

# Ansible



## Ansible 300 July 2012

From **David Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU, UK. Web [news.ansible.co.uk](http://news.ansible.co.uk). ISSN 0265-9816 (print); 1740-942X (e). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Brad W. Foster**. Available for SAE or the last line of the Saaamaaa Ritual.

**Editorial.** Top number theorists confirm that, as was widely speculated after the appearance of *Ansible* 299, this issue is indeed the 300th.

### One in Three Hundred

**Gerry Anderson** revealed in late June that he had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease 18 months previously. (Fanderson.org.uk) [GD]

**Dr Joanne Benford**, the Open University creative writing tutor exposed as having plagiarized a Dylan Thomas story and taken similar liberties with Aleister Crowley and many others (*Telegraph*, 22 June), has also published genre-related nonfiction. According to Alex Keegan, who's been on the case since learning Benford had appropriated his story 'Postcards From BalloonLand', her *Sing of the City Electric*—on postmodern architecture with extensive references to *Blade Runner*—and *Living Doll: The Seduction of the Cyborg* both contain much plagiarism, 100% in the latter case: see his dossier at [alexkeegan.blogspot.co.uk](http://alexkeegan.blogspot.co.uk). Furthermore, Benford's *Postmodern Feminist Fantasy* overlaps or is included in her *Fanning the Flames*, in which researchers are reporting more and more pirated work, and whose content in turn overlaps that of *Living Doll*. One Keegan correspondent asserts that the first chapter of Benford's PhD thesis is 'largely stitched together' from nine articles by others (one from *Wired*), mostly about cyberspace, cyborgs or sf: 'It's an unsophisticated copy and paste job.' [JS] Oh dearie me.

**Mitchell Gross**, whose novels as by Mitchell Graham include a fantasy trilogy, pleaded guilty to fraud (see A292). He's been sentenced to over 12 years in a US prison and ordered to pay \$5.8 million to his victims. (*Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 28 June; *AthensPatch*, 30 June)

**Susan Hill**, author of many supernatural and psychological suspense novels (including the recently filmed *The Woman in Black*) was made a Commander of the British Empire in the Queen's birthday honours, for services to literature.

**Grant Morrison**, comics writer and playwright, was honoured with the MBE for services to film and literature.

**Michael Swanwick** wrote about the passing of Hope Mirrlees's nephew Prince Robin Ian Evelyn Milne Stuart de La Lanne Mirrlees—'almost certainly the highest-ranking noble ever to be published in *NYRSF* [*New York Review of SF*]'—and repeated a favourite family story: 'Robin Mirrlees' mother, Hope's sister-in-law Frances de La Lanne Mirrlees, was a strikingly beautiful and of course aristocratic woman. One of her many friends was Ian Fleming. Who one day told her that he was writing a novel. / "Oh, Ian," she said. "Don't write a novel. You haven't the brains for it." (*Flogging Babel*, 26 June)

**Jeff Vandermeer** was grumpy about *New Yorker* coverage of the BookExpo America sf panel. Despite legendary NY fact-checking, quotes were misattributed and Jeff was transmogrified into James VanderMeer.

**F. Paul Wilson** plunged Facebook into war by linking to a website about the coming tv series *The Fixer*—based on Jon F. Merz's urban fantasies—with the comment 'Let's rip off Jack, shall we?' Merz disliked the insinuation that his 'Fixer' vampire hunter was stolen from Wilson's 'Repairman Jack', and asked for a retraction and apology, causing a loyal Wilson fan to denounce Merz as a pirate.... And so on, and on.

### Convolancy

Until 16 Sep • **Tea with Alice/Storyloom** (exhibitions), Story Museum, Rochester House, 42 Pembroke St, Oxford, OX1 1BP. Each £5, £3 concessions. [www.storymuseum.org.uk](http://www.storymuseum.org.uk); enquiries 01865 790050.

14 Jul • **Edge-Lit** (sf/fantasy/horror), QUAD centre, Market Place, Derby, DE22 3PN. 10am-midnight. £25 reg. Box office 01332 290 606.

