



Ansible 328 November 2014

From **David Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU, UK. Website news.ansible.uk. ISSN 0265-9816 (print); 1740-942X (e). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Brad W. Foster**. Available for SAE or the Glass Clock of Bad Schüschein.

Momentous Changes of Staggering Import. I couldn't resist acquiring the ansible.uk (as distinct from ansible.co.uk) net domain, and have now moved *Ansible's* web presence to news.ansible.uk. All existing links to news.ansible.co.uk pages should be automagically redirected. Likewise with sf-encyclopedia.co.uk and sf-encyclopedia.uk. If anything seems to have gone horribly wrong, please let me know. • In other news, my long-awaited cataract operation took place on 25 October. A great success; but now, of course, I need new glasses.

E=mc² or Bust

Gillian Anderson promoted her debut sf novel *A Vision of Fire*—almost entirely, it seems, by co-author Jeff Rovin—on *Front Row* (BBC, 16 October), where the *X-Files* star explained her heavy involvement: 'I would do anything from changing a few sentences to take out a few paragraphs [and] rewrite them.' BBC presenter John Wilson wrong-footed her by pointing out a 3-page appendix of 'Gillian Anderson's favourite books' which was obviously news to this celebrity author. He, by now falling about laughing: 'There's no science fiction in that list.' She: 'I don't read science fiction,' and an embarrassed giggle. [ASa]

Richard Brittain, known (if not to me) as a winner on the UK game show *Countdown*, has self-published a fairytale whose title we won't publicize. The Goodreads reviewer who writes as Paige Rolland was unimpressed, and said so. In response, Brittain reportedly travelled from London to east Scotland to hit her from behind with a wine bottle: the attack was in her workplace, a shop whose security CCTV confirmed his identity. No skull fracture, but much bleeding and six stitches required. Though police later arrested Brittain, he's out on bail and reviewers should take care. (Groupthink.jezebel.com, 21 October) [ASa]

Harlan Ellison suffered a stroke on 9 October, partially paralysing his right side, and was taken into hospital. His speech and mental acuity were not affected; he bounced back with remarkable speed and was home again on 27 October. (*File 770*, 12/27 October)

William Gibson, sf prophet, still requires expert interpretation: 'When William Gibson, the cyberpunk novelist, declared at the turn of the century that "Japan is still the future," he was probably not thinking of bond yields.' (Peter Tasker, *Financial Times*, 14 October) [MMW]

Jack Kirby, following the settlement between his family and Marvel Comics reported in A327, is at last being credited as joint creator in such comics as *All-New X-Men*, *Fantastic Four*, *Inhuman* and *Wolverine*, all now 'Created By Stan Lee and Jack Kirby'. (*The Spire*, 30 October)

Benjanun Sriduangkaew, mild-mannered Thai author of short fiction published from 2012 (earning her a 2014 John W. Campbell Award nomination) is also the controversial—in the sense of 'often vitriolic and abusive'—blogger who for many years posted and tweeted as Winterfox and Requires Hate. Nick Mamatas, though apparently disapproving of those who circulated this revelation privately, outed her in public on the Ello website: 'I am writing this on ello because nobody reads ello.' BS has responded by deleting a number of self-incriminating past posts (I'm told that she has a long history of doing this), publishing two generic apologies, and blaming some of the most offensive material on mysterious and never previously mentioned impersonators.

Henry Wessells's Endless Bookshelf 'Death of the Book Award' for 'the ugliest book issued from a publisher who should know better' went to the 2014 POD reissue of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in the Oxford University Press Complete Works of Oscar Wilde series: 'Bound in brownish repellent silicon paper over boards, false gilt rules and titling on spine. Textblock stiffly glued and unopenable; narrow margins, poorly reproduced illustrations. From the reports of the judges: "it smells disgusting, too, oily synthetic hormones".' (2 October)

Brianna Wu, sf videogame designer, temporarily fled her home with husband Frank Wu when persistent online abuse escalated from rape threats to death threats and tweeting of their home address. That Twitter account was closed; but such harassment of games-industry women—especially if they're pushing for equality—is shamefully routine behaviour from the toxic '#GamerGate' mob. (Boston.com, 11 October)

Brianna Wu is now planning a fund to subsidize targeted women's legal actions for libel and defamation against the online bullies.

Conaster

Until 22 Feb 2015 • **Alasdair Gray**: From the Personal to the Universal (exhibition), Kelvingrove Museum, Glasgow. £5; £3 concessions.

