

Ansible



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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. Available for SAE, Granek's Equation, Whitewick or Persholt.

Big Locog Is Watching. With current UK restrictions on free speech, *Ansible* dares not refer to the author Jack London, the sf stories *After London* and *London's Peril*, or the prophetic BBC comedy *Twenty Twelve*. It could be fatal to cite Jack Vance's *The Five Gold Bands* or to juxtapose Isaac Asimov's 'Gold' with Justina Robson's *Silver Screen* and Stephen Baxter's *Bronze Summer*. Above all, don't mention Nigel Kneale:

The Year of the Sex Olympics

Brian Aldiss revealed his infallible 1970s pickup technique. Having sat in a train opposite a young woman reading his raunchy *The Hand-Reared Boy*: "You're reading a book I wrote. Do you like it? ... Let's go and have a coffee, or go to your place?" A generous offer, I thought! But she was pretty snooty about it, or shy.' (*Independent*, 28 July)

Neil Clarke of *Clarkesworld* fame had a heart attack while setting up his dealer's table at Readercon on 12 July, and spent the rest of the convention in a hospital next door. He recovered well, with two stents, but on getting home had new trouble with a kidney stone. Ouch. [F]

Emanuel Cleaver exhorted fellow US Congress members in his weekly letter: 'I am protesting these new Twilight vampire movies. They are disgusting. After all, everyone knows that real vampires and werewolves don't date the same girl. This is a travesty that must be addressed by the horror scholars of this generation, otherwise millions of young kids will grow to adulthood thinking that Twilight movies are as accurate as Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.' (An actual political point follows.) Everyone's a critic these days. (*Politico*, 23 July) [MMW]

Gareth Edwards, director of the new *Godzilla*, reassures those who doubt the plausibility of a huge city-smashing reptile: "There's nothing sci-fi about this movie. It's very grounded, very realistic.' (*io9*) [cj]

Terry Goodkind took revenge on a fan who'd openly pirated the latest fantasy in his *Sword of Interminability* series (a self-published ebook), by posting the offender's details and photo on Facebook after private contact efforts were ignored. 'How ironic you claim to be a fan of books that uphold truth and honour above all else. We hope the price of fame is worth the cost of your infamy.' The pirate's Web page(s) and Twitter account soon vanished; onlookers debated whether this was praiseworthy rough justice—after all, 'information wants to be free'—or regrettable vigilantism. (*Guardian*, 11 July) [AIP]

Peter Jackson's and Warner Bros' plan to expand the *Hobbit* project from two films to three—using spare *Lord of the Rings* material since 'There's so much good stuff in the appendices that we haven't been able to squeeze into these movies' (*Telegraph*, 26 July)—was thoughtfully described by *The Independent's* John Walsh as 'stretching an ant's arse over a rain barrel.' (*Independent*, 26 July) [MPJ]

Ursula K. Le Guin said in a July interview that in recent years the publishing industry—specifically, Harcourt—has been trying to tinker with the basics of her novels: "There was an increasing pressure to make them more like Harry Potter.' (*Wired*, 25 July) Imagine that: a Le Guin YA story about a young hero growing up in a school for wizards!

Barry N. Malzberg had successful knee replacement surgery on 24 July and has since been savouring the pangs of rehab therapy. [PDF]

Patrick Stewart carried some kind of torch through Croydon on 23 July. A long, witty report from Croydon fandom is awaited. [F770]

Controm

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.

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. Day rate £35; £30 child/concessions.

18-19 Aug • **Caption** (small-press comics), East Oxford Community Centre, 44B Princes St, Iffley. Starts 10am. £10 or £5/day at door.

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

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

28 Aug • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Melton Mowbray, 18 Holborn, London, EC1N 2LE. 5/6pm for 7pm. With Shaun Tan. *NB Tue, not Wed.*

30 Aug - 3 Sep • **Chicon 7** (70th Worldcon), Hyatt Regency, Chicago. *Now \$230 reg* (both in advance and at the door), \$560 family, \$100 YA (17-21), \$75 child (5-16), accompanied under-5s free. Day rates: Thu \$50; Fri, Sat, Sun \$70; Mon \$40. More at www.chicon7.org. Hugo voting has now closed and the main Worldcon hotel is full.

1-2 Sep • **SF Weekend** in Weaver Words festival (29 Aug-9 Sep), Frodsham, Cheshire. See www.weaverwords.org.uk; 0845 557 7469.

6-9 Sep • **The Asylum** (steampunk), Lincoln. £22 basic reg (plus £1.20 booking fee) with many discounts and extras. Online booking only: steampunk.synthasite.com. Contact majortinker at aol dot com.

15 Sep • **Bristol Beer & Blake's 7**, Knight's Templar, Unit 1 Temple Square, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6DG. 12:15 to 7pm-ish.

