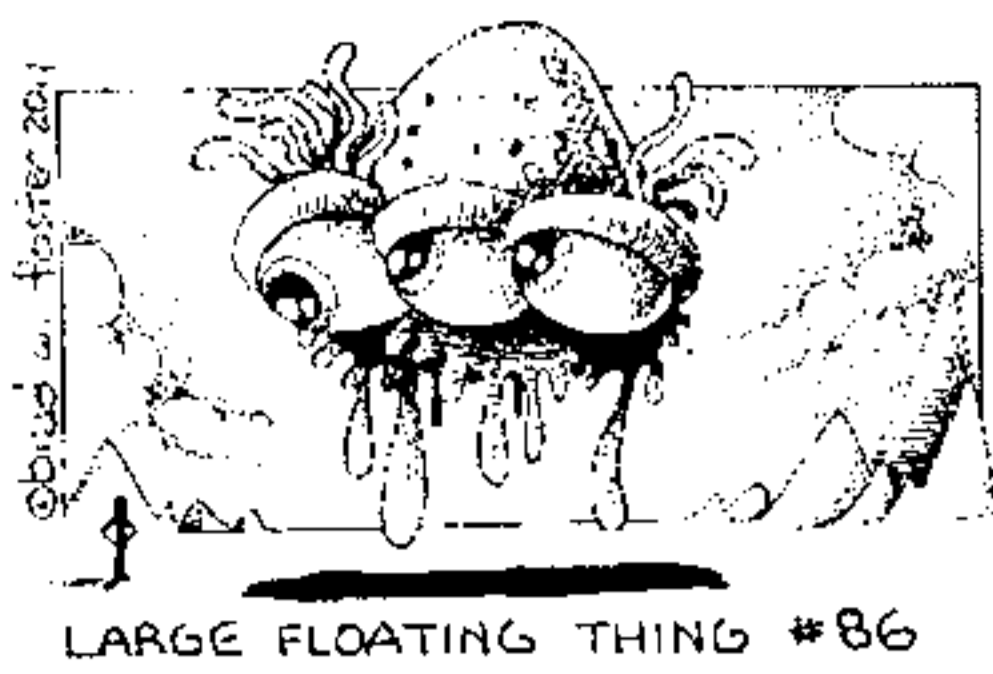


# ansible



## Ansible 290 September 2011

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: Brad W. Foster (congratulations!). Available for SAE or used stass-pisistors.

**Renovation:** Worldcon. Reno. Happened. To no one's surprise, the unopposed Texas bid won the 2013 site selection: see LoneStarCon 3 below. • **Hugo Awards:** *Ansible's* spies described the ceremony as 'interminable' and 'unfunny except for Robert Silverberg'. NOVEL Connie Willis, *Blackout/All Clear*. NOVELLA Ted Chiang, *The Lifecycle of Software Objects*. NOVELETTE Allen M. Steele, 'The Emperor of Mars' by (Asimov's 6/10). SHORT STORY Mary Robinette Kowal, 'For Want of a Nail' by (Asimov's 9/10). RELATED WORK Lynne M. Thomas and Tara O'Shea, ed., *Chicks Dig Time Lords: A Celebration of Doctor Who by the Women Who Love It*. GRAPHIC STORY Phil & Kaja Foglio, *Girl Genius, Volume 10: Agatha Heterodyne and the Guardian Muse*. DRAMATIC, LONG *Inception*. DRAMATIC, SHORT *Doctor Who: 'The Pandorica Opens'/'The Big Bang'*. EDITOR, SHORT Sheila Williams. EDITOR, LONG Lou Anders. PRO ARTIST Shaun Tan. SEMIPROZINE *Clarkesworld*. FANZINE *The Drink Tank*. FAN WRITER Claire Brialey. FAN ARTIST Brad W. Foster. JOHN W. CAMPBELL AWARD Lev Grossman. • **Hugo Rules.** Rules tinkering was debated at the Business Meeting for several standees (periods of near-infinite subjective time), leading to Best Fancast as a new category for audio/video fan publications, plus complementary amendments to the Semi-prozine and Fanzine definitions, the latter now including 'periodical' to eliminate continually updated websites. Ratification is required in 2012.

