

# ansible



Ansible 242 September 2007

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: Joe Mayhew reprint. Available for SAE or the deadly Specium Ray.

**Nippon 2007.** The Japanese Worldcon didn't seem all that far away, thanks to extensive online coverage. A major presence at the Hugos was Ultraman, that iconic tv superhero of 1960s vintage, who not only defeated various rubber-clad monsters to begin the ceremony (and reappeared for the drama presentations) but is commemorated in the Hugo trophy itself. Gosh wow! • **Those Hugos:** Novel: Vernor Vinge, *Rainbows End*. Novella: Robert Reed, 'A Billion Eves' (Asimov's). Novelette: Ian McDonald, 'The Djinn's Wife' (Asimov's). Short: Tim Pratt, 'Impossible Dreams' (Asimov's). Related Book: Julie Phillips, *James Tiptree, Jr.: The Double Life of Alice B. Sheldon*. Dramatic (Long): Pan's *Labyrinth*. Dramatic (Short): *Doctor Who*, 'The Girl in the Fireplace'. Pro Editor (Long): Patrick Nielsen Hayden. Pro Editor (Short): Gordon Van Gelder. Pro Artist: Donato Giancola. Semiprozine: *Locus*. Fanzine: *Science-Fiction Five-Yearly*. Fan Writer: Dave Langford (though by only one vote; sorry, Mr Scalzi). Fan Artist: Frank Wu. Campbell Award (not etc.): Naomi Novik. • **2009 Worldcon Site Selection.** Montréal defeated Kansas City by a clear majority, 507 votes to 341. More below. • **Business Meeting.** The rule preventing artists from being nominated in both pro and fan Hugo categories was repealed; ratification is needed at next year's Worldcon. A proposal for a permanent website Hugo was referred to some WSFS committee for endless deliberations.

## The Gernsback Continuum

**Pat Barker's** latest novel *Life Class* contains a prophetic sf moment when, in a scene set in 1914/15, her protagonist muses: 'There's something machine-like about a lot of the professional nurses here. Even Sister Byrd, whom he admires, he looks at her sometimes and sees a robot.' A word which was to be coined by Karel Čapek in 1921.... [MA]

**Arthur C. Clarke** gets short shrift in *Crunch Time: How Everyday Life is Killing the Future* (2007) by Mike Hanley and Adrian Monck. 'Here in spades is the incurable optimism of the science fiction writer,' they write, and then quote 'Isaac Asimov's Three Laws of Technology', including 'Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.' Our reporter John Bark wonders whether Professor Monck (Head of the Faculty of Journalism and Publishing at City University, London) teaches his students that 'Any sufficiently famous Science Fiction writer is indistinguishable from any other.'

**Dennis Guiot**, French editor whose publisher overrode his acceptance of a YA novel attacking paedophilia in the Church (see A237), has won his fight: Nathalie Le Gendre's *Les Orphelins de Naja* will appear next year with minimal alterations. But 'one doesn't stay unscathed after a conflict of several months, which brought to light irreconcilable differences about publishing': Guiot has resigned from Editions Mango and will launch a new French YA sf line elsewhere in 2008. [J-DB]

**Diana Wynne Jones** enjoys the perks of fame: 'Very much As Others See Us, I have just been interviewed about Fantasy (for a BBC programme on same) in a small damp cave in Cheddar. The rock formations were spectacular: I was very much conscious that behind me—and behind the seven-branched candelabra with which the producer had strewn the available space—there was a weird stalagmite that looked like a gnomelike being in a three-cornered hat, perched with folded arms on a pillar. Also equally conscious of five damp individuals crammed into a small coign in front of me with lots of large equipment and snakes of cables. I kept thinking that none of this had really much to do with fantasy as we know it and it was hard to talk sense. They told me proudly that they had done this to Philip Pullman, Terry Pratchett and others in different settings, and I thought, "If they did this to me, I shudder to think where they put Terry." They said the programme comes on some time this autumn on BBC 4. I shall watch eagerly to see what they did to the rest of us.' (12 August)