21 Sep • **The Hobbit at 75**, British Library, 6:30pm-8pm. £7.50, £5 unwaged. Details and bookings at www.bl.uk.

21-23 Sep • **Oxonmoot** (Tolkien Soc), Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. *Now £47 reg* (members £38); see www.tolkienociety.org/oxon/ for various child discounts. Cheques to Tolkien Society, 149/4 Morrison St, Edinburgh, EH3 8AG. *Registration deadline is 3 September.*

22-23 Sep • **H.G. Wells Festival**, The Grand, The Leas, Folkestone, CT20 2XL. Comprises £40 dinner 7:30pm Sat; £15 lunch noon Sun with speech. Contact 01 303 222 222; www.wellsfestival.com.

22 Sep • **Titancon**, Europa Hotel, Belfast. £18 reg, *rising to £20 on 1 September*. Also GoH reading on previous evening in McHugh's pub as part of Belfast's free Culture Night. See www.titancon.com for more.

4-7 Oct • **Grimmfest 2012** (horror/cult film festival), Manchester. £45, *to rise soon*, plus £2 booking fee. Gory details at grimmfest.com.

25-27 Feb 2013 • **Redemption '13** (multimedia sf), Britannia Hotel, Fairfax St, Coventry, CV1 5RP. GoH Virginia Hey, Kim Newman; more TBA. £65 reg, *rising to £70 on 1 September*; unwaged etc £20 less; £75 at door. £15 supp and under-18s; under-3s free. Contact 61 Chaucer Road, Farnborough, Hampshire, GU14 8SP.

29 Mar - 1 Apr 2013 • **EightSquaredCon** (Eastercon), Bradford. *Now £60 reg*, rising to £70 on 1 February; £25 supp/junior (12-17); £10 child (5-11); £1 infant. Online booking www.eightsquaredcon.org.

25-28 Jul 2014 • **Continuum 2014** (RPG), John Foster Hall, Leicester University. Details TBA. See www.continuum.uk.net.

Rumblings. *London in 2014* (unstoppable Worldcon bid) issued its *Progress Report -1* in digital form only—see www.londonin2014.org—and I was deeply relieved to find I'm not on the committee.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Comic-Con. 'For those unwilling to carry a warlock's staff, wear spandex superhero tights, or daub themselves in green body paint to create the appearance of a slightly less Incredible Hulk, the Comic-Con convention in San Diego may look like an anomalous gathering of geeks, social recluses, and science fiction obsessives.' (Matthew Garrahan, *Financial Times*, 14 July) [MMW]

Awards. *Cordwainer Smith Rediscovery*: Fredric Brown. • *Prometheus* (libertarian): Delia Sherman, *The Freedom Maze*, and Ernest Cline, *Ready Player One* (tie). CLASSIC E.M. Forster, 'The Machine Stops' (1909). • *Eaton* (life achievement): Ray Harryhausen, Stan Lee, Ursula K. Le Guin. [L] • *Pulitzer*: the 2012 poetry winner, Tracy K. Smith's collection *Life on Mars*, has much science and sf content. [SS] • *Rhysling* (poetry). LONG Megan Arkenberg, 'The Curator Speaks in the Department of Dead Languages' (*Strange Horizons* 6/11). SHORT Shira Lipkin, 'The Library, After' (*Mythic Delirium* 6/11) • *Seiun* (Japan) foreign categories: NOVEL Paolo Bacigalupi, *The Windup Girl*, trans Kazue Tanaka & Hiroshi Kaneko. SHORT Ted Chiang, 'The Lifecycle of Software Objects', trans Nozomi Ohmori. • *Shirley Jackson* (suspense/horror), novel category: Sheri Holman, *Witches on the Road Tonight*. • *World Fantasy, Life Achievement*: Alan Garner, George R.R. Martin. • *Emmy Awards*: genre favourites are *American Horror Story*, nominated in 17

categories, and *Game of Thrones*, 12 categories. ● *Booker Prize* long-listed titles of alleged genre interest: Ned Beaman, *The Teleportation Accident*; Will Self, *Umbrella*; Sam Thompson, *Communion Town*. [L]

We Are Everywhere. Following reports of racist intimidation by Greece's far-right Golden Dawn party: 'Mr. Kasidiaris, the Golden Dawn spokesman, denied accusations of vigilantism, including charges of beatings and extremism. "This is not serious stuff," he said. "It's science fiction, a screenplay and an urban legend.'" (*NY Times*, 10 July) [JB]