### The Assassination Weapon

**J.G. Ballard** was in the *Sunday Times* and other UK papers, thanks to a new book about him. Charles Platt comments: 'When John Baxter asked me to help him write his Ballard biography, I somehow got the feeling that I didn't trust him. In email to my friend David Pringle on August 3rd, 2010, I wrote: "... He'll probably misquote or misinterpret me, one way or another..." / Well, how prescient, and I'm glad that I didn't help Mr Baxter very much. Unfortunately I had written for the *New York Review of SF* about a drunken party where Jimmy talked of "the ultimate car crash" involving his girlfriend, Claire. I presented that anecdote with some humour, some skepticism, and some affection. Deprived of this context, it reads like a bizarre mixture of two defunct publications: *New Worlds* and *News of the World*. How ironic that Jimmy, always so fascinated by tabloid treatment of celebrities, should find himself a victim of it—after being safely dead and unable to respond, of course. / If J.G. Ballard is now remembered as the man who wanted to kill his girlfriend in a car crash (much as William Burroughs is remembered for killing his wife when he tried to shoot an apple off her head), we will have John Baxter to thank. To anyone who finds this as offensive as I do, I would like to apologize for the extent to which I may have served as an enabler.' (21 August)

**David Fury**, scriptwriter for *Lost*, recalled a memorable moment of liaison with the ABC-TV network: 'There's an episode in which [the long-term character] Said is being tortured by the French woman, and she is giving up the story of how she got there, and she was there with a research team, and Said asked her what were they studying, what was their expertise, and she said, "Time." And the network said, "You can't say that, that's veering into science fiction." [Audience laughter.] And at this point, we'd had a paraplegic stand up and walk, we'd had a smoke monster no one had seen, and they're going "No, no, no, you can't have this "Time" thing, it's too science-fiction, the audience won't go for that." (transcribed—'close paraphrase, eliding mostly Ums'—from *The Nerdist Writers Panel #2* at www.nerdist.com, recorded 13 March 2011) [TM]

**Marvin Kaye** has bought *Weird Tales* from John Betancourt's Wild-side Press and plans to edit it himself. Current editor Ann VanderMeer, under whom the venerable magazine won its only Hugo (2009), sadly reports that she and other staff are to be dropped; her last issue will be #359, scheduled for February 2012. (*Weird Tales* website, 23 August)

**Martin Rees**, Astronomer Royal, knows where his towel is. As he told the British Interplanetary Society this year, 'It is better to read first-rate science fiction than second-rate science; it's no more likely to be wrong and is far more stimulating than the second-rate science. And I think it's good to read the great classics of science fiction.' [M]

### Contesserate

2 Sep • **Heartwood** (Rob Holdstock memorial discussion), British Library. 6:30-8pm. £7.50/£5 concessions. Online booking only? See [www.bl.uk/whatson/exhibitions/outof/events](http://www.bl.uk/whatson/exhibitions/outof/events) (with other events too).

2-8 Sep • **SF Spectacular**, Oxfam Bookshop, Reading: a second promotion based on Brian Stableford's huge donation of sf texts.

14-15 September • **Opera Siam: Mae Naak** (the UK premiere of Somtow Sucharitkul's ghost opera), Bloomsbury Theatre, London. 7:30pm. £24; £17 concessions. Box office 020 7388 8822; for details and online booking see [www.thebloomsbury.com/event/run/1593](http://www.thebloomsbury.com/event/run/1593).

14 Sep • **Christopher Priest** reading & *Prestige* showing, QUAD, Market Place, Derby, DE1 3AS. 7pm. £5.50. Box office 01332 290606.

15 Sep • **Robert Rankin** evening, Phoenix Square, Midland St, Leicester, LE1 1TG. 7pm. £5.50. Box office 0116 242 2800.

17-18 Sep • **From Imagination to Reality** (British Interplanetary Soc space/sf event), Berrill Lecture Theatre, Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA. £80 or £45/day. Online booking only, at [www.bis-space.com/products-page/symposia/](http://www.bis-space.com/products-page/symposia/).

24 Sep • **TitanCon**, Europa Exhibition Centre, Belfast. GoH Ian McDonald. £10 reg, £5 supp. Join at [www.titancon.com](http://www.titancon.com) (PayPal only).

28 Sep • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Antelope, 22 Eaton Terrace, London, SW1W 8EZ. 5pm for 7pm. Free. With Jo Fletcher.

