

# ansible



## Ansible 280 November 2010

From David Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU, UK. Web news.ansible.co.uk. ISSN 0265-9816 (print); 1740-942X (e). Logo: Dan Steffan. Cartoon: Alan F. Beck. Available for SAE or the bottled ecstasy of Martian zyzmol.

**List to Starboard.** The long-established *Ansible* email list died in September, as I discovered on trying to send out the October issue. Another purge at the Glasgow University computer department... *Ansible* 279 was later emailed in batches to all subscribers, together with invitations to the new list (see news.ansible.co.uk/asubs.html), but it didn't reach everyone. By merry coincidence the issue contained a rude word which got it blocked for such varied reasons as 'mild language', 'sexually explicit' 'tasty Hormel luncheon meat' and 'The rule triggered was: 8966 Banned Words for Incoming Mail'. (Does this mean that *Ansible* passed the 8965 previous tests at that ISP, or that there are 8966 Banned Words?) Which only goes to show that I always get into trouble when, however accurately, I quote Harlan Ellison.

### The November Game

**Iain M. Banks** indulged himself in an epigram at the Cheltenham Literature Festival: 'You don't write space opera in a vacuum!' [NC]

**A.A. Gill** ran true to form when assessing the achievement of H.G. Wells: 'Virtually single-handed, he invented that vast alien planet of nerdy literature read exclusively by unwashed young men with a full spectrum of social incapacity.' (*Sunday Times Culture*, 24 October) [JD]

**Graham Hancock** shamelessly plugged his novel at BoingBoing: 'I follow weird research like this because time-travel—specifically to the Stone Age around 24,000 years ago—is a central element of *Entangled: The Eater of Souls*, my first work of fiction. Unlike Jules Verne, however, I do not propose a time-machine as the vehicle.' (25 October) [JMcN]

**Sir Terry Pratchett's** coat of arms appeared in the *College of Arms Newsletter* (September 2010). 'The Arms are blazoned: Sable an ankh between four Roundels in saltire each issuing Argent. / The Crest is Upon a Helm with a Wreath Argent and Sable On Water Barry wavy Sable Argent and Sable an Owl [presumably a morpork] affronty wings displayed and inverted Or supporting thereby two closed Books erect Gules.' There's a picture on line for the heraldically challenged. [NJ]

**Steven Moffatt** consulted a select focus group: 'Told my son the title of ep 1 of the next run of Dr Who. A pause. "I think we can do better, Daddy." Then: "We need clever. Not cheesy."' (Twitter) [DKMK]

**Elizabeth Moon**, an announced guest of honour at Wiscon 2011 (Madison, WI), was publicly disinvited last month after her September LiveJournal post on Muslims and New York's so-called 'Ground Zero Mosque' led to a controversy too huge and tedious to summarize here.

**J.K. Rowling** dropped ominous hints during her Oprah Winfrey tv chat-show appearance, remarking that the Harry Potter characters were still much in her mind and that she could definitely write new books about them: 'I'm not going to say I won't.' Soon afterwards, she topped the National Magazine Company's poll of the 100 most influential women in Britain. [MPJ] Meanwhile the long-running *Willy the Wizard* plagiarism claim against Bloomsbury and JKR was judged not quite ludicrous enough to be summarily thrown out of court. Mr Justice Kitchen felt it should go to trial: 'I have reached the conclusion that this claim may succeed but that it is improbable it will do so.' (14 October)

**Sean Wallace** stepped down as an editor of *Clarkesworld* after issue 50, owing to family commitments: soon after the magazine's Hugo win in September, his wife Jennifer gave birth to twin girls.

### Conyilia

6 Nov • **BristolCon '10**, Ramada Hotel, Bristol. Programme 10am-10pm; later informality in the bar. £20 reg; £25 at door. Cheques to 34 Dongola Road, Bishopston, Bristol, BS7 9HP.

