

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 or automatic twin-tube wishing machines.

Controversies. Despite ironies in recent SFWA-related upheavals (one eminent author, having signed a dreadfully worded petition and then helped edit it heavily for public consumption, said: 'Many veteran members of SFWA objected to the early text and have worked it over to keep it to the point that pre-censorship of published material is an Orwellian injury to free speech, period.'). I can't face summarizing this. See links at news.ansible.co.uk/misc/oldlink14.html#sfwa1 ('More SFWA fun') and two lines above. • On 1 March, Loncon 3 announced Jonathan Ross as their Hugo Awards MC; Farah Mendlesohn left the Loncon committee in protest; much online sound and fury ensued; Ross, who'd been persuaded by Neil Gaiman to appear free of charge, withdrew some hours later. The above web page has links in its March section.

Report on Probability A

Brian Aldiss writes: 'Congratulations on the accuracy of quotation from *The Guardian*, in your No.318. / However, these matters may not be entirely understood when taken out of content. / Late last year I suffered a TIA. This year I have suffered two heart attacks, On all three of these occasions I was in the local Headington hospital. As a result, I am somewhat seriously incapacitated. / This even to the extent of being unable to read Tolstoy. I assume you have read his final novel, *Resurrection?* Grandly full of criticisms of Church and state. / Despite the blows of fate, allied with age, from which I suffer, career events are prospering. Presumably you find them beyond your province? / A great delight is that my publisher is currently planning to issue a facsimile of my "Whip Donovan" adventures among the Planets, written in two hardcover volumes and liberally illustrated by me—I at the age of fourteen. My career in SF is long and—so I'd imagine—pretty well unique. [...] Carry on the good work!' (15 February)

Ginjer Buchanan is retiring as Ace/Roc editor-in-chief at the end of March 2014. She has been at Ace for 30 years and is now 70. [CSt]

Katherine Bucknell sniffs: 'For me, science fiction classic is an oxymoron. What could possibly go out of date more rapidly than a book imagining what will happen in a future time or place? I believe readers are attracted to them because they like to be amazed at how long such fantasies do continue to interest readers. And they like to be in on the game of prophesying and guessing. The discussions I hear about science fiction "classics" usually focus on how amazing it is that the author was so close to imagining how things really turned out. But real technological, scientific and also cultural change are far more interesting. Even the best-informed books about the future and the best-written soon become boring. I'm afraid *Brave New World* is the last of Huxley's many interesting books that I would recommend. And I would ditch Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, and the like.' ('Which Books Should We Stop Calling Classics?' symposium, *Flavorwire*, 19 February) [CSm] By this logic, it would seem that *The Time Machine* can still be a classic because its predicted far future hasn't yet not happened; but Jane Austen is of course no good because historians confirm *she made all those people up...*

Alfonso Cuarón, with the Oscars looming and *sf* (*Gravity*) tending not to win Best Picture, teetered on the Atwoodian brink: 'To be honest, I never thought I was doing a science fiction movie ... I guess there's a connotation that science fiction lacks gravitas.' However: 'I'm happy with whichever label.' (BBC, 28 February) [MPJ] He won the director and film-editing Oscars; *Gravity* got several more, but not Best Picture.

Continentious

Until 4 Apr • **Parallel Worlds** (exhibition of Iain Banks's foreign editions), University of Stirling Library, Scotland. Free?

Until 25 Apr • **Other Worlds and Imaginary Beings** (exhibition), Christ Church, Oxford. Mon-Fri 9:30am-1pm, 2-4:30pm. Free.

15 Mar • **A Celebration of the Life & Works of Iain Banks**, University of Huddersfield. 2pm-7pm. Tickets £12; concessions £10. Advance booking at www.thelbt.org/celebration-life-works-iain-banks.

16 Mar • **EM-Con** (multimedia), Albert Hall, Nottingham. Many guests. Tickets including booking fees: £14 'early bird' (10am-5pm) SOLD

OUT; £9 day (11am-5pm); under-5s free; £6 evening live-music party at another venue—The Approach, Friar Lane. See www.em-con.co.uk.

26 Mar • **Magical Tales: Wolves and Volumes**, Convocation House, Old Bodleian Library, Oxford. 10am-11am. £11. More at oxfordliteraryfestival.org/literature-events/2014/march-26.

26 Mar • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Artillery Arms, 102 Bunhill Row, London, EC1Y 8ND. 5/6pm for 7pm. BSFA Awards Panel. Free.

27-30 Mar • **Sci-Fi Weekender** (was *SFX* Weekender), Hafan y Mor Holiday Park, Pwllheli, North Wales. Booking by accommodation: all on-site rooms have been booked. Day passes £49 Friday or Saturday, £90 both, plus £10/person booking fee. See www.scifiweekender.com.