R.I.P. *William Asher* (1921-2012), US director of *The 27th Day* (1957) and *Bewitched* (1964-1972), died on 16 July; he was 90. [F] ● *Ernest Borgnine* (1917-2012), Oscar-winning US actor, died on 8 July aged 95. Genre credits include *The Devil's Rain* (1975), *The Ghost of Flight 401* (1978), *The Black Hole* (1979), *Escape From New York* (1981), *Deadly Blessing* (1981), and *Alice in Wonderland* (1985); also the tv *Captain Video* (1951) and *Future Cop* (1976-1977, famously sued by Harlan Ellison). [SG] ● *Cathy Ball*, Oklahoma fan active and popular in UK fandom while stationed here in the late 70s/early 80s, died on 5 July; she was 59. [KC] ● *Tage Eskestad* (1920-2012), Danish author of several sf novels 1967-1981—notably *Flygninge fra Himlen* (1973), an sf interpretation of *The Book of Enoch*, and *Matriarkatet* (1975), a post-apocalyptic dystopia—has died at age 92. [KAM] ● *Norman Felton* (1913-2012), UK-born producer of *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* (1964-1968) and its spinoffs, died on 25 June; he was 99. [MPJ] ● *James Grout* (1927-2012), UK actor whose genre credits include *The Lord of the Rings* (1981 radio), *The Box of Delights* (1984 tv), *Man and Superman* (1984 tvm) and *Old Harry's Game* (1995-2010 radio), died on 24 June aged 84. [AW] ● *Margaret Mahy* (1936-2012), NZ author of 160 children's and YA books including many supernatural fantasies, died on 23 July; she was 76. Her numerous awards include two Carnegie Medals—she was the first Carnegie winner from outside Britain—and the Hans Christian Andersen Award. [JF] ● *Chris Marker* (1921-2012), French writer, artist and film-maker whose time-travel classic *La Jetée* (1962, composed entirely of stills) was the acknowledged inspiration for *Twelve Monkeys* (1995), died on 30 July, a day after his 91st birthday. [MJE] ● *Eric Sykes* (1923-2012), noted UK comic actor and writer whose genre credits range from 1950s *Goon Show* script contributions to parts in *Alice in Wonderland* (1985 tv), *Gormenghast* (2000 tv), *The Others* (2001) and *Harry Potter and The Goblet of Fire* (2005), died on 4 July. He was 89. [AW] ● *Mary Tamm* (1950-2012), UK actress best known as Tom Baker's Time Lady companion Romana in *Doctor Who* 1978-1979, died on 26 July aged 62. Another genre role was in *Tales that Witness Madness* (1973). [AW] ● *Ginny Tyler* (1925-2012), US voice actress heard in many genre animations including *The Sword in the Stone* (1963), *Mary Poppins* (1964), *Space Ghost* (tv 1966-1968) and *The Fantastic Four* (tv 1978), died on 13 July aged 86. [SFS] ● *Gore Vidal* (1925-2012), major US author and polemicist who made regular use of sf and fantasy devices, died on 31 July; he was 86. Works of genre importance include *Messiah* (1954), *Visit to a Small Planet* (1957 play), *Kalki* (1978), *Duluth* (1983), *Live From Golgotha* (1992), *The Smithsonian Institution* (1998) and various critical essays. [F] ● *Simon Ward* (1941-2012), UK actor seen in *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed* (1969), *Holocaust 2000* (1977), *The Monster Club* (1981) and *Supergirl* (1984), died on 20 July aged 70. [MMW] ● *Richard D. Zanuck* (1934-2012), US film producer of *Jaws* (1975) fame, died on 13 July aged 77. Films include *Cocoon* (1985), *Chain Reaction* (1996), *Deep Impact* (1998), *Planet of the Apes* (2001 remake), *Reign of Fire* (2002), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005), *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), *Dark Shadows* (2012) and *Hidden* (due 2013). [SG]

As Others Appreciate Us. 'Iain M Banks's novel *Use of Weapons* has a narrative structure that, if it were not a work of science fiction, would qualify it as the most "literary" of literary fiction.' (John Mullan, *Guardian Book Club*, 20 July) [DH]

Outraged Letters. *Stephen Baxter*: 'Well done Dave—300 not out! Essential reading as ever.' Thanks for all similar messages in the wake of the big 300. ● *Brad Foster* replies to email from your editor: "'Stand in the dock together?' Heck, you mean I might get a free trip to London out of this, too? Sounds like a deal to me. Besides, I have no idea what you are talking about, is it something to do with my cartoonist homage to the artistic field of cubism? Any other view is surely in mind of the beholder only, and in no way remotely the intention of the artist.' ● *Henry Wessells* invites me to join his John Sladek Society. "The chief or only aim is to put a blue plaque on 221B [Camden High St]: 'SLADEK—DISCH—ZOLINE / in a squalor worthy of today's Mozambique / 1968'. ● *Phil Stephensen-Payne* on alleged tiddliness in *HIGNFY* (Claire M. Jordan, *A300*): "This is utter nonsense. Shatner makes a career these

days of this sort of character (just watch any series of *Boston Legal*) and while he was probably a little out of his depth, the suggestion that he was drunk is just plain silly.' (Claire is prepared to accept that despite appearances it was all part of the act, but wonders: 'Is he a good enough actor to act drunk? It's quite a difficult thing to do.')