20-23 Jul • **Continuum 2012** (RPG), John Foster Hall, Leicester University. £35 reg (day: Fri £10, Sat or Sun £15) or £30+room charges. *Room booking deadline: 2 July*. See [www.continuum.uk.net](http://www.continuum.uk.net).

25 Jul • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Melton Mowbray, 18 Holborn, London, EC1N 2LE. 5/6pm for 7pm. With Roz Kaveney.

10-12 Aug • **Congenial** (Unicon/RPG), Murray Edwards College, Cambridge. £30 reg (under-16s £15). Contact Congenial, 19 Uphall Road, Cambridge, CB1 3HX. See also [congenial.org.uk](http://congenial.org.uk).

16-20 Aug • **Return of the Ring** (Tolkien Society), Loughborough University. £90 reg; £75 child/concessions; £20 supp; £1 under-5s, to 20 York Rd, Stony Stratford, Bucks, MK11 1BJ; or register online at [www.returnofthering.org](http://www.returnofthering.org). Day rate £35; £30 child/concessions.

23-27 Aug • **Frightfest** (horror film festival), Empire Cinema, Leicester Square, London. Booking: see [www.frightfest.co.uk](http://www.frightfest.co.uk).

24-27 Aug • **Discworld Convention**, Birmingham. Sold out.

30 Aug - 3 Sep • **Chicon 7** (70th Worldcon), Hyatt Regency, Chicago. Rates *until 31 July*: \$215 reg, \$540 family, \$100 YA (17-21), \$75 child (5-16), accompanied under-5s free. Contact PO Box 13, Skokie, IL 60076, USA. Hugo final-ballot voting closes on 31 July.

16-18 Nov • **Armadacon 24**, Future Inns, Plymouth. *Date change from 9-11 Nov*. GoH Pat Harkin, Ian Edginton. £30 (£25 concessions) to 18 Wadham Rd, Liskeard, Cornwall, PL14 3BD. £35/£30 at the door.

29 Mar - 1 Apr 2013 • **EightSquaredCon** (Eastercon), Bradford. *Rates held to 31 July*: £50 reg; £25 supp/junior (12-17); £10 child (5-11); £1 infant. Online booking details at [www.eightsquaredcon.org](http://www.eightsquaredcon.org).

### Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See GRRM.** Here's how to say you like *Game of Thrones* without being overly uncool: "To anyone who wasn't Hobbit-friendly previously, this genre—fantasy medieval—is as sexy as pubic dandruff. Viewers like me, non-Dr Who types, vehement Hobbit-knockers, fell for *Game of Thrones* sheerly by accident and then fretted for their identity ever after. No sane person intends to go down a path where Saturdays are spent changing from jeans to a Dothraki pelt-skin costume in the back of a Ford Focus in a Milton Keynes conference centre car-park before meeting their friend Nige (him of the egg-box dragon costume and blow-torch mouth o' fire effect) but cosplay has to start somewhere. *Game of Thrones*, and its ilk, have made fancy-dress fools of wiser folk than us." (Grace Dent, *Independent*, 2 June) [MPJ]

