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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: **Bill Rotsler**. Available for SAE or maps of the Unknown Islands.

The Great Wash

J.G. Ballard enjoyed a rare mention in the *Popbitch* celeb-gossip email: 'In 1962 JG Ballard wrote *The Drowned World*, a fictional account of a flooded London, "a garbage filled swamp". This week London has been under flood alert, with the water full of with [*sic*] human sewage and bacteria. / Coincidentally, Ballard's own street in Shepperton is under threat [of evacuation] ...' [GW] Nothing came of this.

Gardner Dozois had his scheduled quintuple bypass operation on 6 July. A week later, following a serious setback, there was a second op to implant a defibrillator; he's since been making good progress. [L/EG]

Hugo Gernsback (1884-1967) was more of a prophet than we suspected. His recently published autobiography, *Hugo Gernsback: A Man Well Ahead of His Time*, anticipates sf developments ten years after his death: 'Today's eight-year old, with his black plastic *Darth Vader* *Starwars* style helmet and his *Light Saber* ...' Alas, it seems that editor/publisher Larry Steckler inserted that bit. [MS] The book, possibly ghosted by Sam Moskowitz, avoids all false modesty: 'Those who rashly brushed him aside merely as a cheap sensationalist or as an impractical dreamer with scientific stars in his eyes were really never able to follow him for lack of imagination. Following Gernsback is no job for a *clot on a clod*. One has to capture a mood to understand him else one is left floundering in the turbulent wake of his restless, speeding mind with only enough breath left to scream out insults.' Take that, Brian Aldiss!

Clive James strayed away from his topic of J.K. Rowling Envy: 'I still haven't forgiven CS Lewis for going on all those long walks with JRR Tolkien and failing to strangle him, thus to save us from hundreds of pages dripping with the wizardly wisdom of Gandalf and from the kind of movie in which Orlando Bloom defiantly flexes his delicate jaw at thousands of computer-generated orcs. / In fact it would have been even better if CS Lewis and JRR Tolkien could have strangled each other, so that we could also have been saved from the *Chronicles of Narnia*...' (BBC Radio 4, *A Point of View*, 29 July 2007) [JE]

Robert Ludlum (1927-2001) 'is solidly among the most prolific of dead authors,' says the *Publishers Lunch* newsletter, with 12 new books released since he died and a 13th due in September. Eric Van Lustbader has been bashing out new Jason Bourne adventures, and (according to *Publishers Lunch*): 'Now a "veteran science-fiction writer" is resuscitating another Ludlum character, Peter Chancellor ...' Who could this be?

Michael Moorcock had an unexpected plug in a *Daily Express* 'Richard and Judy' column about terrorism, the weather and similar sources of gloom: 'The summer of 2007 will not be remembered as a happy one. The brilliant Seventies sci-fi writer Michael Moorcock predicted all this: jihad would sweep the world, he wrote, and it would be the end of civilisation as we know it.' (7 July) [KF] Mr Moorcock is slightly bemused: 'Um, yes. I never predicted a jihad would sweep the world, though. In the 1970s or otherwise. Indeed, I thought I saw the future in quite a jolly light ... I wonder what it was like back then in the 70s. They probably meant I was IN my 70s.'

Michael Swanwick sends a useful lexicological insight: 'I learned that Gordon Van Gelder's rejection letters for *F&SF* are commonly called "alas notes." Because they almost always say something on the lines of, "You wrote a good story and I almost liked it well enough to buy. But, alas ..."' Another vital datum for the *OED* sf citations project.

Contrat

10-12 Aug • **Recombination/HarmUni III** (Unicon 21/RPG/filk), New Hall, Cambridge. *Advance booking closed*. £32 at door. Day: Fri £8, Sat £16, Sun £12. Children 11-17 half price, 5-10 quarter price.

11-12 Aug • **Caption** (small-press comics), East Oxford Community Centre, Princes St. 10am-late Sat, 11am-6pm Sun. £10 reg; £5 day.

22 Aug • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Star pub, West Halkin Mews, London, SW1. 6pm on; fans present from 5pm. With Steph Swainston.

30 Aug - 3 Sep • **Nippon 2007** (65th Worldcon), Yokohama, Japan. Current (and at-door?) rates £142/\$283/€208; £104/\$208/

€153 ages 13-19; £54/\$108/€80 7-12. Day £63/\$125/€92€ Thur or Fri; £83/\$168/€122 Sat or Sun; £42/\$83/€61 Mon; also child/youth discounts too tedious to list here. Contact (UK) 68 Crichton Avenue, York, YO30 6EE; (USA) PO Box 314, Annapolis Junction, MD 20701; (Europe) Koninginnegracht 75a, 2514AH Den Haag, Netherlands.