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

14-16 Nov • **Novacon 44**, Park Inn, Mansfield Road, Nottingham. £45 reg. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

15 Nov • **Arab Science Fiction**: From Imagination to Innovation (panel), Science Museum, London. 7-9pm. £10; £8 concessions. See www.sciencemuseum.org.uk, specific link tinyurl.com/q7vydft.

15-16 Nov • **Thought Bubble** (comics), various halls, Armouries Square, Leeds; part of the Leeds Comic Art Festival, running 9-16 November. £24 or £15/day. See thoughtbubblefestival.com.

18 Nov • **Tolkien in Oxford** (symposium), Merton College, Oxford. £10: see www.merton.ox.ac.uk/event/tolkien-oxford-symposium.

22 Nov • **BFS/BSFA Pubmeet**, Brigantes Bar & Brasserie, 114 Micklegate, York, YO1 6JX. 4:30pm-11pm. With Justina Robson and Vincent Holland-Keen. Readings, raffle etc. Free to all.

24 Nov • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Artillery Arms, 102 Bunhill Row, London, EC1Y 8ND. 5/6pm for 7pm. With Claire Corbett. Free.

23-26 Apr 2015 • **Dead by Dawn** (horror film festival), Filmhouse Cinema One, 88 Lothian Rd, Edinburgh, EH3 9BZ. £75. Box office 0131 228 2688. Further information at www.deadbydawn.co.uk.

12-19 Sep 2015 • **Milford UK** (workshop), Snowdonia. £605 with 7 nights' full board. See www.milfordsf.co.uk/attend.htm.

26 Sep 2015 • **BristolCon**, Doubletree Hotel, Bristol. GoH Jasper Fforde, Jaine Fenn. £20 reg to 30 April 2015; £25 thereafter; £30 at door. Cheques to 18 High Leaze Road, Patchway, Bristol BS34 5AF.

Rumblings. The Christmas edition of the London First Thursday pub meetings can't be in the usual Melton Mowbray cellar bar venue (it's been hired for a party) and is now booked for 18 December in the upstairs room at the One Tun on Saffron Hill, near Farringdon tube station. [RR] More at news.ansible.uk/london.html. • *France in 2023*: this cancelled Worldcon bid is now revived. See worldconinfrance.org.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. *Saving Grace Dept*: from a review of Michael Faber's *The Book of Strange New Things*. 'While the bulk of the book takes place on another planet—a vividly drawn environment with green water, no moon and frequent, spiraling rainstorms—it doesn't read like science fiction, or like any genre.' (*New York Times*, 26 October) [CB]

Yo-Ho-Ho! The highly respectable Internet Archive turns out to be hosting a mass of pirated sf and fantasy, not in 'Wayback Machine' website mirrors but as individual uploads. When Colin Kapp's *The Dark Mind* (definitely not public domain) was reported there [BB], I searched for the infamous 'David Langford' and found several unauthorized texts including *The Space Eater*, since removed after a formal DMCA take-down notice. Other genre authors offered as archive.org freebies include Greg Bear, Pat Cadigan, Peter F. Hamilton, K.W. Jeter, Juliet McKenna, Lyda Morehouse, Terry Pratchett, Chris Priest, J.K. Rowling, Charles Stross, Michael Swanwick ('47 of my stories'), J.R.R. Tolkien, Ian Watson and Liz Williams. All the URLs begin 'archive.org/details/rog-', from which I guess that archive.org user 'rog' is a very naughty boy. Unless he's merely an internal acronym for Ripped-Off Goodies.

R.I.P. *Ian Bambro*, UK fan whose 1980s fanzine title was *Somewhere Before*, died on 1 November. [RG] • *Lynda Bellingham* (1948-2014), Canadian-born actress whose best known genre role was The Inquisitor in *Doctor Who*: 'The Trial of a Timelord' (1986), died on 19 October aged 66. [SG] • *Velma 'Vijay' de Selby-Bowen*, US fan and 1999 Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund delegate, died on 18 October from the intractable cancer diagnosed in July; she was 52. [DN] • *Geoffrey Holder* (1930-