**Awards.** *Campbell Memorial* (tie): Christopher Priest, *The Islanders* and Joan Slonczewski, *The Highest Frontier*. • *David Gemmell Legend* (fantasy): NOVEL Patrick Rothfuss, *The Wise Man's Fear*. DEBUT Helen Lowe, *Heir of Night*. COVER ART Raymond Swanland for *Blood of Aenarion*. • *Ditmar* (Australia) novel: Kim Westwood, *The Courier's New Bicycle*. • *Lambda* (LGBT sf/f/horror): Lee Thomas, *The German*. • *Locus*: SF NOVEL China Miéville, *Embassytown*. FANTASY NOVEL George R.R. Martin, *A Dance with Dragons*. FIRST NOVEL Erin Morgenstern, *The Night Circus*. YA Catherynne M. Valente, *The Girl Who Circumnavigated Fairyland in a Ship of Her Own Making*. NOVELLA Catherynne M. Valente, 'Silently and Very Fast' (*Clarkesworld*) NOVELETTE Catherynne M. Valente, 'White Lines on a Green Field' (*Subterranean*). SHORT Neil Gaiman, 'The Case of Death and Honey' (*A Study in Sherlock*). ANTHOLOGY Gardner Dozois, ed., *The Year's Best Science Fiction: Twenty-eighth Annual Collection*. NONFICTION Gary K. Wolfe, *Evaporating Genres: Essays on Fantastic Literature*. ART BOOK Cathy Fenner & Arnie Fenner, eds., *Spectrum 18: The Best in Contemporary Fantastic Art*. ARTIST Shaun Tan. EDITOR Ellen Datlow. MAGAZINE *Asimov's*. PUBLISHER Tor. • *Theodore Sturgeon* (short story): Paul McAuley, 'The Choice' (*Asimov's* 2/11).

**R.I.P.** *Suzanne Allés* (*Sue*) *Blom* (1948-2012), long-time Milwaukee sf fan and author of the alternate-history novel *Inca: The Scarlet Fringe* (2000) plus unpublished sequels, died on 23 June. [MJL] • *Ray Bradbury* (1920-2012), who for *Ansible* readers needs no introduction, died on 6 June at the age of 91 and was widely mourned by everyone from the usual sf suspects through media pundits to President Obama. Besides the landmark books *The Martian Chronicles* (1950) and *Fahrenheit 451* (1953, a 2004 Retro Hugo winner), his legacy included a great many magical and/or macabre short stories and a greatly appreciated 1960s commercial for prunes. Bradbury received the World Fantasy Award for life achievement in 1977, the SFWA Grand Master Award in 1989, and entered the SF Hall of Fame in 1999. One proposed memorial is the introduction of web error 451, analogous to '404 Page Not Found' but denoting censored content. • *Nora Ephron* (1941-2012), US writer, screenwriter and film-maker who wrote and directed

the fantasy films *Michael* (1996) and *Bewitched* (2005, reinventing the tv series), died on 26 June; she was 71. [SFS] ● *Caroline John* (1940-2012) UK actress fondly remembered as *Doctor Who* companion Liz Shaw in the Jon Pertwee era (reappearing in *The Five Doctors* and other specials), died on 5 June aged 71. [O] 'I met Caroline at a Dimensions convention in Newcastle a few years back, where she revealed she used to refer to the short skirts Liz Shaw wore as "pussy pelmets".' [MPJ] ● *Richard Lynch* (1936-2012), US actor whose many genre credits (usually as villains) included the tv *Battlestar Galactica*, *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century* and *Star Trek: TNG*, plus the films *Deathsport*, *Trancers II*, *Merlin*, *The Mummy's Kiss*, *Halloween* and (forthcoming) *The Lords of Salem*, died on 18 June. He was 76. [SG] ● *Anthony J. Wiener* (1930-2012), US futurist who with Herman Kahn wrote *The Year 2000: A Framework for Speculation on the Next Thirty-Three Years* (1967), died on 19 June aged 81. [PDF] ● *Peter Wragg* (1948-2012), UK visual effects designer who created the *Red Dwarf* spaceship (also Starbug and Kryten's head), died on 15 April aged 65. Other sf work included *Thunderbirds*, *Captain Scarlet* and *Doctor Who*. [MPJ] ● *Jim Young* (1951-2012), US fan (once very active in Minneapolis fandom), former diplomat and author of the sf novels *The Face of the Deep* (1979) and *Armed Memory* (1995), died on 12 June. He'd recently been focusing on his acting career, and played Hitler in *Nazis at the Center of the Earth* (2012). ● *Matt Yuricich* (1923-2012) Croatian-born US visual effects artist who won an Oscar for work on *Logan's Run* and was shortlisted for *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and *Blade Runner*, died on 28 May aged 89. His many film credits also included *Young Frankenstein*, *Planet of the Apes* and *Ghostbusters*. [MPJ] ● *Late notice: J.T. McIntosh* (James Murdoch MacGregor, 1925-2008), Scots author—very popular in his day—whose first sf novel was *World Out of Mind* (1953), died in 2008. [IC] He ceased publishing after *A Planet Called Utopia* (1979).