31 Aug - 2 Sep • **Festival of Fantastic Films**, Day's Hotel, Sackville St., Manchester. £70/\$140 reg; £30/\$60 day. Hotel may be fully booked. Contact 95 Meadowgate Rd, Salford, Manchester, M6 8EN.

31 Aug • **Sci-Fi Symphony II**, Symphony Hall, Birmingham. City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra plays numerous sf film/tv themes. 7:30pm. Tickets £8-£39. Box office 0121 780 3333; www.cbso.co.uk.

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.

14-16 Sep • **Oxonmoot** (Tolkien Soc), Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. Now £32 reg (members £28), closing 24 Aug; day rates may be available. Contact 7 Rievaulx Dr, Morton-on-Swale, Northallerton, DL7 9UE.

15-22 Sep • **Milford Writers' Conference**, Trigonos Centre, Snowdonia. Published authors only. Contact Liz Williams, Homeway House, 40 Westhay Rd, Meare, Glastonbury, Somerset, BA6 9TL.

21-23 Sep • **Eurocon 2007**, Valby Medborgerhus, Copenhagen, Denmark. *Advance booking closed on 1 August*; DKK 200 at the door on Friday, or DKK 100 per day. More information at www.eurocon2007.dk.

13-14 Oct • **Octocon** (Irish national con), Glenroyal Hotel, Maynooth, Ireland. GoH Alastair Reynolds. €30 reg; €15 student; €12 under 18; €10 supporting. Contact c/o Electric Dragon, 19a Main St, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, Ireland. Updates awaited at www.octocon.com.

29-30 Mar 08 • **P-Con V**, Central Hotel, Exchequer St, Dublin. GoH C.E. Murphy. €25/£15 reg (to rise in mid-October), €15 supporting. Contact 253 Sundrive Road, Crumlin, Dublin 12, Ireland. Sterling cheques to 'Dave Lally #2 a/c', 4 Richbourne Tce, London, SW8 1AX.

24-27 Jun 08 • **SF Research Association** conference, Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland. Guests include Karen Joy Fowler, David Mitchell and Zoran Zivcovic. €160/\$185/£110 reg; students €100/\$120/£70. Banquet €75. Contact 23 Ranelagh Road, London N17 6XY. Dollar cheques to Edward James, sterling cheques to Farah Mendlesohn, PayPal transfer to sfra2008@googlegmail.com.

20-22 Feb 09 • **Redemption 09** (multimedia sf)—new venue still being sought. £45 reg, rising to £50 on 4 Sep 07. Under-18s and supp: £15. NB: rates may rise further at any time owing to the venue change problem. Contact 26 Kings Meadow View, Wetherby, LS22 7FX.

Rumblings • **Nostramo SF Festival**, Newcastle upon Tyne, ?8-10 Feb 2008: no more info as yet. Contact ronan.dodds@gmail.com.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See SFWA. Bruno Maddox at the Nebula Awards event: '... this gathering of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America is palpably low on excitement. We're on the 38th floor of a Marriott hotel in Lower Manhattan, in a poky beige suite filled with the same cheap, gestural furniture you find in those fake rooms that get set fire to in fire-safety videos. And with the exception, obviously, of this correspondent, we're a fairly drab and subdued sort of bunch. The demographic is middle-aged to old. The median shirt type is sweat. And there are several grown men apparently untroubled by the fact that they're wearing backpacks to a social event, yet troubled to the point of madness and eczema by pretty much everything else. / Not that there's anything wrong with that. This is, after all, a gathering of fiction writers, and if fiction writers were good at going to parties, well, most of them wouldn't be fiction writers. Fiction is a job for people with Big Ideas, not a flair for small talk ...' The bottom line is 'that science fiction, the genre that lit the way for a nervous mankind as it crept through the shadows of the 20th century, has suddenly and entirely ceased to matter.' (*Discover*, 20 July 2007) [BS] And *Ansible* never noticed!

Awards. *Campbell Memorial*: Ben Bova, Titan. • *Cordwainer Smith Rediscovery*: Daniel F. Galouye. • *First Fandom Hall of Fame*: Algis

Budrys and (posthumous) Dan Daly. ● *Heinlein*: Anne McCaffrey and Elizabeth Moon. ● *Mythopoeic* (fantasy). Adult fiction: Patricia A. McKillip, *Solstice Wood*. Children's fiction: Catherine Fisher, *Corbent*. Scholarship/Inklings: Christina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond, *The J.R.R. Tolkien Companion and Guide*. Scholarship/Other: G. Ronald Murphy, SJ, *Gemstone of Paradise: The Holy Grail in Wolfram's Parzival*. ● *Rhysling* (verse). Long: Mike Allen, 'The Journey to Kailash' (*Strange Horizons*, 1/06). Short: Rich Ristow, 'The Graven Idol's Godheart' (*The Shantytown Anomaly* 2). ● *Sidewise* (alternate history). Long form: Charles Stross, *The Family Trade*, *The Hidden Family*, and *The Clan Corporate* ('Merchant Princes' series 1-3). Short form: Gardner Dozois, 'Counterfactual' (*F&SF* 6/06). ● *Sturgeon* (short story): Robert Charles Wilson, 'The Cartesian Theater' (*Futureshocks*).

