

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: **Brad Foster**. Available for SAE or a recursion in metastories.

Clarke Award 2008. Sir Arthur C. Clarke was remembered at the usual boozy gathering in the now-traditional Apollo Cinema, Lower Regent St, London. Our genial hosts, the Sci-Fi London film festival, laid on a costumed ensemble of Darth Vader and other *Star Wars* icons who were much photographed. All six award finalists turned up—the ever unlucky Stephen Baxter making his seventh nominee appearance, still without a win—and the inflation-adjusted £2008 cheque went to Richard Morgan for *Black Man* (US title *Thirteen*). According to jury chair Paul Billinger, this is 'a complex and passionate exploration of prejudice and identity ... bold and risk-taking yet compelling and coherent.' After criticism of the shortlist for perceived over-emphasis on fringe and slipstream work, there was a sense of relief that the winning novel is unashamed sf and published as such. Another pre-award cavil came from that PC bastion *The Sunday Telegraph*, making cautiously negative use of the g-word: 'You don't have to be a male geek to like—or write—science fiction, but it may be significant that there is only one woman—Sarah Hall, author of *The Carhullan Army*—on the shortlist for the 2007 Arthur C. Clarke Award.' (Anne-Marie Conway, 27 April) [TH]

The Wall of Darkness

Roald Dahl's name was conspicuously not banded in a Birmingham (UK) radio quiz. *Elliott Webb*: 'Who wrote *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*? Caller: 'Was it H.G. Wells?' (96.4 BRMB Birmingham) [PE]

J.K. Rowling and Steve Vander Ark each had a little weep while testifying in the Warner/Rowling lawsuit to block print publication of SVA's *Harry Potter Lexicon*. Despite various pundits' total certainty that the *Lexicon* is (a) a transformative work of scholarship protected by the fair-use doctrine, or (b) a sloppy mass of paraphrase and cut-and-paste that uses far too many of JKR's original words, the law seems less than clear. On the third day of the April hearing, as he had on the second, Judge Robert Patterson Jr. dropped a strong hint: 'I think this case, with imagination, could be settled.' (AP) Some points—false advertising and deceptive trade practices—were indeed settled, but the copyright/trademark infringement decision is up to the judge. And then, no doubt, the court of appeal. Rowling fans' hackles rose at Patterson's comment that he'd read the first Potter novel to his grandchildren and found the 'magical world hard to follow, filled with strange names and words that would be gibberish in any other context.' Comments by sf people ranged from Neil Gaiman's mild bemusement ('Well, if it was me, I'd probably be flattered' ... 'My heart is on the side of the people doing the unauthorised books, probably because the first two books I did were unauthorised') to an authentic Orson Scott Card weblog rant: 'Rowling's hypocrisy is so thick I can hardly breathe ... Her greedy evil-witch behavior now disgusts us. ... What a pretentious, puffed-up coward.' etc. For some reason, though it's utterly irrelevant to the legal issues, Card seems most incensed by Rowling's 'Dumbledore was gay' revelation.

Stanley Schmidt, not yet an Editor Emeritus, was mysteriously referenced as 'Stanley Schmidt, former editor of the science-fiction magazine *Analog* ...' (Marcus Chown, *New Scientist*, 12 April) [PDF]

Patrick Stewart's Broadway role as Macbeth drew some highly relevant questions from *Newsweek's* Nicki Gostin: 'When you're onstage, aren't you worried about weird Trekkie fans in the audience?' PS: 'Oh, come on, that's just a silly thing to say.' NG: 'But they are weird.' PS: How many do you know personally? You couldn't be more wrong. Here's the thing: if you say the fans are weird, that means there is something essentially weird about the show, and there is nothing weird about it. I'm very passionate when people like you snigger.' [AL] Of course *Newsweek* (7 Apr) headlined this *Macbeth* interview 'Mr. Stewart Loves His Trekkies', with the photo caption 'Is that a Klingon I See?'

Congraffet

Until 18 May • **Anne Sudworth** art exhibition, Strawberry Hill House, Waldegrave Road, Twickenham, London. Contact 0208 8922804.

Until 25 Oct • **Dan Dare and the Birth of Hi-Tech Britain**, exhibition, Science Museum, South Kensington, London. Free admission.

3-5 May • **Fforde Ffiesta**, De Vere Hotel, Shaw Ridge, Swindon. £30 reg. Day tickets are available. Booking: www.ffordeffiesta.com. Cheques to The Fforde Ffestival, 37A Oak Close, Bristol, BS34 6RB.

9-11 May • **Bristol International Comic Expo**, British Empire & Commonwealth Exhibition Hall/Ramada Hotel, Bristol. £12 weekend; £6.00 Sat or Sun; £1/day child. Bookings www.comicexpo.net.

