

# ansible



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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: Sue Mason. Available for SAE or bio of Henry Rhodes Hamilton.

## The Terminal Beach

**J.G. Ballard** told the *Sunday Times* that in mid-2006 he'd been diagnosed with advanced prostate cancer. [20 January] This led him to write his autobiography, *Miracles of Life*—published this month.

**Cory Doctorow** announced the birth on 3 February of a daughter proudly named ... Poesy Emmeline Fibonacci Nautilus Taylor Doctorow.

**Shirley Jackson** (1916-1965) is commemorated by the new Shirley Jackson Awards 'for outstanding achievement in the literature of psychological suspense, horror, and the dark fantastic.' These juried awards in various categories will be first presented for 2007 work.

**Steve van der Ark** writes about the intended print edition of his *Harry Potter Lexicon*, which is currently delayed by legal action: see A245. Despite the impression given at one stage by his publishers, this differs from the on-line Lexicon and its very free use of quotations—probably beyond the bounds of fair use—from J.K. Rowling's fiction. 'The book is *not* simply a cut and paste of the Lexicon website. The entries on the website provide much more detailed and complete information than the entries in the book. We took the information on the site and did a lot of editing, condensing, and in some cases complete rewriting. We avoided direct quotations whenever we could and clearly cited any quotations that we kept in. In the case of entries from Rowling's own "encyclopedia"-style books, we intentionally left a lot out and urged readers in the introduction to the book to go buy her books for the complete information. A large portion of the Lexicon book text is available online as part of the filings from Warner Bros last week if you'd like to see what the final result looks like. • While I was working on the Lexicon book, I received assurances from several copyright and intellectual property experts that the book we were creating was legal. Part of the problem all along has been the automatic assumption on the part of many that Rowling has the right to completely control anything written about the Harry Potter world. That's quite a huge power grab on her part and from everything I can tell, not legal. You and I are part of a subculture that lives off the creative work of others. We always try to do that in a legal and respectful way. However, if Rowling manages to extend her reach that far into our subculture, she will choke us off very quickly. And if she doesn't, what's to stop the next person from taking this legal precedent to even more dangerous places?' [21 Jan] • **Statistics:** when I checked, the on-line Lexicon's 1500 words on Albus Dumbledore had about 300 words of direct quotation from Rowling (which seemed risky) and linked to a page with some 3000 words of quotes (which seemed suicidal). The same entry's book version, as seen in PDF proof, has less than 70 words of mostly fragmentary quotation.

## Connemara

8-10 Feb • **SF Ball** (media), Carrington House Hotel, Bournemouth. £90 weekend (still some tickets left), £29 day; child £29/\$15. More expensive options: 'gold ticket' £175, 'dining' £105; child £88/£53. Contact Flat 3, Blighwood, 57 Surrey Rd, Poole, BH12 1HF.

23 Feb • **British Fantasy Society Open Night**, Ye Olde Cock Tavern, 22 Fleet St, London, EC4 1AA. From 6pm. All welcome.

23 Feb • **Picocon 24**, Imperial College Union, London. 10am-7pm/8pm. £8 reg, £6 concessions, £4 ICFs members. Contact ICSF, Beit Quad, Prince Consort Road, London, SW7 2BB.

27 Feb • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Antelope, 22 Eaton Terrace, London, SW1W 8EZ (closest tube, Sloane Square). 6pm on; fans present in the bar from 5pm. With Chris Beckett. *Note new venue:* the former pub, The Star, no longer has an upstairs function room.

21-24 Mar • **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.

29-30 Mar • **P-Con V**, Central Hotel, Exchequer St, Dublin. *Rates held at Euro25/£15*, Euro15 supporting; Euro30 at the door. Contact 253 Sundrive Road, Crumlin, Dublin 12, Ireland. Sterling cheques to

'Dave Lally #2 a/c', 64 Richbourne Tce, London, SW8 1AX.

3-5 May • **Fforde Fiesta**, De Vere Hotel, Shaw Ridge, Swindon. GoH Jasper Fforde. £25 reg, rising to £30 on 1 March. Day tickets will be available. Online booking: www.ffordeffiesta.com. Cheques to The Fforde Ffestival, 37A Oak Close, Bristol, BS34 6RB.

28-29 Jun • **ConRunner 2008** (conrunning), Britannia Hotel, Wolverhampton. *Revised rates:* £30 until after Easter; £35 to 21 Jun; £45 at door. Day rate £25. 'Social event' on evening of Fri 27 Jun. Contact 56 Jackmans Place, Letchworth G.C., Herts, SG6 1RH.

7-9 Nov • **ArmadaCon XX**, Novotel, Plymouth. GoH Adrian Cole; more TBA. £35 reg; £30 concessions; £10 supp/deposit secures current rate. Contact 20 Pinewood Close, Plympton, Devon, PL7 2DW.