6 Nov • **Other Worlds**, Derby Quad, Market Place, Derby. 1pm-4pm. With Peter F. Hamilton, others. £8 (£6 concessions): book at box office 01332 290606, or <http://www.derbyquad.co.uk/other-worlds>.

12-14 Nov • **ArmadaCon 22**, Copthorne Hotel, Plymouth. Note the venue change, for a slightly unusual reason: 'The Royal Fleet Hotel has been sold (to the Church of Scientology!).' £30 reg, £20 concessions. Contact 20 Pinewood Close, Plympton, Plymouth, Devon, PL7 2DW.

12-14 Nov • **Novacon 40**, Park Inn, Mansfield Road, Nottingham.

£40 reg. Contact 379 Myrtle Rd, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

24 Nov • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Antelope, 22 Eaton Terrace, London, SW1W 8EZ. 5pm for 6pm. Free. With Colin Harvey.

3 Dec • **British Fantasy Society Open Night**, Truckles, off Bury Place, Bloomsbury, London. 6pm onward. Free.

5 Dec • **British Fantasy Society Open Night**, Lass O'Gowrie, pub, 36 Charles Street, Manchester, M1 7DB. 6pm onward. Free.

22-25 Apr 2011 • **Illustrious** (Eastercon), Hilton Metropole, NEC, Birmingham. £55 reg, £30 under-25s/unwaged, £20 under-18s, £10 under-12s, £1 under-5s. Contact 4 Burnside Ave, Sheffield, S8 9FR. The committee apologized for not realizing they'd agreed room rates net of VAT—full amounts being £72 single, £60/person double or twin. On a happier note, car parking is £3 rather than the rumoured £12 per day.

23 Apr - 2 May 2011 • **Sci-Fi London** (film), London. Dates announced; more TBA, [www.sci-fi-london.com](http://www.sci-fi-london.com). Enquiries 020 3239 9277.

30 Sep - 2 Oct 2011 • **Fantasycon 2011**, Royal Albion Hotel, Brighton. GoH Gwyneth Jones, John Ajvide Lindqvist, more TBA. £45 reg (BFS members £40), £40/day. Cheques (to Fantasycon 2011) to 10 Haycroft Gardens, Mastin Moor, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S43 3FE.

15-16 Oct 2011 • **Octocon**, Camden Court Hotel, Camden St, Dublin 2, Ireland. GoH John Higgins; more TBA. €20 reg, expected to rise at Christmas. Contact: Apt 56 Shalimar, Monastery Rd, Clondalkin, Dublin 22, Ireland; info at octocon dot com.

### Infinitely Improbable

**Everyone's a Critic.** Paul Wesley of ITV2's *Vampire Diaries* ascribes the current vampire boom to modern tv's astonishing insight, denied to such as Bram Stoker or J. Sheridan Le Fanu, that vampirism can be linked with sexuality. 'They've made this whole vampire thing recently like a sex thing [...] Back in the day it used to be like Dracula. They were genuinely frightening but now it's a very sexual tone.' Fellow-actor Ian Somerhalder enthusiastically agrees: 'Just sucking on the neck of some beautiful girls, that blows off more steam than just violently killing someone.' (BBC, 5 October) [MPJ] Who'd have thought it?

**Magazine Scene.** *Realms of Fantasy* was declared dead on 18 October, with publisher Warren Lapine blaming the 'terrible economic climate' while editors Shawna McCarthy and Douglas Cohen also posted farewell notes at [www.rofmag.com](http://www.rofmag.com). [SW] The sister magazine *Dreams of Decadence* (urban fantasy, paranormal romance) will also cease. • *Book & Magazine Collector*, the UK magazine which has published so much useful genre bibliography since 1984, is to close with issue #328, Xmas 2010. [MA] • *Fantasy Magazine* (from Prime Books) will relaunch in March 2011 with a new look and a new editor: John Joseph Adams.