30 Sep - 2 Oct • **Fantasycon 2011**, Royal Albion Hotel, Brighton. £65 reg (BFS members £60) or £40/day (Sat only). Cheques to 10 Haycroft Gardens, Mastin Moor, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S43 3FE.

7-9 Oct • **Sci-Fi London Oktoberfest**, Odeon Camden Town and other Camden Town venues. Further details to follow.

28 Nov - 7 Jan • **Howl's Moving Castle** (play), Southwark Playhouse, London. 3pm and 7:30pm Mon-Sat (not 24-26 Dec, 31 Dec, 1 Jan). £16; £14 concessions. Box office 020 7407 0234.

6-9 Apr 2012 • **Olympus 2012** (Eastercon), Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow, London. Now £65 reg, £55 unwaged. £20 supp/under-17s, £5 under-12s, £1 under-5s. Contact 4 Evesham Green, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP19 9RX, or enquiries at [olympus2012.org](http://olympus2012.org).

25-27 Feb 2013 • **Redemption '13** (multimedia sf), Britannia Hotel, Coventry, CV1 5RP. Now £65 reg, rising to £70 on 1 September 2012; unwaged etc £20 less. £15 supp and under-18s; under-3s free. Contact 61 Chaucer Road, Farnborough, Hampshire, GU14 8SP.

29 Aug - 2 Sep 2013 • **LoneStarCon 3** (71st Worldcon), Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center, San Antonio, Texas. GoH Ellen Datlow, James Gunn, Willie Siros, Norman Spinrad, Darrel K. Sweet. \$160 reg; YA \$110; child \$75; family \$440; \$60 supp. For the usual labyrinth of presupporter and site-voter discounts, see [www.LoneStarCon3.org](http://www.LoneStarCon3.org). Contact PO Box 27277, Austin, TX 78755, USA.

### Infinitely Improbable

**Riotwatch.** UK sf fans seem mostly unscathed by August's upheavals, but Joe Gordon reported damage to the fronts of Forbidden Planet International outlets in Birmingham (cracked windows at Nostalgia & Comics) and Manchester, though no actual looting. However, Mike Ashley heard bad news when researching an *SF Encyclopedia* magazine entry: 'David Clark who now runs *The Edge* (Graham Evans's old mag) was going to bring me up to speed, except it turned out their office was trashed in last week's riots.' Ouch. According to DC, 'No data or files were lost, but there was some serious damage on two sites, and while I saw no rioters or criminals I had some problems with the police when I tried to go home.' Croydon fandom merely smelled the smoke. Media riot coverage was reportedly evocative of sf: 'And as that footage was beamed around the world, the images had their own kind of psychic velocity: a short-cut to viewers' unconsciousness provided by Britain's rich tradition of fictional visions of dystopia, from George Orwell's *1984* to Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* and of course anything by JG Ballard.' (Gautam Malkani, *Financial Times*, 13 August) [MMW] We all remember *1984's* proles stealing TVs



so Big Brother could watch them all the better, and the soma-crazed masses of *Brave New World* wildly setting fire to cities...

**Awards.** *Big Heart*: Gay Haldeman. • *Chesley* life achievement (art): Boris Vallejo. • *Clareton for Distinguished Service* (to sf): The Tiptree Motherboard (Karen Joy Fowler, Jeanne Gomoll, Ellen Klages, Pat Murphy, Debbie Notkin, Jeff Smith). • *Sidewise* (alternate history): LONG Eric G. Swedin, *When Angels Wept: A What-If History of the Cuban Missile Crisis*; SHORT Alan Smale, 'A Clash of Eagles' (*Panverse Two*).

**By Any Other Name.** "Battlestar"'s five-year run ended in March of 2009, the same week the Cataclysm occurred. That event was the announcement that the channel was changing its name from Sci Fi to SyFy, a crime against nature that had fans—no network has more devoted or opinionated fans—pulling out their light sabres and aiming them at executives and, of course, burning up the Internet with scathing, witty insults... To switch from the noble Sci Fi, associated with so many groundbreaking, beloved writers, to something that looks like your Uncle Seymour's screen name—it's enough to make any earthling go berserk.' (Nancy Franklin, *New Yorker*, 1 August.) [MMW]

