2003) [GS]

C.o.A. Chris Nelson, 63 Ligertwood St, Evatt, ACT 2617, Australia. Ulrika O'Brien, 418 Hazel Ave N, Kent, WA 98030, USA.

Locus Awards. SF novel: Vernor Vinge, *Rainbows End*. Fantasy: Ellen Kushner, *The Privilege of the Sword*. First: Naomi Novik, *Temeraire* trilogy. YA: Terry Pratchett, *Wintersmith*. Novella: Charles Stross, 'Missile Gap' (*One Million A.D.*). Novelette: Cory Doctorow, 'When Sysadmins Ruled the Earth' (*Baen's Universe* 8/06). Short: Neil Gaiman, 'How to Talk to Girls at Parties' (*Fragile Things*). Magazine: *F&SF*. Publisher: Tor. Anthology: Gardner Dozois, ed, *The Year's Best SF 23*. Collection: Neil Gaiman, *Fragile Things*. Editor: Ellen Datlow. Artist: John Picacio. Non-Fiction: Julie Phillips, *James Tiptree, Jr.: The Double Life of Alice B. Sheldon*. Art book: Cathy & Arnie Fenner, eds, *Spectrum 13*.

Random Fandom. Jonathan Cowie reports: 'DreamHost (the US web space provider) had a security breach of passwords. This resulted in our www.concatenation.org *Science Fact & Fiction Concatenation* site being hacked so that those hitting our main page and its indexes were re-directed to a Russian site which then attempted to download spy viruses ...' Happily, this was quickly fixed and lost pages were restored within a few days. • Richard E. Geis writes: 'Mobility update: I'm now in a wheelchair all day when not in bed as my spine continues to crumble. Wheelchair life is frustrating due to having to depend on others to keep the house clean and get the mail from the P.O. Box.... More updates will follow as events deteriorate.' • Bruce Gillespie received the A. Bertram Chandler Award for life achievement, described by him as 'the ultimate honour that can be received in the Australian science fiction community. [...] It's been a long journey, originally inspired by four great Chandler Award winners—John Bangsund, John Foyster, Lee Harding and George Turner—constantly threatened by rising postal charges and periods of unemployment, but constantly inspired by well wishers and contributors. Next goal up ahead -- the 40th anniversary issue of *SF Commentary* in 2009.' • Brian Stableford makes room, makes room: 'I'm trying to clear some space in the garage in order to displace more books from the house. At the BSFA meeting last night [27 June] I offered 40 years' worth of randomly-accumulated fanzines free to anyone who cared to collect them, but there wasn't a

flicker of interest. If you know of anyone who might want to save them from the recycling bin, tell them to get in touch.' Contact via *Ansible*.

Fanfundery. *TAFF* reminder: nominations for the eastbound race from North America to Orbital (Eastercon 2008) close on 16 July. See A238 for further details. One known candidate so far: Chris Garcia.

Group Gropes. *Beer & Blake's 7*: 21 July at The Knight's Templar, Unit 1 Temple Sq, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6DG. From 12.30/1pm.

Thog's Masterclass. 'The *Shadow Nose* Dept. 'My father could give me over to the comparative wholesomeness of American life, leaving himself free to sit in his darkened bedroom and drink whisky until his long sensitive nose floated hazily in front of his face ...' (Poppy Z. Brite, 'Calcutta, Lord of Nerves', 1992) [BA] • *Dept of Sentient Cabbage.* 'She walked on to the grocery store to see if there were any vegetables left from the day's farmer's market thinking furiously.' (Kim Stanley Robinson, *Sixty Days and Counting*, 2007) [BT] • *Freak Accident Dept.* 'Ten minutes later he was in a cab heading through the deserted streets for the Savoy. The cab was driving past Paddington Station when it hit him.' (Clive Cussler & Craig Dirko, *Sacred Stone*, 2004) [WS]

On Serious Literature

Ursula Le Guin sends a cry from the heart: "Michael Chabon has spent considerable energy trying to drag the decaying corpse of genre fiction out of the shallow grave where writers of serious literature abandoned it." Ruth Franklin (*Slate*, 8 May 2007) • Something woke her in the night. Was it steps she heard, coming up the stairs—somebody in wet training shoes, climbing the stairs very slowly ... but who? And why wet shoes? It hadn't rained. There, again, the heavy, soggy sound. But it hadn't rained for weeks, it was only sultry, the air close, with a cloying hint of mildew or rot, sweet rot, like very old finocchiona, or perhaps liverwurst gone green. There, again—the slow, squelching, sucking steps, and the foul smell was stronger. Something was climbing her stairs, coming closer to her door. As she heard the click of heel bones that had broken through rotting flesh, she knew what it was. But it was dead, dead! God damn that Chabon, dragging it out of the grave where she and the other serious writers had buried it to save serious literature from its polluting touch, the horror of its blank, pustular face, the lifeless, meaningless glare of its decaying eyes! What did the fool think he was doing? Had he paid no attention at all to the endless rituals of the serious writers and their serious critics—the formal expulsion ceremonies, the repeated anathemata, the stakes driven over and over through the heart, the vitriolic sneers, the endless, solemn dances on the grave? Did he not want to preserve the virginity of Yaddo? Had he not even understand the importance of the distinction between sci fi and counterfactual fiction? Could he not see that Cormac McCarthy—although everything in his book (except the wonderfully blatant use of an egregiously obscure vocabulary) was remarkably similar to a great many earlier works of science fiction about men crossing the country after a holocaust—could never under any circumstances be said to be a sci fi writer, because Cormac McCarthy was a serious writer and so by definition incapable of lowering himself to commit genre? Could it be that that Chabon, just because some mad fools gave him a Pulitzer, had forgotten the sacred value of the word mainstream? No, she would not look at the thing that had squelched its way into her bedroom and stood over her, reeking of rocket fuel and kryptonite, creaking like an old mansion on the moors in a wuthering wind, its brain rotting like a pear from within, dripping little grey cells through its ears. But its call on her attention was, somehow, imperative, and as it stretched out its hand to her she saw on one of the half-putrefied fingers a fiery golden ring. She moaned. How could they have buried it in such a shallow grave and then just walked away, abandoning it? "Dig it deeper, dig it deeper!" she had screamed, but they hadn't listened to her, and now where were they, all the other serious writers and critics, when she needed them? Where was her copy of *Ulysses*? All she had on her bedside table was a Philip Roth novel she had been using to prop up the reading lamp. She pulled the slender volume free and raised it up between her and the ghastly golem—but it was not enough. Not even Roth could save her. The monster laid its squamous hand on her, and the ring branded her like a burning coal. Genre breathed its corpse-breath in her face, and she was lost. She was defiled. She might as well be dead. She would never, ever get invited to write for *Granta* now.'

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