15-18 May • **Eurocon/RosCon**, Lesnye Dali Hotel, Gorki-10, Moscow West, Russia. \$100 reg; same at the door; €20 supp; all-inclusive membership €250 (with 3 nights' accommodation and 3 meals/day; must be booked in advance). See www.eurocon2008.ru.

28 May • **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 Andrew Wilson.

7 Jun • **BSFA/SF Foundation AGM Event**, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London, WC1R 4RL. GoH Geoff Ryman for SFF, Peter Weston for BSFA (50th-anniversary theme). 10:30am-5pm (then to pub), with SFF AGM 12:30-1pm, BSFA AGM 2-2:30pm. Admission free.

1-2 Nov • **UnConvention** (Fortean), University of Westminster, 309 Regent St, London ('site of Britain's first public moving picture show in 1896', a demo by the Lumière brothers). Further details TBA.

2-5 Apr 10 • **Odyssey 2010** (Eastercon), Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow, London. Now £45 reg, £35 unwaged, £20 supp. Junior (under 17) £20, child (under 11) £5, infant (under 5) £1. Contact: 5 Langhau Road, Crookston, Glasgow, G53 7SE. Odyssey is also bidding, this month, for the 2010 Eurocon: Euro rates will follow if it wins.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. Sam Wollaston of the *Guardian* bewails the effort of comprehending *Battlestar Galactica's* season-four opening without having watched a single past episode: 'What I'm trying to say is, I'm not very good at sci-fi—in books, on television, anywhere. There's not enough food in it, or baths—the important things in life. When was the last time you saw a bathroom on a spaceship? Or a kitchen? Or a bedroom for that matter, and any of the things that go on in there? It's so concerned with the massive issues—time, space, war, distant galaxies, the future of the human race—that it forgets the little things that make life interesting and human and sensual. Sci-fi has no smell.' In short: 'I don't understand half the complexities. (That, incidentally is another problem: it's so bloody complicated. Why is sci-fi like that—a competition for boys to see who's best at working out what the hell is going on?) [...] This obviously makes me a girl.' (*Guardian*, 16 April) [CP]

More Awards. *Nebulas*. Novel: Michael Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*. Novella: Nancy Kress, 'Fountain of Age'. Novelette: Ted Chiang, *The Merchant and the Alchemist's Gate*. Short: Karen Joy Fowler, 'Always'. Script: *Pan's Labyrinth*. Andre Norton Award (YA): J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. • **James Tiptree Jr**, for gender-exploring sf: Sarah Hall, *The Carhullan Army*.

Wisdom of the Mainstream. Joe McNally reports: 'A friend took part in a panel discussion with Toby Litt at the weekend, on the future of the short story. As the conversation turned to online fiction and authors' online presences, Litt made the frankly bizarre assertion that "nobody has ever written a story about Kirk and Spock having sex." Cue collapse of several stout parties, many of them wondering whether Mr Litt has ever actually seen the internet.' (7 April)

R.I.P. *Bebe Barron* (1925-2009), pioneer of electronic music who with her husband Louis created the score for *Forbidden Planet* (1956), died on 20 April; she was 82. [GD] • **John Berkey** (1932-2008), noted US sf artist whose work is collected in *The Art of John Berkey* (2003, text by Jane Frank), died on 29 April. [ML] Paul Barnett writes: 'He was one of the most painterly of sf artists, and managed to convey both splendour and strangeness with a power and sense of wonder that it's hard to describe.' • **Johnny Byrne** (1935-2008), Irish-born writer and script editor best known in sf for his work on the first year of *Space: 1999* (1975-6), died on 3 April. He also wrote five stories for *Science Fantasy* (1964-5) and three *Doctor Who* tv scripts. [CM] • **Tristram Cary**