**As Others See Us.** The Pirate Bay plans for a naughty file-sharing site in orbit have just one slight credibility problem: 'Although it is no secret that Sci-Fi fans are well represented in the pirate community, the idea is taken somewhat seriously ...' (Torrentfreak.com, 20 October) [MMcL] • Another skiffy insight: 'The ability to design and immediately fabricate a custom ensemble is the dream of every well-dressed science fiction nerd.' (Katherine Mangu-Ward, *Reason*, November 2010) [MMW]

**World Fantasy Awards.** LIFE ACHIEVEMENT (announced in advance, with an unprecedented three winners): Brian Lumley, Terry Pratchett, Peter Straub. NOVEL China Miéville, *The City & The City*. NOVELLA Margo Lanagan, 'Sea-Hearts' (X6). SHORT Karen Joy Fowler, 'The Pelican Bar' (*Eclipse Three*). ANTHOLOGY Peter Straub, ed., *American Fantastic Tales*. COLLECTION (tie) Ludmilla Petrushevskaya, *There Once Lived a Woman Who Tried To Kill Her Neighbor's Baby: Scary Fairy Tales*; Gene Wolfe, *The Very Best of Gene Wolfe/The Best of Gene Wolfe*. ARTIST Charles Vess. SPECIAL/PROFESSIONAL Jonathan Strahan, for anthologies. SPECIAL/NON-PROFESSIONAL Susan Marie Groppi, for *Strange Horizons*.

**R.I.P.** Alexander Anderson (1920-2010), US creator of various animated cartoon characters—most famously *Rocky and Bullwinkle* (1959-1964) with Jay Ward—died on 22 October at age 90. [SJD] • Hans Arnold (1925-2010), Swiss-born Swedish artist specializing in horror, died on 25 October; he was 85. [AE via AIP] • Roy Ward Baker (1916-

2010), UK film/tv director whose work includes *Quatermass and the Pit* (1967), *Moon Zero Two* (1969), *Scars of Dracula* (1970), *The Vampire Lovers* (1970), *Dr Jekyll & Sister Hyde* (1971), *Asylum* (1972), *And Now the Screaming Starts!* (1973), *The Legend of the Seven Golden Vampires* (1974), *The Vault of Horror* (1973), *The Monster Club* (1980) and much genre tv, died on 5 October. He was 93. [SG] ● **Betty Bond**, widow of old-time sf author Nelson S. Bond (1908-2006)—and a published author in her own right, having sold to a 1937 pulp magazine to prove she could—died on 2 October. [CP] ● **Graham Crowden** (1922-2010), UK actor who refused the starring role in *Doctor Who* after Jon Pertwee quit, died on 21 October aged 87. Genre credits include *Catweazle*, *The Amazing Mr. Blunden*, *The Final Programme*, *The Little Prince*, *Star Maidens*, *Jabberwocky*, 1990, *Doctor Who*/'The Horns of Nimon' (all 1970s), *Britannia Hospital* (1982), *Delta Wave* (1996), *Soul Music* (1997) and *The 10th Kingdom* (2000). [SG] ● **Bob Guccione** (1930-2010), US publisher best known for *Penthouse*, and of sf relevance for launching its glossy sister magazine *Omni* (1978-1995; web only to 1998), died on 20 October aged 79. [GVG] ● **Eva Ibbotson** (1925-2010), US author of *The Great Ghost Rescue* (1975), *Which Witch?* (1979) and other children's fantasies, died on 20 October. [PDF] She was a 2001 Smarties gold award winner. ● **Alain le Bussy** (1947-2010), Belgian author of at least 30 sf novels and 200 stories, died on 14 October following a throat operation. He was a regular Eurocon attendee, received the 1993 Prix Rosny-Aîné, and won a 1995 European SF Society award as best promoter of the genre. [BJW/SFS] ● **Benoît Mandelbrot** (1924-2010), Polish-born US/French mathematician whose pioneering work on fractals (a term he coined) and fractal geometry was hugely influential in many fields including sf, died on 14 October aged 85. ● **Harry Mulisch** (1927-2010), eminent mainstream Dutch author who explored sf/fantasy themes in *De toekomst van gisteren* (*Yesterday's Future*, 1972), *De ontdekking van de hemel* (*The Discovery of Heaven*, 1992, filmed 2001) and *De Procedure* (1998), died on 30 October aged 83. [PDF] ● **Claire Rayner** (1931-2010), UK agony aunt and novelist whose sf venture was *The Meddlers* (1970; US title *The Baby Factory*), died on 11 October; she was 79. [JC] ● **Johnny Sheffield** (1931-2010), US actor whose best-known part was Boy in Johnny Weissmuller's 1930s and 1940s Tarzan films, died on 15 October after falling off a ladder while pruning a palm tree; he was 79. [RC] ● **Takeshi Shudo** (1949-2010), Japanese anime scriptwriter and novelist who worked on some of the best-known modern anime and won the first Anime Grand Prix screenwriting award in 1983, died on 28 October. [JonC] ● **Donald H. Tuck** (1922-2010), Australian sf bibliographer whose researches formed a major foundation stone of genre reference work, died on 11 October aged 87. [BRG] He received a special committee award from the 1962 Worldcon; was a guest of honour at the first Aussiecon in 1975, though unable to attend; and won a 1984 nonfiction Hugo for the third and last volume of his monumental *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction and Fantasy through 1968* (1974-1983). ● **Norman Wisdom** (1915-2010), UK comic actor who played Britain's first astronaut in *The Bulldog Breed* (1960), died on 4 October; he was 95. His more recent genre credits include *Five Children and It* (2004), *Evil Calls* (horror, 2008) and *Labrats* (2010). [SG]