**Jeanette Winterson's** *The Stone Gods* is not sf, because: 'I hate science fiction. But good writers about science, such as Jim Grace and Margaret Atwood, are great. They take on science because it's crucial to our world, and they use language to give energy to ideas. Others just borrow from science and it ends up like the emperor's new clothes, with

no understanding of the material. But you shouldn't fake it because science is too important, it's the basis for our lives. I expect a lot more science in fiction because science is so rich.' (*New Scientist*, 25 August) What is so particularly non-sciencefictional about this science novel? From *The Bookseller*: 'Billie Crusoe flees an authoritarian society in the company of a highly evolved robot of the species Robo sapiens, to join the perilous voyage to a new Blue Planet, a pristine place of apparently infinite possibilities. [...] Another part of the book is set in Wreck City, a no-go zone peopled by outcasts and casualties post 3-War, a conflict which has ravaged the world.' Winterson explains: 'This part of the book is far from fantasy [...] Everything in that part of the book has been written about scientifically already, it's very near.' [MKS via CB] Her next book will be equally unsciencefictional: 'It's called *Robot Love* and it's for kids. A girl builds a multi-gendered robot, which then kills her parents because it sees them mistreat her, so they both go on the run. I'm fascinated by artificial intelligence and where it will lead. These robots couldn't build anything as bad as us—so why would they keep us?' [YH] What sf author could have imagined such novel concepts?

## Conceptious

13 Sep • **Brian Aldiss** talks to John Clute at Waterstone's, Gower St, London. 6:30pm-8pm. Tickets are free: call 0207 636 1577 to book.

14-16 Sep • **Oxonmoot** (Tolkien Soc), Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. Advance registration closed in August. Please ask by email for availability of day membership: bookings at [tolkiensociety dot org](mailto:tolkiensociety dot org).

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 in August; DKK 200 at the door on Friday, or DKK 100 per day. More information at [www.eurocon2007.dk](http://www.eurocon2007.dk).

21-23 Sep • **FantasyCon 2007**, Britannia Hotel, Nottingham. £55 reg; British Fantasy Society members and students £45; day £25. Contact 3 Tamworth Close, Lower Earley, Reading, Berks, RG6 4EQ.

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

6 Oct • **Satellite 1** (50th anniversary of first artificial satellite), Campanile Hotel, Tunnel St, Glasgow. £20 reg, £5 supp or child (5-15), £1 infant (0-4). Contact Flat 3/2, 132 W Princes St, Glasgow, G4 9DB.

29-30 Mar 08 • **P-Con V**, Central Hotel, Dublin. €25/£15 reg (to rise in mid-October), €15 supporting. Address correction for sterling cheques: 'Dave Lally #2 a/c', 64 Richbourne Tce, London, SW8 1AX.

20-22 Jun 08 • **SF Foundation Masterclass**, University College, Dublin. £190 reg; single rooms €55/night. Applicants to be approved by committee. Ask Farah Mendlesohn, farah dot sf at gmail dot com.

20-22 Feb 09 • **Redemption 09** (multimedia sf)—Britannia Hotel, Fairfax St, Coventry, CV1 5RP. Now £50 reg. Under-18s and supp: £15. Contact 26 Kings Meadow View, Wetherby, LS22 7FX.

6-10 Aug 09 • **Anticipation** (67th Worldcon), Palais des congrès de Montréal, Montréal, Canada. GoH Neil Gaiman, Elisabeth Vonarburg, Taral Wayne, David Hartwell, Tom Doherty. Contact C.P. 105, Succursale NDG, Montréal, Québec, Canada, H4A 3P4. Further details awaited.

## Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See Us.** More lordly condescension: 'Phasers or lightsabers? Solo or Sulu? If you couldn't care less, or don't know what on earth we're on about, you're probably not one of that pale, clammy species: the sci-fi fan. If you are, you may be interested that all this week on Sky Movies ... the eternal question will be debated: which is better, *Star Wars* or *Star Trek*? [...] But if you think a Tie Fighter is some kind of martial artist specialising in neckwear combat, then it's probably not for you. For the rest of us, it's just another reason not to go out for some fresh air.' (Adam Smith, *Radio Times*, August) [JY]

**More Awards.** *World Fantasy Award for Life Achievement*: Betty Ballantine and Diana Wynne Jones. • *James Tait Black Memorial Prize*

for fiction: Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*. • Tähtifantasia for best fantasy translation into Finnish: Jeff VanderMeer, *Pyhimysten ja mielipuolten kaupunki* (*City of Saints and Madmen*)—first year of presentation. • *Prometheus*: Charles Stross, *Glasshouse*. Hall of Fame: Sinclair Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*; Vernor Vinge, 'True Names'. Special: *V for Vendetta* (film). • *Seiun* (Japanese) for translated book: Phillip Reeve, *Mortal Engines* (trans Rei Anno). • *Sense of Gender* ('the Japanese Tiptree') for translated book: Eileen Gunn, *Stable Strategies and Others*.