Magazine Scene. With issue 23 (June-July), *Black Static* has shrunk from 20x27.5cm to 17x24cm and grown from 64pp to 96pp. Its sister magazine *Interzone* may do the same if readers don't object to the discontinuity in their neat rows of back issues. Feedback is requested.

A Far, Far Batter Thing. Allegedly *The Dark Knight Rises* is 'loosely based' on *A Tale of Two Cities* (*Independent*, 15 July) [MPJ]

Random Fandom. *Readercon's* stated 'zero tolerance' policy, whereby sexual harassment brings 'permanent suspension of membership', led to controversy when the convention board chose to ban a (serial, as it turned out, and persistent though told repeatedly to stop) offender for two years. The facts are undisputed; the last such ban was for life; what had changed, since the policy hadn't? The former offender was an outsider but this time it's a well-known fan who conveyed that he was 'sincerely regretful'. Complaints that some are more equal than others soon followed, and a vast protest petition is growing online.

As Others Try to Love Us. 'Lethem's ambition to marry the crime novel with science fiction tripped the sanctimonious alarm bells my newly-minted MFA had wired into my aesthetic sense, and I read *Gun* (*With Occasional Music*) without feeling like I understood it and made for *Amnesia Moon*, another dystopia that plainly read to me like science fiction (although I had never read science fiction). More alarm bells, precipitating an incipient loathing for genre.' (Jaime Clarke, introducing *Conversations with Jonathan Lethem* ed. Clarke, 2011) [MMW]

The Dead Past. *70 Years Ago*, the world war had a chilling side-effect: 'Doc Smith's new [*Lensman*] book was slowed down for a while for he has gone to work for a big munitions firm as a Chemical Engineer, and since his work for the past twenty years or so has been Cereal Chemistry, and he had to do a little "boning up" on his explosives at first. But he expected to get at it soon the last time I saw him. so perhaps he is already working again in his spare time.' (E. Everett Evans, *Futurian War Digest* 22, August 1942) A critical insight from the same piece: 'Doc really writes TWO stories in ONE; the "bang-bang" story for the casual reader, and the deeply-plotted, carefully worked out psychological story for the deeper reader and thinker.' ● *30 Years Ago*: 'Brain Of Britain (radio) lately featured strange questions—e.g. about "Reindeers of the Lost Ark"—and strange answers also. "Billion Year Spree. New Maps of Hell. What do these books have in common?" "Er ... Drug addiction.'" (*Ansible* 28, August/September 1982)

C.o.A. *Lilian Edwards*, 36 Gillespie Crescent, Edinburgh, EH10 4HX.

Fanfundery. Despite the lack of a North American DUFF winner to grace this year's Australian NatCon, I gather DUFF was represented by 'a small dazed looking stuffed teddybear called "Hold Over Funds"'. [YR]

Thog's Masterclass. *Silence is Golden Dept.* "'Don't talk." Her words were soundless. "Just come with me.'" (Jack Williamson, 'The Humanoid Universe', June 1980 *Analog*) [CG] ● *Eyeballs in the Sky.* 'Her eyes were rocking with water.' (Sarah Hall, *Daughters of the North*, 2007) [PB] ● 'The solid steel was back in those watery eyes.' (Julie Hyzy, 'Five Sorrowful Mysteries' in *At the Scene of the Crime*, 2008, ed. Dana Stabenow) [PB] ● *Dept of Early Rising.* 'Liam gave up trying to scrub his brain awake through his scalp.' (Dana Stabenow, 'On the Evidence', in *At the Scene of the Crime* as above) ● *Self-Introduction Dept.* 'As she peered up at him, Jupiter suddenly realized she was a Gypsy. Her first words confirmed this. "I am Zelda, the Gypsy," she said.' (Robert Arthur, *The Mystery of the Talking Skull*, 1969) [PL] ● *Neat Tricks Dept.* 'It was an appropriate start to a night during which my heart rarely left my mouth except to sink to my boots.' (Eric Ambler, *The Dark Frontier*, 1936) [PB] ● 'Her mind boiled coldly.' (Felicity Savage, *Humility Garden*, 1995) [BA] ● 'And energy that she could never access any other time, not even when she needed it, welled up like clotted urgent speech in her fingers.' (*Ibid*) ● *Dept of Can This Be Euphemism?* 'Jimmy looked over Nadine's head at Annabeth and Sara, felt all three of them blow through his chest, fill him up, and turn him to dust at the same time.' (Dennis Lehane, *Mystic River*, 2001) [PB]

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