30 Mar • **The History of the Wizard**, Christ Church, Oxford. 2pm-3pm. £6. See 30 March events at Magical Tales link above.

5-6 Apr • **Sci Fi Scarborough** (comics, media), The Spa, Scarborough. 10am-10pm. £35 reg; child £17.50. Day £20 Sat, £15 Sun (child £10, £7.50). See www.scifiscarborough.co.uk.

8-10 Apr • **London Book Fair**, Earls Court. Terry Pratchett is Author of the Day for 8 April. See www.londonbookfair.co.uk.

9-10 Aug • **Sunderland Comic Con**, Sunderland Software Centre, Tavistock Place, Sunderland, SR1 1PB. £20 reg, £15 concessions; £14/£10 for one day. Tickets from sunderlandcomiccon.com.

11-13 Aug • **SF Foundation Critical Masterclass**, Royal Observatory, Greenwich. £200. Application deadline was 28 February, but maybe it's not full: enquiries to farah dot sf at gmail dot com.

14-18 Aug • **Loncon 3** (72nd Worldcon), ExCeL centre, London Docklands. Now £125 reg; £280 family. Unchanged: £65 YA; £30 child (6-15); £2 infant (0-5); £25 supp. These rates hold until 14 July 2014, and will then rise to at-the-door levels. See www.loncon3.org.

21 Aug • **Irradiating the Object: M. John Harrison** (conference), University of Warwick. Linked to *SF/F Now*, below.

22-23 Aug • **SF/F Now** (conference), University of Warwick. See www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/hrc/confs/sf. CFP deadline 31 March.

20 Sep • **Andromeda Two**, Digbeth, Birmingham. Postponed to 2015 owing to venue problems. More at terror-tree.co.uk/andromeda-tw.

18-20 Oct • **Lakes International Comic Art Festival**, Kendal, Cumbria. Many guests. Tickets on sale from May. Some parts free, including Comics Clock Tower venue. See www.comicartfestival.com.

14-16 Nov • **Armadacon 26**, Future Inn, Plymouth. GoH TBA. £30; day rates £15 Sat, £10 Sun (concessions £25, £12, £8); £5 evening from 6pm. Contact 18 Wadham Rd, Liskeard, Cornwall, PL14 3BD.

6-8 Feb 2015 • **Con27ilkin** (filk), Best Western Hotel, Marks Tey, Colchester. £37 reg, £27 unwaged. Cheques to UK Filk Convention, c/o 119 Whitehill Lane, Gravesend, DA12 5LU.

Rumblings. *Worldcon 2016*: Beijing and Kansas City are both bidding, with site selection voting to follow and a result expected at Loncon 3 this year. See www.loncon3.org/2016_bidder_filing.php.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. It must be true, it's on the net: 'John Clute and John Grant, as two of the forefathers of gaslight romance, commented that ...' (steampunk.wikia.com/wiki/Steampunk as at 3 March) [BA]

Awards. *Horror Writers Association Life Achievement*: Stephen Jones, R.L. Stine. • *James Tiptree Jr* (exploring gender roles): N.A. Sulway, *Rupetta*. • *Kitschies*: NOVEL Ruth Ozeki, *A Tale for the Time Being*. DEBUT Ann Leckie, *Ancillary Justice*. COVER ART Will Staehle for *The Age Atomic* by Adam Christopher. • *Red House Children's Book Awards* (voted by children): overall winner Rick Yancey, *The 5th Wave*. [MPJ]

Publishers & Sinners. Constable & Robinson, famed for all those 'Mammoth Book Of' anthologies, was acquired by Little, Brown on 31 January. Pete Duncan from C&R remains its managing director at L.B.

Thog is Everywhere. Now moonlighting for the BBC website: 'Singapore Airshow: The fight for eyeballs in mid-air'. (11 February) [JF]

R.I.P. Aaron Allston (1960-2014), US role-playing game designer and author—mainly of *Star Wars* spinoffs—died on 27 February; he was 53. [MR] *Nonie Rider* adds: 'Aaron's mostly known as a writer of

Star Wars books, but for those of us who've been roleplaying for a few decades—the old-fashioned way, around a table with dice and pizza—he was also the best goddamn writer of genre supplements out there.'

