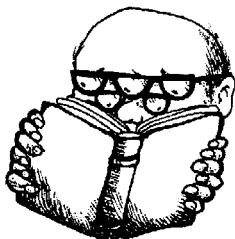


Ansible



Ansible 245 December 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: **Sue Mason**. Available for SAE or the epitome of chimneytude.

Land of the Buried Sun

Mike Ashley on that supposed autobiography *Hugo Gernsback: A Man Well Ahead of His Time*, recently published by Larry Steckler (see A241): 'Steckler promotes the book as a long-lost autobiography by Gernsback, but the more I've looked into it the more certain I am that it is no such thing. The book's actually a fairly complicated hotchpotch of pieces about Gernsback by various hands, including Robert Lowndes, none of it duly credited; such stuff that is by Gernsback comprises various articles by him reprinted from old magazines, and so nothing new. I go into a lot of detail about all of this, along with how my suspicions were aroused and how I discovered what it really was, in an extended review of the book which will appear in the next issue of *Foundation*. As a consequence, Steckler has agreed to repack the book and hopefully correct the errors that he had perpetuated in the text.'

Michael Chabon was interviewed by Julie Phillips, biographer of James Tiptoe Jr, who asked: 'Do you think you will ever really break into science fiction? Or are you doomed to keep coming back to literature?' MC: 'As for science fiction, it is literature, as you very well know, dear lady. The gates between the kingdoms are infinitely wide and always open!' (*Washington Post Book World*, 4 November) [KM]

Harlan Ellison is hopping mad, again, having heard the rumours that J.J. Abrams's new *Star Trek* film (please imagine a spoiler warning here) will involve time travel arranged by the Guardian of Forever, as first introduced in HE's 'The City on the Edge of Forever'. Ellison expostulates: '... "City" and all its elements EXCEPT specific *Star Trek* characters, belong to Harlan Ellison—author of that much-lauded episode—by terms of the Separation of Rights clause of the Writers Guild's Minimum Basic Agreement (MBA), and if Mr. Abrams—with whom I'm currently on strike—or anyone else, at Paramount or elsewhere, thinks they're going to use MY creations—whether the City, the Guardians, Sister Edith Keeler, or any other elements CREATED BY HARLAN ELLISON ... they had damned well better lose the unilateral arrogance, get in touch with me, or my agent, Marty Shapiro, and be prepared to pay for the privilege of mining the lode I own.' [12 November] Cinemablend.com notes that the Guardian has been repeatedly used in *ST* novels and comics, and that Paramount surely wouldn't allow its inclusion if legal trouble was likely to ensue. Also, of course, the rumour may be false.

Rose Fox is not afraid to brag: 'as of 19 November, I am the Science Fiction/Fantasy/Horror reviews editor at *Publishers Weekly*. Peter Cannon, my predecessor, remains at *PW* and is handling mystery and thriller reviews.... I am pleased as the proverbial punch.'

Terry Pratchett is alive and well: 'One of the most astonishing things about going along to the Washington Literary Festival last month was meeting the children's writer Jacqueline Wilson, an old friend, in the hotel lift when we were all shiny and scrubbed up for the big dinner in the Library of Congress. Once at the do in that lovely building, we of course gravitated to the bar, though come to think of it the bar seemed to gravitate toward me, and were shortly surprised to hear a voice telling us to *put down our glasses* and head off to the theatre in the same building. Put down your glasses.... So unlike the homelife of our own dear publishing industry.' (8 November)

Conspue

8 Dec • **British Fantasy Society** open night, Devereux pub, Essex St, off Strand, London. 6.30pm onwards. All welcome.

20 Dec • **London Open Xmas Meeting**, usual venue: the Melton Mowbray, 18 Holborn, EC1N 2LE. Cellar bar booked all evening. [RN]

23 Feb 08 • **Picocon 24**, Imperial College Union, London. 10am-7pm/8pm. GoH Paul Cornell, Cory Doctorow, Liz Williams. £8 reg, £6 concessions, £4 ICFS members. Contact ICFS, Beit Quad, Prince Consort Road, London, SW7 2BB.

1-2 Mar 08 • **Microcon**, Exeter University. More TBA. Contact SF Soc, Students' Guild, Devonshire House, Stocker Rd, Exeter, EX4 4PZ.

21-24 Mar 08 • **Orbital** (Eastercon), Radisson Edwardian Hotel,

Heathrow, London. £55 reg; £20 supp or junior (12-17), £5 child (5-11), £1 infant. Contact 8 Windmill Close, Epsom, Surrey, KT17 3AL. Credit card bookings: www.orbital2008.org.