2014), US actor, dancer and choreographer best remembered as Baron Samedi in *Live and Let Die* (1973), died on 5 October aged 84. Genre credits include *Doctor Dolittle* (1967) and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005). [MPJ] ● *Jan Hooks* (1957-2014), US actress whose genre work includes *Batman Returns* (1992), *Coneheads* (1993) and *3rd Rock from the Sun* (1996-2000), died on 9 October aged 57. [MMW] ● *Ann Methe*, Canadian con-runner, past chair of Con*Cept and a member of the Anticipation (Montréal) Worldcon committee, died from cancer on 6 August. [DL] ● *Gerard Parkes* (1924-2014), Irish-Canadian actor whose best known genre role as was Doc the inventor in *Fraggle Rock* (1983-1987), died on 19 October aged 90. [AIP] ● *Michel Parry* (1947-2014), Belgian-born horror/supernatural novelist whose many anthologies included the Mayflower Books of Black Magic Stories and the Reign of Terror collections of Victorian horror, died on 1 November; he was 67. [GA] ● *Elizabeth Peña* (1959-2014): Cuban-American actress and director, died on 14 October aged 55. Some genre credits: *#batteries not included* (1987), *Vibes* (1988), *Jacob's Ladder* (1990), *The Invaders* (1995), *It Came From Outer Space II* (1995) and *Impostor* (2001), plus voice work in *The Incredibles* (2004) and others. [SG/LP] ● *Zilpha Keatley Snyder* (1927-2014), prolific US author of children's and YA adventures and fantasies—three of which received Newbery Honor citations—died on 7 October aged 87. [PDF] I liked her borderline fantasy *The Headless Cherub* (1971, also retitled *A Witch in the Family*).

The Weakest Link. *Bradley Walsh: 'The Nun's Priest's Tale is a story by which fourteenth-century English author?' Contestant: 'J.K. Rowling.'* ● *Walsh: "The title of which Shakespeare play means "everything turns out OK"?" Contestant: 'Macbeth.'* (ITV *The Chase*) [PE]

Court Circular. 'State media in China are warning citizens to think carefully before adopting an English name to do business with Western companies. The official news website CCTV is warning that choosing famous names like Dumbledore could lead to a call from a "serious law firm."' (*The Week*, 31 October) [MMW] Also, avoid 'Harlan Ellison®'.

As Others See Us II. Raymond Chandler dashes off a quick sf spoof and scores a prophetic hit regarding information sources: 'The sudden brightness swung me around and the Fourth Moon had already risen. I had exactly four seconds to hot up the disintegrator and Google had told me it wasn't enough.' (letter, 14 March 1953).

Magazine Scene. *Flurb*, Rudy Rucker's online sf magazine, has officially ceased after a hiatus since #13 in 2012. 'I no longer feel like I have the time and energy to put together a *Flurb*. I did the thirteen issues in six years, and that's going to have to be enough.' (*Flurb.net*, September 2014) ● *Michael Moorcock's New Worlds*, the latest (online only) incarnation of *New Worlds*, announced its demise via Facebook on 8 October: 'I am sorry to inform everyone that this page and MMNW will be no more from this Friday. This is due to a massive lack of interest in paying a very nominal price for some cracking content. For all those who did support us, thanks and goodbye.' One fears there was also a massive lack of promotion, as suggested by the long gap since the previous post on that page: a bare announcement of the second and final issue, dated 15 May 2013. Mike Moorcock himself writes: 'I never saw it. Nobody there made any effort to let me see it!' Warren Ellis adds: 'After getting out (I think) two issues via a clunky, ugly and largely broken website, this was no more than raising a headstone over something that was already cold.' (*morning.computer*, 23 October)

Money for Old Prop. Though dismissed as 'a bit of plastic' by BBC *Antiques Roadshow* presenter Fiona Bruce, a TIE fighter pilot's helmet from the 1977 *Star Wars* set was valued by the experts at £40-£50,000. Must check the going rate of those rare *Doctor Who* fridge magnets that years ago came free with *SFX*.... (*Independent*, 19 October) [GD]

Random Fandom. *Steve Green* confided the tense state of Nova Awards voting in mid-October: 'Just to update you all, not a single bugging vote so far ...' Alas, online voting has now closed; you can still vote at Novacon. ● *Stu Shiffman*, after long, slow progress towards recovery from his 2012 stroke, had a fall, a relapse and a number of seizures in October. We can only hope that he comes through this too. [ASc] ● *Steve Sneyd* proudly published the 200th issue of *Data Dump* (launched 1991) in October. He ascribes the longevity of this genre poetry newsletter to its flexible format based on minuscule 'handrot', inspired by terror-haunted realms and vertiginous spaces beyond the last line of the optician's chart. See, or fail to see, for yourself: SAE to Hilltop Press, 4 Nowell Place, Almondbury, Huddersfield, HD5 8PB.

Outraged Letters. *Paul Barnett* chilled my blood by writing 'you've published more issues than you thought ...' and linking to the Amazon page for *Ansible 15715*—actually some chap's self-published sf story. ● *Simon R. Green*: 'I was very sad to hear about Graham Joyce's passing.