● **Bill Baker**, US publisher, comics historian and author of *Icons: The DC Comics and WildStorm Art of Jim Lee*, died in February at the age of 55. [PDF] ● **Christopher Barry** (1925-2014), UK tv director who had the longest run as director of the original *Doctor Who* (1963-1979), died on 7 February; he was 88. Further genre credits are *Out of the Unknown* (1965), *Moonbase 3* (1973) and *The Tripods* (1984). [GW] ● **Erik Blegvad** (1923-2014), Danish-born artist who illustrated Mary Norton's *Bed-Knob and Broomstick* (1957), his own translation of Hans Christian Andersen and other children's fantasies, died on 14 January; he was 90. [PDF] ● **Richard Bull** (1924-2014), US actor who was in *Men into Space* (1959) and played the doctor in *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* (1964-1968), died on 3 February aged 89. [MMW] ● **Stepan Chapman** (1951-2014), US author—mainly of offbeat short stories following a 1969 debut in *Analog*—whose one novel *The Troika* (1997) won the Philip K. Dick Award, died on 27 January. [AV] ● **Robert M. Fresco** (1930-2014), US screenwriter and Oscar-winning documentary film-maker whose early credits include the sf horror movies *Tarantula* (1955), *The Monolith Monsters* (1957) and *The Alligator People* (1959), died on 14 February; he was 83. [PDF] ● **Martin Greenberg** (1918-2013), co-founder with David Kyle of Gnome Press in 1948 and editor of several sf anthologies, died on 20 October 2013; he was 95. [WGC] ● **John Henson** (1965-2014), son of Muppets founder Jim Henson and occasional Muppet performer (his regular character being the huge, hairy 'Sweetums'), died on 14 February aged 48. His films include *Muppets from Space* (1999). [O] ● **Ken Jones** (1930-2014), UK actor who played Archangel Derek in *Dead Ernest* (1982 tv) and was in *The Guardians* (1971 tv), *Thriller* (1974 tv), *Stanley's Dragon* (1994) and *Turn on to T-Bag* (1988 tv), died on 13 February aged 83. [AW] ● **Christopher Malcolm** (1946-2014), Scots actor best known for *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), *Labyrinth* (1986) and *Highlander* (1986), died on 15 February aged 67. [PDF] ● **Philip Seymour Hoffman** (1967-2014), Oscar-winning US actor and director whose genre credits include *The Invention of Lying* (2009) and *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire* (2013), died on 2 February aged 46. His character in *The Master* (2012) was, essentially, L. Ron Hubbard. [LP/SG] ● **Arthur Rankin Jr** (1924-2014), US producer, director and animator whose work included *Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer* (stop-motion, 1964), *The Hobbit* (1977), *The Last Unicorn* (1982) and *Thundercats* (1980s), died on 30 January; he was 89. [PDF] ● **Harold Ramis** (1944-2014), US screenwriter, actor and producer/director best known for *Ghostbusters* (1984, co-writer and star role), *Groundhog Day* (1993, writer/director) and the remake of *Bedazzled* (2000, writer/director), died on 24 February; he was 69. [GW/SG] ● **Mark E. Rogers** (1952-2014), US fantasy/horror author and illustrator whose work includes the 1980-1998 'Samurai Cat' sequence, died on 2 February. His novella *The Runestone* became a 1990 film. [PB] ● **Maximilian Schell** (1930-2014), Oscar-winning Austrian actor seen in *The Black Hole* (1979) and *Deep Impact* (1998), died on 1 February aged 83. [LP] ● **Bhob Stewart** (1937-2014), US artist, writer, editor and fan influential in early comics fanzines and acting as 1960-1963 art director for the Hugo-winning *Xero*, died on 24 February aged 76. [F770] ● **Shirley Temple** (1928-2014), famed US child star who played fairytale fantasy roles in *The Blue Bird* (1940) and *Shirley Temple's Storybook* (1958-1961 tv), died on 10 February; she was 85. [PDF]

We Are Everywhere. The novelty of Tolkien imagery never ceases to delight US political pundits: 'President Obama apparently lost his magic ring. The sun broke through the pall of Republican despair, the fires of Mordor ceased and the spell of buffoonery and pettifoggery that had plagued the elephant herd was miraculously lifted.' (Kathleen Parker, *Washington Post*, 19 February) [MMW] Oliphant herd, surely? ● Similarly: "'It's like what what's-his-name told the hobbit," Ohio's Republican governor told me [...] "What's the guy's name? Gandel? Gandorf?"' (Matt Bai, *NY Times Magazine*, 9 September 2012) [MMW]

Award Shortlists. Best Novel categories only; see February 2014 links at news.ansible.co.uk for full listings. ● BRAM STOKER Joe Hill, *NOS4A2*; Stephen King, *Doctor Sleep*; Lisa Morton, *Malediction*; Sarah Pinborough and F. Paul Wilson, *A Necessary End*; Christopher Rice, *The Heavens Rise*. ● NEBULAS Karen Joy Fowler, *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*; Neil Gaiman, *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*; Charles E. Gannon, *Fire with Fire*; Nicola Griffith, *Hild*; Ann Leckie, *Ancillary Justice*; Linda Nagata, *The Red: First Light*; Sofia Samatar, *A Stranger in Olondria*; Helene Wecker, *The Golem and the Jinni*.

C.o.A. Andy Sawyer (home), 10 Kingsway West, Chester, CH2 2LA.