20-22 Jun 08 • **SF Foundation Masterclass**, announced for University College, Dublin, but moved owing to SFRA event changes (below): Kitap Evi Café & Bookshop, Tottenham High St (Seven Sisters tube); 'the James/Mendlesohn collection of critical works will be available, and will be supplemented by a visit to the famous Clute Cellar.' 9am-7pm daily. £170 reg. Applications by 31 January, to be approved by committee. Contact Farah Mendlesohn: farah dot sf at gmail dot com or 23 Ranelagh Road, London, N17 6XY.

24-27 Jun 08 • **SF Research Association** conference; announced for Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland. Owing to the disastrous dollar exchange rate, this event is being relocated to the USA—new venue TBA. Contact Adam Frisch: adam dot frisch at briarcliff dot edu.

26-29 Jun 08 • **ConRunner 2008** (conrunning), Britannia Hotel, Wolverhampton. £30 reg rising to £35 after 31 Dec. £50 at door. Day rate £25. Contact 56 Jackmans Place, Letchworth G.C., Herts, SG6 1RH.

6-10 Aug 08 • **Denvention 3** (66th Worldcon), Denver, CO, USA. \$175 reg, \$45 child, \$40 supporting; site selection voters \$135 (child/supp free). *New rates from 1 Jan to 10 Jul*: \$200 reg, \$50 child or supp. Contact Denvention, PO Box 1349, Denver, CO 80201, USA.

29-30 Aug 08 • **Mecon 11/Unicon 22**, Queen's University Belfast Student's Union. GoH TBA. £15 reg; £10 concessions; £5 supp. Cheques to 'QUB Sci-Fi Society'. Contact 115 Malone Road, Belfast, BT9 6SP.

5-7 Sep 08 • **ZombieCon** (in the vein of *Aliens Stole My Handbag*, *Damn Fine Con* and *They Came And Shaved Us*), Bentley, Walsall. Guests TBA. £40 reg until the end of Eastercon; then £45 until 31 August; £50 at the door (places not guaranteed; numbers are limited). Parent/guardian consent required for under-18s. Contact 54 Bridge Rd, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB8 2QP; **ZombieConUK** at yahoo dot com.

Sep/Oct 08 • **Fantasycon 2008**, date/venue TBA: 'mid September to mid October'. £25 reg (apparently for anyone) to 31 Dec; then £45 (BFS members £40) to 31 Jun 08; then £55 (£50). Supp or day rate £25. Contact 3 Tamworth Close, Lower Earley, Reading, RG6 4EQ.

11-12 Oct 08 • **NewCon 4**, The Fishmarket, Bradshaw Street, Northampton, NN1 2HL. GoH Iain M. Banks, Ken MacLeod, Storm Constantine, Paul Cornell. £30 reg (BSFA members £25), rising to £40 (£35) after Easter. £10 supporting; £20 per day. Contact 16 Albany Road, Northampton, NN1 5LZ.

18-19 Oct 08 • **Octocon**, Ireland. Further details TBA.

7-9 Nov 08 • **Armadacon 20**, Novotel, Plymouth. Details TBA.

14-16 Nov 08 • **Novacon 38**, Quality Hotel, Bentley, Walsall. GoH Ian R. MacLeod. £36 reg, until Eastercon 2008. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

Rumblings • **BSFA** London Meeting cancelled as usual in December.

Infinitely Improbable

The Way We Live Now. *Radio Clyde Breakfast Show* presenter: 'What famous detective features in the Agatha Christie novel *The Hound of the Baskervilles*?' Contestant: 'Is it Harry Potter?' (*Private Eye*, 23 Nov)

More SFWA Uproar. 'SFWA attempts to commit public suicide' is Charles Stross's caption to a fiery weblog post about the return of the e-piracy committee (suspended after a perceived PR disaster; see A242) under a new name. Despite the urgings of an exploratory committee on which Charlie served, this 'copyright committee' is headed by its controversial former chair, Andrew Burt. Much on-line gibbering ensued.

Awards. *World Fantasy*. Novel: Gene Wolfe, *Soldier of Sidon*. Novella: Jeffrey Ford, 'Botch Town'. Short: M. Rickert, 'Journey into the Kingdom'. Anthology: Ellen Datlow & Terri Windling, ed., *Salon Fantastique*. Collection: M. Rickert, *Map of Dreams*. Artist: Shaun Tan. Special/Professional: Ellen Asher. Special/Non-Professional: Gary K. Wolfe. • *International Horror Guild*. Novel: Conrad Williams, *The Unblemished*. Long Fiction: Norman Partridge 'Dark Harvest'. Mid-Length: Paul Finch, 'The Old North Road'. Short: Stephen Gallagher, 'The Box'.

Collection (tie): Terry Dowling, *Basic Black*; Glen Hirshberg, *American Morons*. Anthology: William Sheehan & Bill Schafer, ed., *Lords of the Razor*. Periodical: *Subterranean Non-Fiction*: S.T. Joshi, ed., *Icons of Horror and the Supernatural*. Illustrated Narrative: Lewis Trondheim, *A.L.I.E.E.N.* Art (tie): Aeron Alfrey, *Exhibits from the Imaginary Museum*; John Picacio, *Cover Story: The Art of John Picacio*.