R.I.P. *Ingmar Bergman* (1918-2007), legendary Swedish film director, died on 30 July; he was 89. The symbolic chess game with Death in *The Seventh Seal* (1957) may be the most famous and frequently homaged fantasy sequence in cinema. [GW] ● *Alice Borchardt* (1939-2007), US nurse and author of several historical fantasy novels—notably the werewolf sequence beginning with *The Silver Wolf* (1998), died on 24 July aged 67. She was Anne Rice's sister. ● *László Kovács* (1933-2007), Hungarian-born cinematographer for *Ghostbusters* and other genre films, died on 21 July; he was 74. [CH] His first and most memorable title was *The Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living and Became Mixed-Up Zombies!!?* (1964). ● *Charles Lane* (1905-2007), US character actor whose long career (1931-2006) included *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946) and many other genre films, died on 9 July aged 102. [SJD] ● *Frank Maher* (1929-2007), UK actor/stunt-man involved with *The Prisoner* and (as stunt coordinator) *Blake's 7*, died on 21 July; he was 78. [SR] ● *Peter L. Manly* (1945-2007), US fan, airman, astronomer and author of several stories in *Analog* etc (plus two self-published novels), died on 27 July. ● *Kerwin Mathews* (1926-2007), US actor who starred in *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* (1958), *The 3 Worlds of Gulliver* (1960) and *Jack the Giant Killer* (1962), died on 5 July. He was 81. [GW] ● *Art Stevens* (1915-2007), long-time Disney animator whose genre work included *Peter Pan* (1953), *101 Dalmatians* (1961) and *Bedknobs and Broomsticks* (1971), died on 22 May aged 92. ● *Peter Tuddenham* (1918-2007), UK actor who voiced Orac and Slave for *Blake's 7* and appeared three times in *Doctor Who*, died on 9 July; he was 88. [SR] ● *William Tuttle* (1912-2007), makeup artist who won a special Academy Award (before makeup became a standard Oscar category) for *7 Faces of Dr Lao* (1964), died on 27 June aged 95. Other genre work included *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1945), *The Time Machine* (1960) and *Young Frankenstein* (1974). [CH]

As Others See Some of Us. 'Autograph-hunters are easily maligned. When not frequenting sci-fi conventions, they are to be found lurking like discomfited pigeons at film premières or the opening nights of West End theatre productions, clutching pocketbooks bearing signatures of the famous. Their glasses are bottle-bottomed relics of the NHS. They reek of sweat and charity shops. Their anoraks are zipped up tight, come rain or sun.' (Patrick Marmion, *Spectator*, 28 July) [MM]

Small Press. Sarob Press (based in Wales) is closing down at the end of 2007: its proprietor Robert Morgan is 'giving up the rat-race and the daily 130 mile commute and moving abroad', to France.

Outraged Letters. *Charles Butler*: 'Hearing on last night's *Front Row* (BBC R4) that Booker-shortlisted author Sarah Hall had set her latest book, *The Carhullan Army*, in a dystopian future, I remarked ... "I wonder how long it will take for her to deny it's science fiction?" Forty-five seconds into the interview, Hall obliged: 'I suppose the idea with dystopia is that it's not something completely unrecognizable, so we're not falling into the realm of science fiction or anything like that.'" It is, rather, an everyday tale in which 'Britain—now entirely dependent on the US for food and energy—is run by an omnipresent dictatorship known simply as The Authority.' (Amazon) ● *David A. Hardy* is wary of political spin: 'I've just been watching Al Gore on TV kicking off Live Earth in the USA. All very stirring and worthy stuff, and I fully approve of the sentiments; so it's probably churlish of me to mention that that lovely Earth on the big screen behind him was spinning clockwise. What would that do to the climate?!' ● *Ursula Le Guin* notes that Jon Carroll reprinted her A240 piece (also on her website) in his *San Francisco Chronicle* column without, apparently, asking anyone's permission. ● *Lloyd Penney* gloats that David C. Onley, tv journalist who wrote the sf novel *Shuttle* (1981), is to be Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario, Canada.

British Fantasy Awards. This year's novel shortlist has more than the statutory five items, owing to multiple ties: Chaz Brenchley, *Bride of Dreams*; Mike Carey, *The Devil You Know*; Mark Chadbourn, *Jack of*

Ravens; M. John Harrison, *Nova Swing*; Tim Lebbon, *Dusk*; Scott Lynch, *The Lies of Locke Lamora*; Sarah Pinborough, *Breeding Ground*; Mark Samuels, *The Face of Twilight*; Conrad Williams, *The Unblemished*.