**R.I.P.** *Clive Exton* (1930-2007), UK scriptwriter who adapted sf for *Out of This World* ('The Cold Equations') and *Out of the Unknown*, and scripted an episode of *Doomwatch*, died on 16 August; he was 77. [JY] • *John Gardner* (1926-2007), UK author of many thrillers—some of them sf—died on 3 August; he was 80. [IC] His best-known spy creation Boysie Oakes goes into space in *Founder Member* (1969). Gardner produced 14 official James Bond continuations and two Bond film novelizations, including the sf *GoldenEye* (1995); he also wrote Holmesian novels centred on Professor Moriarty. • *Joe L. Hensley* (1926-2007), US lawyer, judge and sf/crime author who was active in fandom from the 1930s, died on 27 August. He was 81. His first published sf was in *Planet Stories*, 1953; his sf novel was *The Black Roads* (1976). [TM] • *Peter Graham Scott* (1923-2007), UK producer whose tv work included *Danger Man*, *The Prisoner* and *The Avengers*, died on 26 August aged 83. [KF] • *Aida Young* (1920-2007), UK producer/director who worked on the original *The Quatermass Xperiment* (1955) and produced three Christopher Lee *Dracula* films, died on 12 August. [GW]

**Thog's Science Masterclass.** 'Metals are slow-moving liquids, but you have to heat them thousands of degrees before they change states.' • 'Though more than two miles above sea level, the surrounding land was littered with fossilised sea-shells suggesting that at one time the altiplano had been forced upwards from a seabed. During this geologic change, great quantities of ocean water could have been suspended throughout the Andean ranges and become landlocked. Though hundreds of miles from the ocean, many of the animals dwelling in the lake were oceanic rather than freshwater types.' • *Why the high Andes are subject to periodic flooding*: 'Twice every season the tidal pull of the moon joins the constant gravitational pull of the sun, resulting in an especially high tide. That tide was now attempting to bury them in a liquid grave. The effects of a strong spring tide would raise the level of the water table.' (all Walt Becker, *Link*, 1998) [AK]

**SFWA vs Scribd.com.** As briefly as I can: Scribd is a document-sharing website (like Flickr for photos) whose users don't all respect copyright. Noting illicit posts of work by Isaac Asimov and Robert Silverberg, SFWA VP Andrew Burt asked Scribd to remove many texts, later claiming that—despite not meeting the legal requirements—this was a formal takedown notice under the US Digital Millennium Copyright Act. But the Burt List of offending material was based on a too-simplistic search for keywords like 'Asimov': resulting Scribd deletions included a recommended reading list, legitimate archives of an on-line magazine, public domain text freely available from Project Gutenberg, and work by authors whom SFWA has no right to represent in copyright matters. Cory Doctorow's angry reaction (*boingboing*, 30 August) to the removal of his Creative-Commons-licensed *Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom* caused—to understate hugely—some comment online, almost drowning out news of the Japanese Worldcon. On 3 September, SFWA announced that the activities of its ePiracy committee were suspended and the committee disbanded; a considerable rethink is promised. Meanwhile the Scribd.com people can expect interesting times, since this affair gave publicity to their naughty users' upload of work by such authors as Jerry Pournelle and Harlan Ellison.... (Yes, I searched for my own name and found portions of *The Necronomicon* [1978] by George Hay, myself, Robert Turner and Colin Wilson. Watch this space.)

**As Others See Our Academics.** A traditional Taxpayers' Alliance grumble about UK "'non-degrees" of little or no academic merit' listed 'Science: fiction and culture, at the University of Glamorgan' in its top five alleged wastes of money. (BBC News, 21 August) [JO] Perhaps this course will be hotly defended by science novelist Jeanette Winterson.

**Outraged Letters.** *Simon R. Green* tried to make my flesh creep: 'Did you get the warning e-mail from SFWA, about the dangers of being a fan in Japan, and attending the Worldcon? Apparently you have to carry your passport with you at all times, because the Japanese police can demand to see it, and if you haven't got it, can cart you off to chokey until someone comes to reclaim you. There followed many other dire warnings, including that the trains can break down and leave you stranded for days. So unlike our own dear British Rail.' • *Steve Green* on Sarah Hall's non-sciencefictional *The Carhullan Army* (see A241): 'To