**Rumblings • Nostromo SF Festival** (Newcastle): announced for February 2008 but now postponed until, tentatively, Summer 2008.

## Infinitely Improbable

**Matrix Rebooted.** The British SF Association's newsletter *Matrix*—a regular feature of BSFA mailings since 1975—saw its last print edition with #186, distributed in January. Henceforth it will be excitingly 'reactive and interactive' on line at www.bsfa.co.uk, where it's hoped that new *Matrix* pages will be launched later this month. The domain www.matrixmagazine.co.uk (currently down) is to be abandoned. [IW]

**As Others See Us.** Mark Harris rips the lid off sf cinema: 'Let's turn our attention to an unlikely candidate for a heart-and-brain transplant: science fiction. / Sci-fi is in trouble, although it's not the kind of trouble that can be measured at the box office, where it looks as healthy and robust as a T-rex must have seemed five minutes before it realized there was nothing left to eat. The genre has been around for as long as the movies themselves, and flourished for the last 30 years. The problem is, none of the ideas are getting any newer. Scratch that: the problem is, there are no ideas.' (*Entertainment Weekly*, 11 January) [MMW] • Philip K. Dick is outed, again: 'But Dick himself really wasn't a "sci-fi author". He was essentially a serious writer, who used the genre of science fiction as a disguised delivery system ... for a complex, self-generated philosophy Dick very much believed in.' (Paul M. Sammon, *Future Noir: The Making of Blade Runner*, revised edition) [FS]

**R.I.P.** **Christopher Allport** (1947-2008), US character actor seen in *The Twilight Zone*, *Invaders from Mars* (1986), *The X-Files*, *Quantum Leap* etc., was killed in a California avalanche on 25 January; he was 60. [SFS] • **Joe Beedell**, UK fan who founded the Southend sf group (Orion) in 1982, attended 50+ conventions and ran South Trek 96 and 97 in Southend, reportedly died on 3 January. [O] • **Frank Hamilton** (1918-2008), US artist who worked in a pulp mode—recreating classic *Doc Savage* and *Shadow* magazine covers as well as original art—died on 28 January; he was 89. He co-authored *Amazing Pulp Heroes* (1988; expanded 1996) with Link Hullar. [AIP] • **Dwight Hemion** (1926-2008), US tv director/producer remembered in sf circles for his dire 1978 *Star Wars Holiday Special* (later disowned by George Lucas), died on 28 January aged 81. [AIP] • **Edward D. Hoch** (1930-2008), US author of over 900 stories since his 1955 debut, died on 17 January; he was 77. He is best known for crime fiction, for which he received the Mystery Writers of America Grand Master award. However, his early 'Simon Ark' detections are tinged with fantasy; he also wrote horror and sf, including three 1970s sf/detective novels. [AIP] • **Heath Ledger** (1979-2008), Australian-born actor who played a title role in *The Brothers Grimm* and the Joker in the forthcoming Batman film *The Dark Knight*, died on 22 January; he was 28. [CH] • **Maila Nurmi** (1921-2008), Finnish-born actress who as 'Vampira' was the first ever tv horror host (*The Vampira Show*, 1954) and famously appeared in Ed Wood's *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (1959), died on 10 January aged 86. [SG/S] • **Derek Pickles** (1928-2008), UK fan whose *Phantasmagoria* (1950-1955) was a notable fanzine of its day, died on 5 January; he would have been 80 this month. [AP] Derek was at Britain's first post-war convention in 1948 and stood for TAFF in 1954; *Phantasmagoria* contained John Brunner's first published works (verse) and was the first fanzine to announce

itself as available for 'the usual' (trade, letter of comment or contribution) rather than subscription. After a long absence following his 1956 cancer operation, Derek renewed his fan contacts in the 1990s, attending the 1991 Mexican and the 1998 Leeds Corflu. [SS/PW] ● *Jinzo Toriumi* (1929-2008), Japanese anime scriptwriter since 1964, died on 17 January aged 78. Genre work included *Astro Boy*, *Speed Racer*, and *Gatchaman* (aka *Battle of the Planets*). [PM]

**Dumbwatch.** The Booksthatmakeyou dumb.virgil.gr website does its teasing research by comparing the most popular fiction and non-fiction read at 1,352 US colleges (as revealed by that scientific tool, Facebook) with said colleges' average SAT/ACT scores, to chart a 'correlation between books and dumbitude.' The *Boston Globe* coverage continues: 'Science fiction, for some reason, appears at both ends of the chart: Near the top [test scores], we find Ayn Rand's pro-capitalism dystopia "Atlas Shrugged," Kurt Vonnegut's apocalyptic novel "Cat's Cradle," and Orson Scott Card's uber-geeky "Enders Game," about a kid whose mad video-game skills allow him to save the planet from real space invaders. Near the bottom, we find Ray Bradbury's apocalyptic dystopia "Fahrenheit 451." Bradbury's book is a classic work of fiction, never mind the genre; "Enders Game" is drivel. So ... what does it all mean?' (Joshua Glenn, 30 January) [DK] According to a hasty straw poll at *Anisble* HQ, it means that Orson Scott Card is less than pleased.