C.o.A. *Bridget & Simon Bradshaw*—from 10 September, for a year, while doing Masters degrees—39 (1F2) Viewforth, Edinburgh, EH10 4JE. *Rich Coad*, 2132 Berkeley Drive, Santa Rosa, CA 95401, USA. *Jim Young*, 4232 Irving Ave S, Minneapolis, MN 55419, USA.

There Can Be Only One. *Sunshine* director Danny Boyle on making sf films: 'They are really tough, they're very tough [...] I would recommend it to everybody. You should do one. But nobody does more than one—unless they're doing a *Star Wars* or something like that—no director goes back into space.' (ABC News Australia, 18 July 2007) [AJ] Send your counterexamples on a postcard, but not (please) to *Ansible*.

Fanfundery. *TAFF 2008*: the eastbound race from North America to Orbital (Eastercon 2008) is now on, with candidates Chris Barkley, Linda Deneroff, Chris Garcia and Christian McGuire. Voting deadline is 17 November. Ballot forms from taff.org.uk or the administrators, Bridget Bradshaw (see C.o.A. above) or Suzanne Tompkins, PO Box 25075, Seattle, WA 98165, USA. ● *The Corflu Award* grew from one-off funds to bring various fans to the Corflu conventions: Steve & Elaine Stiles are the recipients for 2008. Money comes from the 'Corflu Fifty' email list, whose members pledge \$25/£15 annually; outside donations also welcome. Contact Rich Coad (see C.o.A.), richcoad at comcast dot net; or Rob Jackson, Chinthay, Nightingale Ln, Hambrook, nr Chichester, PO18 8UH; jacksonshambrook@tiscali.co.uk.

Magazine Scene. *Nature Physics* seeks a topical 'Futures' story for its Christmas issue: contact Henry Gee, H.Gee at nature dot com. ● *Science Fiction Chronicle* and all other titles from Warren Lapine's DNA Publications appear to be dead, Jim. The www.dnapublications.com site has now been replaced by a zombie simulacrum, festering with ad links.

Random Fandom. *Dave Langford* was cheered to be described in a Swiss news magazine as 'uno dei massimi esperti internazionalia del fantastico' (*Ticino* 7, July 2007), even if the context was H*rry P*tter.... (Thanks to *Ansible* reader Giovanni Valerio for the plug.) ● *James Nicoll* found his most famous line misquoted: 'One of her friends at the Academy had a T-shirt which proclaimed that "Ransaran doesn't borrow from other languages. It follows other languages down dark alleys, knocks them on the head, and goes through their pockets for loose grammar."' (David Weber & Linda Evans, *Hell's Gate*, 2006) ● *Rog Peyton* announced his resignation as editor of *Brum Group News* in the July issue, number 430: '... my interest in SF, and reading, is perhaps at its lowest for 50 years.' William McCabe took over in August, though as 'acting editor' only. ● *Greg Pickersgill* is collecting donations for a Dave Wood memorial plaque which will go 'on Clevedon Pier, which was an important place to our man.' He reports good progress.

Court Circular. Harlan Ellison's 2006 defamation claim against Fantagraphics was settled in late June. Gary Groth of Fantagraphics, whose sins had included using the great man's name (with the subtitle 'Famous comics dilettante') on the jacket of a book that legitimately reprinted an old Ellison interview, explained tersely: 'The parties are not at liberty to discuss the terms of the resolution at this time.'

Hideous Gaffes. *Steve Swires* (1951-2006): my source for the *Ansible* 240 death notice was uncertain of this writer's birth year, 1951 or 1952. SFWA has since confirmed 1951.

Thog's Masterclass. *Literary Similes Dept.* 'His dust-iced skin zebraed by the sharp stripes of winter light which gushed apologetically—like hordes of white-froked debutantes flashing their foaming silk petticoats in eager curtsies—between the regimented slats of his hand-built shutters.' 'A fierce blush—like two clumsily upended measures of sweet cherry brandy—slowly stained the immaculate cotton tablecloth of her soft complexion.' (both Nicola Barker, *Behindings*, 2002) [MMW] ● *Colour Coding Dept.* '... his face went darker than usual. "Now they all think I'm yellow"' (Ben Bova, *Titan*, 2006) [AR] ● *Dept of High Fantasy Diction.* 'Finwald's dark eyes were steady and true, and he alone of the "nonfighters" was committed to the fight. In a way, he was "in with the big boys," "one of the lads." He made Bolldhe feel so lame.' (David Bilsborough, *The Wanderer's Tale*, 2007) ● *Senior Citizen Ailments Dept.* '... a ghastly old crone, withered with age, eaten away by malice, disease, and invertebrates, glowing red with fire.' (*Ibid.*) [BMS]

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