**In Typo Veritas.** *Dept of King Alfred's Revenge.* 'Torches burned in the scones bound to the trunks of each tree ...' (Kari Sperring, *Living with Ghosts*, 2009) [KS]

**We Are Everywhere.** 'A little more than 24 hours after online ballots started pouring into the Washington, D.C. Board of Elections and Ethics in late September, it became apparent that something was amiss. Washington D.C.'s newly elected U.S. Representative went by the name of Colossus. A villainous computer from science-fiction lore captured the city council chairmanship. And 15 seconds after voters cast their ballots, they were serenaded by the University of Michigan fight song. The system had been hacked.' (Time.com, 15 October) [MMW] ● A tiny surprise for *SF Encyclopedia* fans, albeit one L short: 'in the Ewan McGregor neo-noir movie *Deception* (2008) the accountancy firm our hero must infiltrate and embezzle from is called ... Clute-Nichols!' [PB]

**As Others See Us II.** Gloom and sf are synonymous, according to a commenter outraged by the announcement of a 'new dystopian trilogy' from HarperCollins Children's Books: 'My pet hobbyhorse, I know, but isn't "dystopian" just a pretentious way of saying "Science Fiction"? Can we not just accept that SF is an extremely popular and legitimate genre and one that we don't need to invent face-saving euphemisms for?' (TheBookseller.com, 5 October) [DG]

**Outraged Letters.** *Mark Plummer* on A279: 'You mention the unattended funeral of Luke Skywalker (43) of Addiscombe, Croydon. The

undertakers who failed to trace any friends or family clearly weren't trying too hard, given that the district's most famous denizen is Dave Prowse.' ● *Vernon Speed* blinds us with science and predicts the World Fantasy Award: 'According to the immutable Laws of Psychoballotry, if you want to increase your chances of winning an SF award, then you should entitle your novel *The City, the City, and the City* since these words are statistically correlated with past success (*City* by Clifford Simak won the International Fantasy Award; *The City and the City* by China Miéville won the Hugo). However, if you want to win the Man Booker Prize, then call it *The Sea, the Sea, the Sea*, following the trend of past winners *The Sea* by John Banville and *The Sea, the Sea* by Iris Murdoch.' This theory may also explain the international success of Peter Høeg's borderline-sf *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow*, whose six sections are titled The City, The City, The City, The Sea, The Sea and The Ice. ● *Andrew Stephenson* watched the telly: 'BBC-tv's *Only Connect* quiz show [4 October] had as one team three "Fantasy Writers", to wit, Geoff Ryman, Liz Williams and (captain) I-Forget-Who [Paul Cornell]. Alas, their evial opponents cheated outrageously by being Way Too Good and eventually made talking space-calamari of Our Heroes, who nonetheless redeemed their performance by being Sporting Chaps ...'