Outraged Letters. *Email Too Eldritch to Answer Dept:* 'The Lovecraft Reference Resource are a new religious organisation established to represent that which is Lovecraftian on the Internet into one place. Our idea is that the Lovecraftian is being established on the Internet as a growing artistic, literary and religious movement, and that if we can organise this towards one resource, then a more cohesed movement can be organised. [...]' Partly cohesed and partly squamous. ● *Gregory Feeley:* 'Did you notice that with the release of the new Liam Neeson movie *Non-Stop*, there now is no way that Brian Aldiss's first SF novel can be made into a movie without a title change? (The US title *Starship* has also been taken.) I think *Vanguard from Alpha* is still free, though.'

UPS and Downs. That set of US stamps depicting Asimov and other sf authors—thought to have been postponed indefinitely if not cancelled—may appear after all in 2015. (*Washington Post* blog) [GM]

Political Statistics Dept. 'One study found 41% of Lib Dem supporters were fans of Doctor Who, compared with 31% of the general population ... Intriguingly, Lib Dems also bucked the national trend of preferring Star Wars over Star Trek.' (*Guardian*, 3 February) [JS]

Random Fandom. *FAAn Awards:* voting is now open, closing on 5 April. Ballot form at corflu.org/Corflu31/faan_ballot_2014.pdf.

The Dead Past. *50 Years Ago:* 'New Worlds and Science Fantasy have gained an eleventh hour reprieve. *New Worlds*, which has seen some fifteen years of continuous publication, and its sister *Nova* publication were due to fold this month. Both titles have now been bought by a new publisher, David Warburton of Roberts & Vinter Ltd., and will accordingly continue publication without a break. [...] Stepping into the world of professional sf is Kyril Bonfiglioli, the Oxford antiquarian bookseller, who will be responsible for *Science Fantasy*, whilst in charge at *New Worlds* will be Michael Moorcock who comes to the editorial chair via general fandom, editing *Tarzan Adventures* and the world of Elric. This is undoubtedly the most important elevation to prozine publishing since seventeen year old Charles Hornig was hired as editor to *Wonder Stories* just thirty years ago.' (*Skyrack* 64, March 1964)

Media Awards. *BAFTAs:* the director (Alfonso Cuarón), UK film, cinematography, sound, music and visual effects categories all went to *Gravity*; *Frozen* won as animated film. ● *London Critics' Circle:* *Gravity* won for director and technical achievement/effects (Tim Webber). ● *Annies* (animation): *Frozen* took best feature film, music, production design, direction and voice acting (Josh Gad). ● *US Writers Guild:* Spike Jonze won original screenplay for *Her*, which he also directed. [MPJ]

Fanfundery. The ongoing reminder: DUFF 2014 voting ends on 31 March, TAFF on 22 April, GUFF on 9 June. See taff.org.uk for ballots.

Thog's Masterclass. *Dept of Engineering Insight.* 'Obviously, the main driving force will be the power units.' (John W. Campbell, *The Black Star Passes*, 1953) ● *Worth a Thousand Words.* 'Their photographs all look and sound a little bit like me.' (Austin Grossman, *Soon I Will Be Invincible*, 2007) [PB] ● *Dept of Frenzied Anatomy.* 'Swan's cheeks had turned hectic.' (Kim Stanley Robinson, *2312*, 2012) [KS] ● *Dribbling Dept.* 'I followed him as he kicked his feet angrily in front of him, as if dissatisfied with their progress.' (Antti Tuomainen, *The Healer*, 2010; trans Lola Rogers 2013) [PB] ● *Eyeballs in the Sky.* 'Her eyes ran over me like mice.' (Keith Laumer, *A Plague of Demons*, 1965) [JHM] ● *Pitiless Chill of Space Dept.* 'I had time then to notice a cut on my jaw and a swollen eye and register a cabin pressure of .9 PSI and a temperature of -56 K ...' (Keith Laumer, *Star Treasure*, 1971) [BA] ● *The Gap into Prose: A Dark and Hungry Thog Arises.* 'Without warning, a tingle ran down Holt's nearly strong spine and tightened around his scrotum.' 'When he lifted his head again, he was smiling like a corpse with an orgasm.' "'He didn't say," Scorz reported, as if he were fighting a knot in his throat.' 'A laser of inspiration shot along the synapses of Nick's brain; his nerves were ablaze with coherent light.' 'She didn't reply. Her only answer was the increasing stability of her strides.' 'In the privacy of his bowels, he feared Angus too intensely.' 'Angus Thermopylae laughed—a sound like the pulping of flesh.' 'Naturally no room, however private, could be secure from what Milos Taverner might have called "buggery": "'You've made us look like garbage, like weasels! You've curled their moral hair to the roots!'" (all Stephen R. Donaldson, *The Gap into Power: A Dark and Hungry God Arises*, 1992) [AR]

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