Eco-Awareness Masterclass. 'Several million tons of the Martian topsoil had been ferried in as ballast some fifty years earlier, when it was feared that the continuous firing of planetary probes and space vehicles, and the transportation of bulk stores and equipment to Mars, would fractionally lower the gravitational mass of the Earth and bring it into a tighter orbit around the Sun. Although the distance involved would be little more than a few millimetres, and barely raise the temperature of the atmosphere, its cumulative effects over an extended period might have resulted in a loss into space of the tenuous layers of the outer atmosphere, and of the radiological veil which alone made the biosphere habitable.' (J.G. Ballard, 'The Cage of Sand,' 1962) [RM]

R.I.P. Sidney Coleman (1937-2007), leading US theoretical physicist once active in sf fandom, died on 18 November aged 70. He co-founded the specialist press Advent: Publishers in the mid-1950s and reviewed books for *F&SF* in the 1970s. Gregory Benford writes: 'Sid was so much—physicist, raconteur, world traveler—and he gave much to science fiction. His teenage toils for Advent: Publishers supported a scrupulous, ambitious role for fans in holding the field to its standards.' ● **Peter Haining** (1940-2007), UK author and editor best known for some 150 anthologies of supernatural, horror, fantasy, sf and crime, died unexpectedly on 19 November. He was 67. [MA] He also published many single-author collections and scores of nonfiction titles (e.g. several volumes about *Doctor Who*), and edited anthologies for Peter Cushing and Alfred Hitchcock. His family announced that he died 'doing what he loved—playing football and wearing his Arsenal shirt.' ● **Colin Kapp** (1929-2007), UK author and electronics worker fondly remembered for the quirky puzzle-stories collected as *The Unorthodox Engineers* (1979), died on 3 August. His sf career began in 1958 in *New Worlds*, which serialized his first novel *The Dark Mind* (1964; US title *Transfinite Man*); further novels included *The Patterns of Chaos* (1972) and *The Wizard of Anharitte* (1973). Kapp was professional GoH at the 1980 UK Eastercon, where he famously delivered his speech in a spacesuit. ● **Verity Lambert** (1935-2007), UK tv/film producer who debuted with the first series of *Doctor Who* (from 1963), died on 22 November; she was 71. Other genre work included *Adam Adamant Lives* (1966), *Quatermass* (1979), *Morons from Outer Space* (1985) and a 1996 return to *Doctor Who*. She received the OBE in 2002. ● **Ira Levin** (1929-2007), US novelist whose best known works of horror and sf—*Rosemary's Baby* (1967), *The Stepford Wives* (1972) and *The Boys from Brazil* (1976)—were all filmed, died on 12 November at the age of 78. A further sf novel is his dystopian *This Perfect Day* (1970). ● **Norman Mailer** (1923-2007), celebrated US novelist who twice won the Pulitzer prize, died on 10 November; he was 84. Much of his later work has various fantastic elements, most strikingly in the ancient-Egyptian posthumous fantasy *Ancient Evenings* (1983). ● **Jerzy Peterkiewicz** (1916-2007), Polish-born novelist, poet and translator who wrote the afterlife fantasy *The Quick and the Dead* (1961) and the sf *Inner Circle* (1966), died on 26 October aged 91. [DP]

As Others Judge Us. The sinister evidence against a US teenager convicted of plotting a school massacre included not only printed images of guns 'from the Internet' but what police described as a 'devil worshipping book titled *Necronomicon*.' (*Boston Globe*, 13 Nov) [PDF]

Bad Sex Awards. The *Literary Review's* uncoveted honour went to the late Norman Mailer for a tasty evocation of oral sex in his last novel *The Castle in the Forest*, where the relevant male organ is 'soft as a coil of excrement'. Jeanette Winterson received an honourable mention for 'silicon-lined vaginas' in an episode of steamy robot sex from her novel which is most definitely not sf, *The Stone Gods*. (*Guardian*, 28 Nov) [SG]

More Legal Toils. J.K. Rowling approved legal action by Warner Bros against the prospective publishers of a print version of Steve Vander Ark's on-line *Harry Potter Lexicon*. A New York judge granted a restraining order against RDR Books on 8 November, blocking publication until at least February. JKR: 'Given my past good relations with the Lexicon fansite, I can only feel sad and disillusioned that this is where we have ended up.' Merely annotating Harry Potter characters, locations, spells and so on seems legitimate enough; but the Lexicon website contains a vast amount of direct quotation from the novels, which (though winked at in a web-only resource which even Rowling has said she finds highly useful) surely goes beyond the rule-of-thumb limits for fair use in print. RDR haven't helped their case by refusing to

provide Warner's lawyers with the text intended for publication, merely indicating that it would be a 'verbatim' copy of the website. This in turn caused a stir among contributors of additional essays to the on-line Lexicon, who inferred—wrongly, it seems—that all their work was to be included without permission in the printed book. What a mess.