**BSFA Awards.** The shortlist has been released. NOVEL Bryan Talbot, *Alice in Sunderland*; Richard Morgan, *Black Man*; Ian McDonald, *Brasyl*; Ken MacLeod, *The Execution Channel*; Alastair Reynolds, *The Prefect*; Michael Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*. ● SHORT Ken MacLeod, 'Lighting Out' (*disLocations*); Chaz Brenchley, 'Terminal' (*disLocations*); Ted Chiang, *The Alchemist and the Merchant's Gate*; Ian Whates, 'The Gift of Joy' (*TQR*); Alastair Reynolds 'The Sledge-Maker's Daughter' (*Interzone* 209). ● ARTWORK (all covers): Andy Bigwood, 'Cracked World' (*disLocations*), Les Edwards, 'H P Lovecraft in Britain' (Stephen Jones chapbook), Richard Marchand, 'Lunar Flare' (*Interzone* 211); Kenn Brown, 'Metal Dragon Year' (*Interzone* 212). ● BEST NOVEL OF 1958 James Blish, *A Case of Conscience*; Robert A. Heinlein, *Have Spacesuit, Will Travel*; Brian Aldiss, *Non-Stop*; Fritz Leiber, *The Big Time*; James Blish, *The Triumph of Time* aka *A Clash of Cymbals*; Algis Budrys, *Who?* ● *Alice in Sunderland* is the first graphic novel to reach the novel shortlist. No nonfiction category owing to lack of nomination consensus. Winners to be announced on Saturday of Eastercon (22 March).

**In Typo Veritas.** *The Bear Facts*: 'Jenna nodded sheepishly, then cut Cob off as he began to describe, in grizzly detail, what he intended to go say to them.' (Mark J. Ferrari, *The Book of Joby*, 2007) [PM]

**Fanfundery.** DUFF: Sue & Steve Francis won the southbound race, North America to Australia, by a simple majority: 163 of 218 votes. Murray Moore 48; no preference 2; other 5. [JS] ● *ConRunner Bursaries*: there are two, each of £150 (sponsored by Contemplation, the 2006 Eastercon), to help individuals or couples attend ConRunner 2008—see events list above. Details at [www.conrunner.org.uk](http://www.conrunner.org.uk). Apply by 31 March. ● TAFF: 2008 voting figures now released. European/North American/Total: Chris Barkley 0/13/13, Linda Deneroff 4/26/30, Chris Garcia 41/66/107, Christian McGuire 4/14/18, Hold Over Funds 0/2/2, No Preference 5/5/10; totals 54/126/180. A few more ballots turned up after the A245 announcement but made no difference; a single Rest Of World voter is included in the NA total to conceal his/her choice. [ST]

**As Sympathizers See SF.** From a positive review of that nice Mr Aldiss's *A Science Fiction Omnibus*: 'Fiction generally moves through a retrospective landscape, solid with the detail of personal and social memory. The future is not its natural territory.' (Dinah Birch, *Times Literary Supplement*, 30 January) [AJW]

**Outraged Letters.** Richard E. Geis confesses, again: 'You know, I'm still writing erotic fiction even though there isn't a decent paying market, because I simply enjoy it and enjoy the challenge of doing it well. There must be a name for this kind of insanity.' ● Patrick Nielsen Hayden on Mr Green's plaint that his US book title was changed because the word 'damned' is verboten: "This no doubt accounts for the commercial failure of Anne Rice's *Queen Of The Damned* (1989), Laurell K. Hamilton's *Circus Of The Damned* (2002), and for that matter F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful And Damned* (1922). Doomed to obscurity by the bluenoses who dominate American bookselling. Alternately, maybe someone is pulling Simon R. Green's leg.' ● Steve Sneyd reports: 'At Derek Pickles' funeral, the officiant in her talk about deceased's life said she'd been a Trekkie herself, and was clearly in sympathy with his science fiction (she actually called it thus, not sci-fi) connections (tho' gently dismissive of his enthusiasm for *Red Dwarf*), and even explained his origination of "the usual" and, briefly, what that actually meant. She

also said DP was the first person she'd done a funeral for who had a significant Google entry, because she always looked.'