**As Others Lump Us.** 'But as Amazon's six other publishing imprints [...] have discovered, in certain genres (romance, science fiction and fantasy) formerly relegated to the moribund mass-market paperback, readers care not a whit about cover design or even good writing, and have no attachment at all to the book as object. Like addicts, they just want their fix at the lowest possible price, and Amazon is happy to be their online dealer.' (*The Nation*, 18 June) [JC]

**Sidewise Award Shortlist**, for alternate-history fiction: SHORT Michael F. Flynn, 'The Iron Shirts' (Tor.com); Lisa Goldstein, 'Paradise Is a Walled Garden' (*Asimov's* 8/11); Jason Stoddard, 'Orion Rising' (*Panverse* 3); Harry Turtledove, 'Lee at the Alamo' (Tor.com). LONG Robert Conroy, *Castro's Bomb*; Robert Conroy, *Himmler's War*; Jeff Greenfield, *Then Everything Changed*; Ian R. MacLeod, *Wake Up and Dream*; Ian McDonald, *Planesrunner*; Ekaterina Sedia, *Heart of Iron*; Lavie Tidhar, *Camera Obscura*.

**As Others See Us: The Last Resort.** A sales pitch from The Writing School at Oxford Open Learning: 'There are many different kinds of novel and part of the challenge is to find the kind of novel which you will enjoy writing and your audience will enjoy reading. Whether it is a thriller, a romance, comedy [*sic*], historical fiction, a whodunit or even science fiction, we will give you the technical skills to express your vision effectively ...' (writingschool.co.uk) [TE]

**Magazine Scene.** The revived *Amazing Stories* has a 'Relaunch Prelaunch' issue online at [www.amazingstoriesmag.com](http://www.amazingstoriesmag.com) (1 July).

**Outraged Letters.** *Claire M. Jordan* on Simon R. Green's A299 letter: 'Shatner didn't just show up on *Have I Got News for You*—he was, or certainly appeared to be, as drunk as a skunk. The funniest bit was when he made some racy joke about Angela Merkel being a lesbian and then waved his hand expansively and said it would be cut out before the show went to air, and one of the others said "You haven't watched this show, have you?" ... He wasn't incapable, you understand—but sort of fuzzy and slurred, and suspiciously red in the face.' Later he issued an apology for his mysterious impromptu quip about Ilfracombe, Devon: 'The place is laced with prostitution.' (BBC, 20 June) [JD]

**MTV Awards** (film). *Twilight: Breaking Dawn 1* was overall winner; *The Hunger Games* won for best male and female performances, fight scene and 'transformation' (four wins in all); *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows 2* collected two awards, for best hero and cast. [MPJ]

**Astronomical Scale Masterclass.** An IEEE *Spectrum* piece on e-money conveys how vastly, hugely, mindbogglingly big space is: 'Science-fiction writers once imagined a galactic currency that would grease the wheels of commerce from here to Alpha Centauri.' (June 2012) [AT]

**That Old-Time Religion.** 2011 Australian census results reveal that the Lucky Country's self-confessed Jedis now hugely outnumber its admitted Scientologists, by 65,000 to 2,163. (ABC, 29 June) [AIP]

**As Others See Ray Bradbury.** He 'wrote modern myths, not science fiction [...] Bradbury was not that popular among science fiction fans. He was not geeky enough.' (*Telegraph*, 6 June) [MPJ] ● 'Bradbury wasn't so much a major science fiction writer. He was a major writer who specialized in science fiction.' (*Boston Globe*, 1 July) [DK]

**Random Fandom.** *Ted Ball* of the late lamented Fantasy Centre is recovering from a recentish heart attack. ● *Stu Shiffman*, ace fanartist, had a stroke on 16 June. After two brain operations and one on his kneecap (broken in a hospital fall) he's doing well. All good wishes to Stu and his partner Andi Shechter, who's issuing regular bulletins.