(1925-2008), UK-born electronic music composer who scored several *Doctor Who* episodes including the 1963 debut of the Daleks, died in Adelaide, Australia, at age 82. His music was also heard in the Hammer *Quatermass and the Pit* (1967) and his effects in *When the Wind Blows* (1986). [CM] • **Hugo Correa** (1926-2008) Chilean sf author—largely untranslated, though some stories appeared in *F&SF*—died on 23 March. [SFS] • **Hazel Court** (1926-2005), UK actress who co-starred in such popular genre movies as *Devil Girl From Mars* (1954) and several of Roger Corman's Poe adaptations—notably *The Raven* (1963)—died on 15 April; she was 82. [SJD] • **Alex Grasshoff** (1928-2008), US director of *Future Shock* (1972), 3 episodes of *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* (1974) and *The Last Dinosaur* (1977), died on 5 April aged 79. [SFS] • **Lawrence Hertzog** (1951-2008), US producer/scriptwriter who worked on *SeaQuest DSV* (1990s) and *Painkiller Jane* (2007), died on 19 April aged 56. [SJD] • **Charlton Heston** (1924-2008), US actor with famous sf roles in *Planet of the Apes* (1968, followed by an extended cameo in the 1970 *Beneath the Planet of the Apes*), *The Omega Man* (1971) and *Soylent Green* (1973), died on 5 April. He was 83. [GW] Inevitably, many people wrote of assorted unlikely objects being prised from his cold, dead fingers. • **Margaret J. Howes**, US fan and author of the sf novel *The Wrong World* (2000), died on 15 April aged 80. [DL] • **Ollie Johnston** (1912-2008), last survivor of the 'Nine Old Men' of classic Disney animation, died on 16 April. He was 95. His career began in 1935, included work on the 1937 *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, and continued until *The Rescuers* (1977). [JY] • **Kay Linaker** (Kate Phillips, 1913-2008), US actress and screenwriter who co-wrote *The Blob* (1958), died on 18 April aged 94. [AIP]

As Others Research Us. From a positive article on sf (and Ken MacLeod) at the Glasgow Science Festival: "The whole basis of the internet was famously inspired by William Gibson's book *Neuromancer* and Isaac Asimov, who recently died, "invented" earth-orbiting satellites in one of his tales." (Jasper Hamill, *Sunday Herald*, April) [KM]

Fanfudery. *TAFF*: Chris Garcia completed his 2008 trip report and sent it to me for the *TAFF* website on 10 April: 'And here, finally, is my *TAFF* Report. I sleep now.' By Chris's request, web access is password-controlled. Details from the man himself: *garcia* at *computerhistory.org*.

Thog's Radical Politics Masterclass. Sherlock Holmes is briefed on the Great Game's state of play in 1924: 'Our enemy may have changed his hat, but the Bolsheviks want a Communist East as much as the Tsar did, you can count on it.' (Laurie R. King, *The Game*, 2004) [YR]

Outraged Letters. *Ramsey Campbell* mourns his mother-in-law: 'Jenny's mother (and Penny's and Chris's), Joan, died today aged 93. She was married to A. Bertram Chandler and later to John Newman but outlived both.' (29 April) • *Chris Morgan* writes: 'Today (Mon 31 March) we attended the cremation service for Ray Bradbury (29 March 1950 to 17 March 2008). The chapel at Robin Hood Crematorium, Birmingham, was completely packed, a third of the attendees standing. It was a mixture of family, friends, fans, magicians. Those attending included Chris & Pauline Morgan, Rog & Arline Peyton, Pete Weston, Dave Hardy, Vernon & Pat Brown, Martin Tudor, Tony Berry, Steve Green and Dave Holmes. There were moving tributes from his wife Carole and three friends, stressing Ray's generosity, his high quality workmanship in numerous fields and his sense of humour. Not entirely a serious occasion.' • *Mark Newton* of *Solaris* takes issue with the Games Workshop mole report (A249) on the firing of *Solaris/Black Library* founder Marc Gascoigne: 'I was most surprised to hear of our impending demise, in the recent issue of *Ansible*, especially given that today we were celebrating George Mann's promotion to Head of *Black Library* and *Solaris*. Just to reassure any interested parties that changes were mostly related to our Role Playing Games imprint, and that both *Black Library* and *Solaris* continue to thrive in double-digit growth.' Guy Haley, late of *GW*, added a pungent comment but thought better of it.

Squids in Space, Redux. The US procurement magazine *Defense AT&L* offers an sf parable about expensive weaponry aimed at bygone threats. Warlord Korg muses on the end of the Cold War: 'Obviously we're not fighting the Torrapians anymore. Are we?' Alas, his Peregriane starship [stealth bomber] isn't much use against 'a technologically backwards group of jelly-fish-based terrorists with very limited space-faring capabilities. [...] They lack both the means and the inclination to conduct combat operations in space. Their most effective planetary defense weapon flings a cloud of debris in the general direction of a spacecraft and hopes to punch a hole or two in the hull.' They are called ... the Minotaur-Squids of the Indigo Zone! (*Wired*, 13 April) [TL]

FAAn Awards were presented at Corflu in April. Fanzine: *Prolapse*. Fan Artist: Dan Steffan. Fan Writer: Arnie Katz. Letterhack (Harry

Warner Memorial Award): Robert Lichtman. New Fan: John Coxon. Fan Website: *eFanzines.com*. Number One Fan Face: Arnie Katz.