**As Others See Evolution.** 'History looks more and more like a science-fiction novel in which mutants repeatedly arose and displaced normal humans—sometimes quietly, by surviving starvation and disease better, other times as a conquering horde' (Gregory Cochran, co-author of a paper on human evolution, quoted in *Newsweek*, 19 January) [AL]

**Random Fandom.** *Greg Pickersgill* will be offering a vast bonanza of free fanzines at Eastercon 2008 (mostly post-1970 US material): be sure to come with suitable crates and pantechnicons. Greg is still acquiring selected 20th-century British fanzines. ● *Peter Weston's* British Convention Archive wants-list includes programme books for Novacon 23, 26, 27, 28 and 30. 'PRs and "Read Me"s will also be useful.' Contact at 53 Wyvern Rd, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, B74 2PS.

**Magazine Scene.** *Farthing* has been suspended since issue 5, owing to editor Wendy Bradley's poor health and a general lack of funds. She was also irked that SFWA never recognized the magazine as a qualifying market: 'I'm not saying it's SFWA's fault *Farthing* ran out of money and is on hiatus till I have some more.' (weblog, 2 December) The *Farthing* website and editorial weblog have both ceased.

**More Awards.** *IAFA Crawford Award* for best first fantasy novel: Christopher Barzak, *One for Sorrow*. ● *Philip K. Dick Award* (US paperback original) shortlist: Jon Armstrong, *Grey*; Elizabeth Bear, *Undertow*; Minister Faust, *From the Notebooks of Dr. Brain*; M. John Harrison, *Nova Swing*; Adam Roberts, *Gradisil*; Karen Traviss, *Ally*; Sean Williams, *Saturn Returns*. [GVG]

**Publishers and Sinners.** *Dedalus Books*, publishers of important translated work including much fantasy, lost its modest Arts Council funding in January and may well close. The AC has behaved oddly, failing to follow its own 'disinvestment' procedures and disclose reasons for the decision: there seems to be some hidden grudge here. [IC] ● *HarperCollins* invites cover designs for a limited edition of J.G. Ballard's *Crash*. Deadline 30 April. Just as with fanzines, the winner will apparently receive no payment but a copy of the book. J.G. Ballard design competition, Times Online, Times House, 1 Pennington St, London, E98 1TT.

**Group Gropes.** *Orion*, Southend's sf group, is closing this month following the death of its founder (see R.I.P.). [O] ● *Birmingham SF Group*: please note that the monthly meetings have now moved to The Briar Rose Hotel, 25 Bennetts Hill, Birmingham, B2 5RE.

**ALA Honours.** *Margaret A. Edwards Award* (teen-fiction life achievement): Orson Scott Card for *Enders Game* and *Enders Shadow*. ● 2008 *Genre Reading List* recommendations include: Patrick Rothfuss, *The Name of the Wind* (fantasy); Joe Hill, *The Heart-Shaped Box* (horror); Kathleen Ann Goonan, *In War Times* (science fiction). This, released in January, is the first such ALA genre reading list.

**The Dead Past.** *Thirty Years Ago*: 'Meanwhile, in the sercon strongholds of The Sf Foundation, Malcolm Edwards has replaced Peter Nicholls as boss, and David Pringle has moved in as an Igor figure. [...] Harlan Ellison plans to sleep in a tent at Iguanacon for political reasons. Look, don't ask me, I just print the bloody news.' (Peter Roberts in *Checkpoint* 86, February 1978)

C.O.A. Yvonne Rowse, 23 Roach Rd, Sheffield, S11 8UA.

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Telling Simile Dept.* 'He looks like a basilisk. She wasn't quite sure about it—what a basilisk was, much less what one looked like—but its sound had the feeling of his face.' (Rufus King, *Valcour Meets Murder*, 1937) [BP] ● *Philosophy Dept.* 'If the shortest distance between point A and point B is a straight line, how do you go from point A to point B? This sort of debate could take a long time.' (Colin Kapp, *Transfinite Man* aka *The Dark Mind*, 1964) [AR] ● *Worsening Odds Dept.* 'Outspace there was one chance in infinity squared that he would not die.' *But later*: "'I don't give you one chance of survival in infinity raised to the infinite power,' said Madden.'" (*Ibid*) ● *Dept of As Others See SF.* 'The sun didn't want to go down that day because it was a sci-fi sun, big and fat and red, and it wanted only to dry out everything in creation.' (T. Coraghessan Boyle, 'Ash Monday', *New Yorker*, 21 Jan 2008) [MMW] ● *Dept of Logical Consequences.* 'You could have cut off an arm or a leg and I wouldn't have been able to lift so much as a finger in protest.' (Amber Dean, *Chanticleer's Muffled Crow*, 1945) [BP]

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