Always a good read, not least because you never knew where he was going, from book to book. I remember attending a speech he gave at a con when he was starting out. I went to sit in the front row, to be supportive. But it was just after a big lunch, in a hot cosy room ... and I slowly nodded off. The next thing I knew, this great God-like voice was saying: *Green! Wake up you bastard! / Sorry, Graham.'*

Awards. *Munsey Award* for promotional and research work related to pulp magazines and dime novels: J. Randolph Cox. ● *Science Fiction and Fantasy Translation Awards*: these, with the Association for the Recognition of Excellence in SF & F Translation, are closing down owing to lack of time and of director/juror volunteers. (30 October) [CM]

The Dead Past. *50 Years Ago*, a brave but doomed project: 'LONDON FANDOM is clubbing together to buy a club house, it says here. Financial details are not known but shares in the project may be obtained at £1 minimum from Michael Moorcock, [street address here redacted], London W.11. Could be a Good Thing.' (*Skyrack* 72, November 1964) ● 'Further to the Hugos there's a funny story going the rounds at the moment. Following the example of the Pacificon II, the [1965] London Worldcon Committee has decided against presenting an award for a dramatic work, such as a film or TV show. It is understood that a certain Committee member recently suffered a three a.m. phone call from an irate writer who stated that he had spent over \$300 in publicity for his own dramatic work, who asked how could he possibly win a Hugo for this work if one wasn't to be presented and who announced that unless this decision was retracted he *would not join the convention*. I tell you putting on a Worldcon is great fun.' (*Ibid*) ● *John Christopher* is fondly remembered by David Mitchell: 'Actually, I read a really good book published in the 1950s called *The Death of Grass*, where a killer virus doesn't kill us, humans, as they do in many contemporary stories, but it gets the crops we eat. That's more interesting to me. Wholesale zombie apocalypses in six days makes for a few good scenes in movies, but we've seen those films already. But when food becomes scarcer and scarcer, and it's moving closer and closer to your part of the world, and first rice goes, but it's ok, because we've still got wheat, and then wheat turns into a brown mush in the fields, and then barley, and then oats, and then everything?' (Interview, *The Millions*, 29 October) [PDF]

C.o.A. *Robert Day*, Flat 2, Heatherlea, 4 Station Road, Kirby Muxloe, Leicestershire, LE9 2EN. ● *Andrew Stephenson*: 'My Lyng home is being rebuilt, with eco features, which my builder says will take a year. Upon moving back in I hope to score an Ansible first, a C.O.H.—much like a C.O.A. except the address stays the same and the house changes.'

Fanfundery. *TAFF*: 2015 TransAtlantic Fan Fund nominations will open at Novacon (14-16 November), with voting to start on 1 January: a westbound race, sending a Euro-delegate to the Spokane Worldcon.

Media News. Film, tv and merchandise rights to John Carter of Mars have reverted to Edgar Rice Burroughs Inc, following the generally agreed failure of Disney's 2012 *John Carter of Mars*. ERB Inc hopes to find another studio to do better justice to Barsoom. (15 October) [AIP]

Thog's Masterclass. *Breakages Dept.* 'The fantasy snapped like a broomstick across someone's knee.' (Edward Lee, *The Backwoods*, 2005) [SS] ● *Dept of Time and Motion Study: The Dark Light-Minutes.* 'Grierson doubted if he would sleep at all during the voyage to Venus. Raven estimated that the ship would take almost a week. He stepped the ship up to close on supra-light velocity once they were well clear of Terra ...' [*Days later:*] 'As a precaution Raven had reduced velocity to sub-light. According to his reckoning they would close with Venus in two more days ...' (Denis Hughes as Gill Hunt, *Space Flight*, 1951) [BA] ● *Personal Charisma Dept.* 'The man's will drew back like a well-trained leopard, to remain poised behind the persuasiveness of his smile and eyes. The nose, neither straight nor aquiline, added to his expression of power consciousness ...' (E. Hoffmann Price, 'The Shadow of Saturn', 1950) [BA] ● *Eyeballs in the Sky.* 'As we walk the streets I once called home, conversations sputter and die, and eyes cling to my face and body.' 'The eyes follow me down the street, pinching the back of my neck.' (both Veronica Roth, *Insurgent*, 2012) [NR-S] ● 'He caught Bril's eye squarely as it returned from another disgusted and apprehensive trip to the boulder, and laughed outright.' (Theodore Sturgeon, 'The Skills of Xanadu', July 1956 *Galaxy*) [TS]

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