**Publishers and Sinners.** PublishAmerica, the notorious US vanity press, made its authors an irresistible offer linked to the Edinburgh International Book Festival. 'We will bring your book to the attention of Harry Potter's author next week while our delegation is in her hometown, and ask her to read it and to tell us and you what she thinks. Tell her what you think: in the Ordering Instructions box write your own note for JK Rowling, max. 50-100 words. We will include your note in our presentation for her!' Cost: \$49, or \$69 for multiple books. Alas, neither Rowling nor the Festival had ever heard of this interesting deal. 'Rowling spokesman Mark Hutchinson said Tuesday that the claim was "completely false" and promised "appropriate action." PublishAmerica, based in Frederick, Md., has long been cited by industry watchdogs for allegedly deceiving authors.' (*Huffington Post*, 16 August) Meanwhile, PublishAmerica made blustery threats to sue for defamation. (*Writer Beware*, 16/18 August) [JS] *Publishers Weekly* found this PublishAmerica response 'notable because their legal representation utilizes triple exclamation points.' (*PWxyz*, 19 August) [AIP]

**R.I.P.** *L.A. Banks* (Leslie Esdaile Banks, 1959-2011), US author of many urban fantasies including the 'Vampire Huntress Legends' vampire series and the 'Crimson Moon' werewolf series, died from adrenal cancer on 2 August. She was 51. [PDF] • *Del Connell* (1918-2011), US old-timer of comics and animation—almost always anonymously owing to past industry practice—died on 12 August aged 93. He wrote thousands of comics, spent several decades from 1939 with Disney drawing Mickey Mouse and others, and created the storyline that became tv's *Lost in Space*; his life work was at long last honoured with the Bill Finger award for Achievement in Comic Book Writing at Comic-Con this year. [PDF] • *Colin Harvey* (1960-2011), UK sf author and anthologist whose small-press book debut was *Lightning Days* (2007) and whose career had since taken off with two novels from Angry Robot, died on 16 August following a stroke on the previous day. He was 50. [JS] • *Richard A. Hoen* (1928-2010), US fan who in 1948 sent a joke letter to *Astounding SF* about its November 1949 contents—to which John W. Campbell famously responded by publishing the issue more or less as described—died on 2 August last year. [SHS] • *Pat Jackson* (1916-2011), UK film/tv director who was the last surviving director of Patrick McGoochan's *The Prisoner* (1967-1968), died on 3 June aged 95. [MPJ] • *Robert Robinson* (1927-2011), popular UK tv and radio personality whose three novels include the sf satire *The Conspiracy* (1968), died on 12 August; he was 83. (BBC) • *Jimmy Sangster* (1927-2011), UK Hammer Studios scriptwriter and, later, director who wrote *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957), *Horror of Dracula* (1958) and other Hammer classics, died on 19 August aged 83. [SG] • *William Sleator* (1945-2011), US author of more than 30 books including many children's and young-adult sf and fantasy novels, died on 2 August aged 66. [AIP] An early sf title is *House of Stairs* (1974).

**As Others See Our Dupes.** 'Most Australians duped by science fiction' is an intriguing ABC News headline. The Australian Nuclear Science & Technology Organization polled 1,250 people to learn if they could tell reality from sf: 'More than three-quarters of Australians believe microscopic life has been found on other planets and almost half believe humans can be frozen and thawed back to life, despite neither being true.' (15 August) [AL] Could they possibly be remembering old news stories and pop-science articles rather than sf?

**Outraged Letters.** *Paul Barnett* on A288 obits: 'For me and I think many others, Peter Falk's major role in a fantasy flick was in Wim Wnders's *Wings of Desire* (1987).' • *N. Lee Wood* on A289: 'I was really

saddened to read that Sakyō Komatsu had died. He was a charming, funny, sweet, intelligent, lovely man, and his passing is a loss to the entire sf community. I spent a memorable evening at a science fiction convention (Den Haag? Italy?) when he and I ended up orphaned in the hotel restaurant together, too far away to join in with the rest of the gang's conversation. He entertained me well into the wee hours with a thoroughly funny explanation of intricately Byzantine Japanese tax laws while drinking copious amounts of booze until his eyes became a peculiar shade of bloodshot. The next morning, when I saw him at breakfast, I said hello, and asked, as one does, "How are you this morning?" He bowed, always the polite Japanese gentleman, and with impeccable comedic timing said, "Very hungover, thank you very much." He was a tireless and amazingly cheerful man who attended sf conventions all over the world, and did a great deal to promote Japanese sf into the English language market, as well as vice versa. I'll miss him.'