be fair to Sarah Hall, she immediately stated her preference for the label "speculative fiction", although the concept of an entire Government resigning because it failed the voters strikes me as outright fantasy.' • *Martin Hoare* sent politically incorrect email from Japan: 'Rangfold san wins fanliter Hugo by one vote.' Many thanks as always for the famous Hoare Hugo Pickup Service ... and to all who sent congratulations, notably the magnanimous John Scalzi. • *Roger Robinson* saw *The Weakest Link* on 14 August: '*Ms Red-Haired Welsh Hater*: "The writer of the graphic novels *Watchmen* and *V for Vendetta* is Alan who?" *Contestant*: "Er ... Ginsberg." Now THERE is a graphic novel I'd read!' • *Gordon Van Gelder* (and other correspondents) corrected Michael Swanwick's 'alas notes' terminology: 'Actually, the term I've heard applied to my rejection letters is "alas-o-grams". At the 2001 Worldcon I said that I'd been toying with the idea of simply printing up little cards that read "Alas" and the room broke out in cheers and laughter.' I like to imagine that Gordon's Hugo acceptor said that he'd really have loved to be at Nippon 2007 in person, but alas ...

**C.o.A.** *Sandra Bond & Simon Amos*, 40 Cleveland Park Ave, London E17 7BS. *Dave Hicks & Cat Coast*, 23 Dorset Ave, Glenfield, Leicester, LE3 8BD. *Duncan MacGregor*, 207 Campkin Rd, Cambridge, CB4 2LE. *Jim Young's* Minneapolis move is delayed: his house sale fell through.

**Small Press.** Marking its anniversary in August, Infinityplus.co.uk was updated with masses of new material. But the man in charge writes: 'Keith Brooke has decided that ten years is enough. The tenth anniversary update will be the site's last; after that, the site will remain publicly available as a major genre fiction archive, but will no longer be updated. This decision has partly been forced due to ill health, but it is partly simply that Keith hopes to get his life back after all this time!'

**Random Fandom.** *Janet Carrington & Jim Caughran* married themselves in a Quaker ceremony on 28 July. • *Pat McMurray & Julie Rigby* were married on 18 August and honeymooned in Japan. 'We are going to call ourselves Mr and Mrs Rigby-McMurray.' • *Harry Turner* writes (via Sue Jones): 'My stroke has left my right hand with three uncooperative fingers and useless for drawing any more! And my memory has suffered about the past!! (Though I'm catching up with some things.)' • *Ken Slater's* misadventure at the recent Warsaw convention was less alarming than initially reported: he fell, spent the night on a tiled floor through inability to get up, and returned home early, but is communicating again: 'I am shaken but not stirred—perturbed, perhaps. [...] Put the black armbands back in the mothproof boxes.' • *Jean Weber* had a hip replacement on 27 August. [ASFB]

**Doctor Who** is taking a year off in 2009: the fourth current series is to be in 2008, and the fifth not until 2010. (BBC News, 3 Sep)

**Unattributable.** Notes from London: 'Blackwells did a Bill Gibson event on 28 August at which he read in his usual lethargic manner, and was "interviewed" in equally laid back fashion by Prof John Sutherland. Questions from the "cool" rather than SF audience—a full house of perhaps 400 souls at £7 a head—were by and large mundane and/or stupid ... Blackwells had *Spook Country*, of course, and a range of pb titles which inexplicably excluded *Neuromancer*, *Count Zero* and *Mona Lisa Overtime* ... presumably because these were not available through Penguin/Viking. I queried the Blackwells folk, who said that nearly all the punters had asked about copies of *Neuromancer*, and that they did not really know why they did not have it available... Is this undue restraint of trade by Penguin/Viking or what??' More likely a cock-up.

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Dept of Dry Eyes.* 'She was a poor swimmer—and if Jack hadn't already known that, her eyes would have told him.' (Walt Becker, *Link*, 1998) [AK] • *High-Energy Lepidoptera Dept.* 'Jack wondered if she felt the same thing he did—butterflies emerging from cocoons within deep reaches of his stomach. The tactile connection sparked kinetic energy that flowed between them.' (*Ibid*) • *Dept of Air Physics.* 'The energy field vanished—as quickly as it came—replaced by a whoosh as a vacuum of air escaped from beneath the two sections, now divided. The air vaporised in the colder temperatures, creating wisps of steam that curled towards the sky before dissipating in the atmosphere.' (*Ibid*) • *Simile Dept.* 'Steam rose from the five wet bodies in the room, as if each person were percolating.' (*Ibid*) • *Eyeballs in the Sky:* 'She watched as his eyes bounced around in his head, in perfect unison with the butt of the little courtesan in front of them.' (*Ibid*)

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