New Wave Denounced. Egyptian novelist Alaa Al Aswany reveals the secret of his success: 'I am writing for ordinary people. I want everyone to be able to read my books. The problem with Arab literature has been that it forgot to tell stories and lost its way in experimentation. Too many novels that start with lines like "I came home to find my wife having sex with a cockroach."' (*New York Times*, 27 April) [DB]

C.o.A. *Mog Decarnin* is moving soon. *Don West*, 16 Rockville Drive, Embsay, Skipton, North Yorkshire, BD23 6NX. [HA]

Futurology Corner. Christine Peterson of the Foresight Nanotech Institute in Menlo Park, California, 'has one recommendation: Read science fiction, especially "hard science fiction" that sticks rigorously to the scientifically possible. "If you look out into the long-term future and what you see looks like science fiction, it might be wrong," she says. "But if it doesn't look like science fiction, it's definitely wrong."' (Joel Achenbach, 'The Future Is Now', *Washington Post*, 13 April) [AL]

Sidewise Awards (alternate history) finalists: LONG FORM Michael Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*; *Robert Conroy, 1945: A Novel*; Mary Gentle, *Ilario: The Lion's Eye* (US ed in two volumes, #2 being *Ilario: The Stone Golem*; Jay Lake, *Mainspring*; Sophia McDougall, *Rome Burning*; Jo Walton, *Ha'penny*. • SHORT FORM Elizabeth Bear, 'Les Innocents/Lumiere' (*New Amsterdam*); Michael Flynn, 'Quaestiones Super Caelo Et Mundo' (*Analog* 7/07); Matthew Johnson, 'Public Safety' (*Asimov's* 3/07); Jess Nevins, 'An Alternate History of Chinese Science Fiction' (*No Fear of the Future*, 17/5/07); Chris Roberson, 'Metal Dragon Year' (*Interzone* 213); Kristine Kathryn Rusch, 'Recovering Apollo 8' (*Asimov's* 2/07); John Scalzi, 'Missives from Possible Futures #1: Alternate History Search Results' (*Subterranean Magazine*, Winter).

Market Reminder. Henry Gee of *Nature* continues to solicit: 'Futures SF column is alive and well and always on the lookout for copy. Inquiries to the Third Park Bench On The Left, The Esplanade, Cromer, Norfolk, or by email to futures at nature dot com.'

The Dead Past. *Forty Years Ago*. 'Due to hit the presses later this year is a book titled Pop-Corn, written by James Sallis and Michael Moorcock. Pop-Corn has been described as "a fierce attack on the world of pop culture and the cults that surround it." Tolkien, James Bond and Alfred Hitchcock are just three targets of the way of life some of us hold dear. The book, not yet quite complete, is already scheduled for joint publication by Gollancz and Penguin.' (*Skyrack* 95, May 1968).

SFWA Elections. As reported webwide, the hot news seemed to be not so much that Russell Davis won the presidency with 330 votes as that the somewhat controversial Andrew Burt (with 53 votes) didn't. World interest in this momentous poll was signalled by Ian Whates's unopposed win as Overseas Regional Director 'with one of the biggest turnouts for his region in years', being 19 votes. [SFWA]

Thog's Masterclass. *Pole Shift Dept.* 'Unsmiling, the Secretary of the Interior mumbled, "I wonder if the earth will topple all the way over—I mean—like this." He made a rolling motion with his hands.' (Edwin Woodard and Heather Woodard Bischoff, *Storehouses of the Snow*, 1980) [AR] • *Dept of Naval Rhetoric.* "'Mr President," [the Admiral] began, "here is a message, sir, the like of which no man has received since the days of Noah!"' (*Ibid*) • *Bathos Dept.* 'All the men were acutely aware of the tremendous events taking place: the change in the earth's axis; the great earthquakes which had apparently occurred, the sudden eruptions of many old and new volcanoes; the breaking up of the Great Ross Ice Shelf; the torrents of meltwater, and evident speeding up of the flood of glacial ice tossing thousands of giant icebergs into the sea. Making several trips, they brought out many cans. Some of them were dented.' (*Ibid*) • *Dept of Who Knew?* 'Weather was always changing somewhere.' (*Ibid*) • *Rhetorical Poultry Dept.* "The man nodded briskly, now looking like a chicken that had finally been proved correct over a point that had long been in bitter dispute.' (Michael Marshall Smith, *The Servants*, 2007) [PB] • *Dept of Inexorable Fate.* 'It would not be like that, but that was the way it would be.' (*Ibid*) 'It was that way, but also it was not.' (*Ibid*) • *Alternative 'Spung!' Dept.* 'Suddenly Kris had boobs. Boobs that she knew all too well how to make go boom.' (Mike Shepherd, *Kris Longknife: Audacious*, 2007) [PM]

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