**As Others Remember Us.** '[John W.] Campbell was the Editor of *Amazing Stories*, the first sci-fi magazine, with a group of contributors that included Frederik Pohl, Isaac Asimov, and Damon Knight.' (Comics Alliance.com on the *New Worlds* revival, 20 August) [AIP]

**Fanfundery.** *TransAtlantic Fan Fund*. The 2012 TAFF race begins. N. American candidates for the trip to Olympus 2012 (Eastercon) must find nominators, write a platform, etc., by 30 September. Contact Anne & Brian Gray (akg.netmouse at gmail.com; see CoA) or see taff.org.uk.

**We Are Everywhere.** More genre imagery. 'The phone-hacking scandal has reached a tipping point familiar to any viewer of science fiction: the moment when the monster, created in a secret laboratory, finally breaks free of any restraint and goes rampaging off amid a trail of mayhem.' (Jenny McCartney, *Sunday Telegraph*, 21 August) [MPJ] • 'Enter a terrifying procession of ghouls. The US economy has started to stumble lethargically, as if bitten by a zombie. The eurozone countries, one by one, are being drained of lifeblood by a swift and merciless vampire. Even among the seemingly healthy emerging-market villagers, there are signs of a diabolical malady that brings first fever and then debilitation. Perhaps most worrying of all is that the forces of light—with their weaponry of silver bullets, decapitation machetes and powerful antibiotics—are scattered and disorganized, if not totally absent.' (Alan Beattie, *Financial Times*, 6 August) [MMW]

**Random Fandom.** *Ted White* had a spinal laminectomy on 25 August and came through 'in excellent shape'. [CP] He's back home, can walk, and is active in his usual email lists. • *Also Hospitalized* but recovering: Jan Howard Finder, who got to Reno but missed Worldcon owing to heart trouble, and Heinlein biographer Bill Patterson, who had to leave early with a necrotic foot that's since been amputated. • *Worldcon Attendance* estimated at over 4000, perhaps over 4100. [F770]

**The Dead Past.** *50 Years Ago*: London uproar! 'JOHN BRUNNER is understood to be one of the many CND people who yesterday staged a Ban the Bomb sit down in Trafalgar Square. Although the rally was declared illegal by Home Secretary R.A. Butler, the demonstration went on. Chaos reigned in the Square and squatters were carted away constantly by the police in an attempt to get traffic moving. Well over 600 arrests were made. Not playing the game at all, what! And on Battle of Britain Day!!!' (Ron Bennett, *Skyrack* 37, 18 September 1961)

**C.o.A.** *Anne and Brian Gray*, 5006 Royene Ave NE, Albuquerque, NM 87110, USA. ('We moved just ten days before Worldcon ...')

**Group Gropes.** *London Fortean Society*, The Bell, 50 Middlesex St, London, E1 7EX. Last Thursday each month except August & December. First meeting 29 September; 7pm for 7:30; £3 or £2 concessions. [DVB]

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Sensitivity Dept.* 'Even from the corner of her eye when one of her sobs was carried to him like a fallen leaf, he, thankfully, let her be.' (Taylor Holden, *The Sense of Paper*, 2006) [PB]

• *Dept of Existential Insight.* 'Carnelian jerked awake. The cessation of pain was so instant he was sure he must be a corpse.' (Ricardo Pinto, *The Third God*, 2009) [BA] • *Morning After Dept.* 'She recoiled from herself.' 'But I woke the next morning with a fountain spurting from the pit of my stomach.' (both William Brodrick, *The Sixth Lamentation*, 2003) [PB] • *Dept of Possible Perspiration.* 'The boy's face shone with the youthful dew that no one misses until it is gone.' (David Ebershoff, *The 19th Wife*, 2008) [PB] • *Try It With A Log Dept.* 'I lay awake upon the bed, unable to fall off.' (*Ibid*)

Ansible 290 © David Langford, 2011. Thanks to David V. Barrett, Brian Ameringen, Paul Barnett, Tony Cullen, the late and still-missed Mog Decarnin, Paul Di Filippo, File 770, Steve Green, Martyn P. Jackson, A. Lawday, Markus, Todd Mason, Curt Phillips, Andrew I. Porter, Steven H Silver, Jim Steel, Martin Morse Wooster, and our Hero Distributors: Dave Corby (Brum Group), SCIS/Prophecy, Alan Stewart (Australia). 1 September 2011