**The Dead Past.** *50 Years Ago*, we became respectable: 'Gone, it appears, are the days when fans tore off prozine covers so that they could read their purchases in the tube, when convention reports in newspapers began "If you see an alien monster walking down the street next Saturday," when your colleagues told you they had once read Jules Verne at school. For SF has now attained the ultimate status symbol. TV, after delving condescendingly with the genre for so many years, has finally gone overboard for science fiction. My, I bet you're proud.' Thus Ron Bennett on the BBC serials *The Big Pull* (gosh, I remember that) and *Andromeda Breakthrough*, plus ITV's *Out of This World* anthology series: 'Well, it makes a change from Z Cars.' (*Skyrack* 44, 2 July 1962)

**As Others ...** 'The usual move in science fiction is to remain vague about the dates, so as to render "the future" a zone of pure fantasy, no different than Middle Earth or Narnia, or like *Star Wars* "a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away." As a result, our science fiction future is, most often, not a future at all, but more like an alternative America, a dream-time, a technological Elsewhere, existing in days to come the same way elves and dragon-slayers existed in the past—another screen for the displacement of moral dramas and mythic fantasies in to the dead ends of consumer pleasure.' (*The Baffler*, December 2011) [MMW]

**Fanfundery.** *DUFF*: 'Hold Over Funds' was a clear first-round winner with 57 votes (38 NA+19 Australasia) to 25 (24+1) for Juanita Coulson and 13 (11+2) for Murray Moore. This wasn't a vote against the candidates but against the scheduling which made it impossible for a US winner to attend New Zealand's national con (already in progress during the count) and nearly so for Australia's on the next weekend.

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Literal Dept.* 'She literally flowed with stories and spunk.' (Brad Torgersen, 'Outbound', *Analogue* 11/2010) [NW] ● *Eye-balls in the Sky.* 'Her eyes felt lost and confused ...' (James Rollins, *Sandstorm*, 2004) [MCN] ● 'Her eyes were like a condor's, or some worse star-spawned bird of prey, crimson edged and bleeding into blank holes at the center that seemed to be pinpoint windows into her diseased soul. Kullervo thought he saw things crawling around behind those windows.' (Emil Petaja, *Tramontane*, 1967) ● *Special 300th-Issue Technothriller Bons Mots Dept.* 'He knew that he ought to have prepared his speech better ... but the tension within his intestine had proved too much.' ● 'In the two weeks since Helena's note had arrived he had stopped sleeping and begun waking in dreams.' ● '... the door opened to find their quarry at his elbows on the desk, his face enveloping his hands.' ● 'Hartmann too smiled but it was not a creature of grace; it skittered, like a new-born faun and, in similar fashion, fell down completely before another second had died.' ● 'He swallowed and smiled at the same time; perhaps, he at once realized, a mistake.' ● 'The smell of cigarette smoke suffused directly into his stomach lining and into his strobing brain.' ● '... the telephone call from the Coroner had also caused a distinct rise in his anal sphincter tone ...' ● 'That Eisenmenger found the look on her face odd would be untrue; he found it worrying. She looked as if she had appendicitis.' ● 'Which made the slap when it came all the more unexpected and all the more painful. It rang in his ears and made the mast cells in his skin explode with unpleasant substances.' ● 'Eisenmenger could feel the atmosphere [*between the two women*] beginning to reek with noxious gases.' ● 'Through the pain she tried to ignore the nihilism of the thought, finding it seditious.' ● 'Where do you put a virus?' ● 'She knew more about the inside of a Turkish wrestler's underpants than she did about virology ...' ● 'She bent down again, profaned against her back, and pulled.' ● 'He picked up his coat from the back of the sofa and moved to the door, feeling distinctly like an ambulant and green soft fruit.' (all Keith McCarthy, *The Silent Sleep of the Dying*, 2004) [PB]

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