**More Awards.** *Hans Christian Andersen* children's literature prize: J.K. Rowling. This is a new award, not the established Andersen medal which this year went to David Almond. (*Guardian*, 20 October) [MPJ]

**Random Fandom.** *Rob Hansen* raised a glass last week for British fandom's 80th birthday: 'On 27th October 1930, at 32 Thorold Road in Ilford, the first ever meeting of Britain's first ever fan group took place. If our fandom can be said to have a specific beginning, this was it.' Breathes there a fan with soul so dead as not to remember the Ilford Science Literary Circle (1930-1931)? ● *Duncan Lunan* celebrated his 65th birthday in Glasgow on 24 October.

**C.o.A.** *Earl Kemp*, P.O. Box 369, PMB 205, Tecate, CA 91980, USA.

**The Dead Past.** *36 Years Ago*, Robert Silverberg wrote a booklet on drugs in sf, now extensively cited in the latest *Druglink* magazine from the UK charity DrugScope: Marcus Roberts's article 'Dream-Dust from Mars' acknowledges having 'borrowed from Robert Silverman's [*sic*] "Drug Themes in Science Fiction" published by the US National Institute on Drug Abuse in 1974.' Dr Rob Jackson comments: 'As well as using the surnames Silverman and Silverberg in a randomly interchangeable way throughout the article, he also refers to some bloke called Chine Mieville, and a 1984 William Gibson novel called *Necromancer*. I have also spotted a Robert Silverman novel called *Downward to Earth*. (No "the".) If their proofreading is this good in the rest of the journal, I'm not that sure I can trust them to tell the difference even between cocaine and codeine, let alone between methadone and mephedrone.'

**Fanfundery.** *Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund* nominations for the 2011 westbound race (Europe to North America) open 12 November and close 18 December. Voting deadline 12 March; the winner attends the Reno Worldcon in August. Contact stevegreen at livejournal dot com.

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Dept of Yes, But What Shape Was It?* '... near the bottom of the floor was a rectangular-sized hole ...' (Chris Mooney [not the science journalist], *The Missing*, 2007) [PB] ● *Long Patient Vigil Dept.* 'From the depths of the grotto came the sound of water, a single drop blepping into a pool. A week later, another blep. Then a month passed before three drops fell in as many seconds.' (Troy Denning, *Star Wars Fate of the Jedi: Abyss*, 2009) [AR] ● *Dept of Existential Introspection.* 'His tongue lay in his mouth like a raw sausage—swollen, numb and cold. [He had] a throbbing head that made him feel like he had died and just didn't realise it yet.' (*Ibid*) ● *Eyeballs in the Sky.* 'You think you can pull the wool over everyone's eyes ... but mine, you'll find, are in the back of my head.' (Martin Russell, *Mr T aka The Man Without a Name*, 1977) [PB] ● *Dept of Entire Entirety.* 'It looked entirely normal, except that the sheath was made entirely of lead, and it covered the sword entirely ...' (Brent Weeks, *The Way of Shadows*, 2008) [BC via TM] ● *Equine Dexterity Dept.* 'But with fire in one hand and a gleaming knife in the other, the horse was hardly calmed.' (*Ibid*) ● *Dept of Workshop Romance.* 'Her climax was a nail he was hammering repeatedly.' (Emma Holly, *Angel at Dawn*, 2011) [RF]

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