Fanfundery. *TAFF*: Chris Garcia won the eastbound TransAtlantic Fan Fund race with a clear majority of the 174 votes cast, and will travel to Britain for Orbital, the 2008 Eastercon. The other contenders were Chris Barkley, Linda Deneroff and Christian McGuire.

Outraged Letters. *Everyone* pounced on the 'Sue Donym' suggestion that Octocon numbers dropped suddenly from 300 to 80. The latter is OK for 2007, but the 300-ish peak was years ago in a city-centre venue: 100-150 is now typical. ● **Lise Eisenberg** on Hank Reinhardt's death: 'You might want to add that he was married to Toni Weisskopf, also a US fan, as well as publisher/editor of Baen Books. It's sad news all around.' ● **David Garnett** grumbles that an sf-themed *Open Book* (BBC Radio 4) featured presenter Mariella Frostrup dismissing the genre as 'littered with strange creatures and robots that do funny things' while the guest expert complained of 'beards, T-shirts with unamusing slogans and real ale'. The latter, mind you, may possibly count as fair comment. ● **Omega** on the magical fantasy kingdom of Coventry (see A244): 'Reminds me of the *Space*: 1999 episode "Rules of Luton".'

Futurology Corner. 'If we could have devised an arrangement for providing everybody with music in their homes, perfect in quality, unlimited in quantity, suited to every mood and beginning and ceasing at will, we should have considered the limit of human felicity already attained.' (Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, 1888)

Still More Awards. *Novas (fan)*, presented at Novacon 37 last month: fanzine, *Prolapse* ed. Peter Weston; fanwriter, Mark Plummer; fanartist, Alison Scott; special best fan award, Peter Weston.

As Others Used To See Us. S.I. Hayakawa on the failure of the Ford Edsel: 'The trouble with selling symbolic gratification via such expensive items ... is the competition offered by much cheaper forms of symbolic gratification, such as "Playboy" (fifty cents a copy), "Astounding Science Fiction" (thirty-five cents a copy), and television (free).' (1958; cited by George F. Will, *Washington Post*, September 2007) [AL]

Magazine Scene. *Fantasy Magazine* (from Prime Books) has dropped its print edition and continues exclusively on-line, though co-editor Sean Wallace promises occasional print anthologies of its best fiction. ● *Dragon* magazine (Hasbro/Wizards of the Coast), likewise digital-only in its latest incarnation, is again open to fantasy fiction submissions—but beware. For just 3¢-6¢ per word they want it all, forever: 'once your contract is signed, we'll own all rights in your submission.' [JS]

C.o.A. **Howard Waldrop**, 2900 Pinecrest Dr, Austin, TX 78757, USA. *N. Lee Wood* is now living in Auckland, New Zealand.

The Dead Past. When the *Guardian/Observer* archives went on line with temporary free access, David Pringle was quick to track down the first ever mention of J.G. Ballard—in 1956, as a runner-up (along with Gavin Ewart) in a competition to parody regular *Observer* features. JGB won a princely £10 for his spoof of the 'Crime Ration' review column, then being written by Maurice (*The Exploits of Engelbrecht*) Richardson.

Secrets of the Old Ones. Philip José Farmer and Ken Slater both plan to celebrate their 90th birthdays in January 2008.

Chog's Masterclass. *Eyeballs in the Sky*. 'The porcine little eyes widened just a bit and then settled elastically back to half-mast.' (Jeff Somers, *The Electric Church*, 2007) [TL] ● *Eternity Isn't What It Used To Be Dept.* 'Even Eternal Wanderings must come to an end.' (Lavie Tidhar, *Hebrew Punk*, 2007) [AR] ● *Dept of Relativity*. 'It had been known, of course, that, at the speed of light, time ran backward. But nobody had made any practical application of the theory until Johnson found that, beyond the speed of light, one got into the time-drift, so that you could sit still and let space come to you.' (Clive Trent [Victor Rousseau], 'Human Pyramid', *Spicy-Adventure Stories*, April 1941) [DL] ● *Evocative Cough Dept.* 'Damiano followed, out of the sunshine and into damp, odorous shadow, and as the chill patted his face, there came a cough out of the alley: a cough rich, phlegmy and spineless.' (R.A. MacAvoy, *Damiano's Lute*, 1984) [BA] ● *Dept of Ecodomy*. "'Yes, ecology!' Merrivale made the word sound as though he wanted it to rhyme with sodomy.' (Frank Herbert, *Hellstrom's Hive*, 1972) [AR]