

# ansible



## ANSIBLE 315 OCTOBER 2013

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: **Jim Barker**. Available for SAE or detailed pedigree listing from *Twurp's Peerage*.

### The Eye in the Pyramid

**Margaret Atwood** clarifies matters once and for all. 'I don't give a crap about how my books are described as long as it's accurate. When people say sci-fi they mean spaceships and other planets and my books aren't about that. I don't want people to feel cheated. I'm talking about things that could happen, like the [lab-meat] burgers, and then they do, just as Jules Verne was writing about things he thought could happen, like submarines, and they did.' (*Scotsman*, 31 August) [KM]

**Richard Dawkins** missed out on a Hugo nomination, according to the retired Pope Benedict XVI—who in a recently published letter declares: 'The Selfish Gene by Richard Dawkins is a classic example of science fiction.' (*Independent*, 25 September) [RC]

**Vin Diesel**, promoting his new film role, may be in need of a quick reality check. *Time*: 'You fight some scary aliens in *Riddick*. Are there any creatures that you're scared of in real life?' *Diesel*: 'Huh. Uh ... dinosaurs?' *Time*: I meant creatures that actually exist now. *Diesel*: I would say King Kong, but I'm not really scared of King Kong. That would be inaccurate.' (*Time* interview, 6 September) [MPJ]

**China Miéville** issued a September e-circular announcing that as a result of unspecified 'circumstances' he has had to cancel all coming engagements including his World Fantasy Convention MC role. [GC]

**Jennifer Ridyard** explicates: 'I guess sometimes they just call the science fiction that girls love "fantasy", because girls tend to shy away from the tacky sci-fi label.' (*Guardian*, 24 September) [PS]

**Spider Robinson** announced on 14 September that he's recovering well from a heart attack and emergency operation on 31 August. [L]

**Karen Russell**, US author of supernatural and fantastic fiction, has received one of the 2013 MacArthur Foundation 'genius grants' of \$125,000 a year for the next five years, no strings attached. [L]

### Conuzor

2 Oct • **From Sindbad to Sci-Fi: Reimagining Arab SF**, Science Museum, London. 7-9pm. Free booking needed: see [sindbadscifi.com](http://sindbadscifi.com).

11-13 Oct • **Sci-Fi-London Oktoberfest** (film), Stratford Picturehouse, London. Films individually priced. See [www.sci-fi-london.com](http://www.sci-fi-london.com).

12 Oct • **Starship London** (science/sf, linked to the above), The Crystal, London. From 11am. Free, but register at [tinyurl.com/qbejj5](http://tinyurl.com/qbejj5).

18-20 Oct • **Lakes International Comic Art Festival**, Kendal, Cumbria. Many guests. Free exhibitions; day events £7; evening (7pm and after) £9; Comics Clock Tower venue £3.50/day; weekend and day passes offer savings. See [www.comicartfestival.com](http://www.comicartfestival.com).

21 Oct • **Starship Century** symposium, Royal Astronomical Society, Piccadilly, London. 10am-5pm. With Martin Rees, Stephen Baxter, Paul MacAuley, James and Gregory Benford, other sf/science speakers. Free. More at [www.starshipcentury.com/blog/event-102113/](http://www.starshipcentury.com/blog/event-102113/).

23 Oct • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Artillery Arms, 102 Bunhill Row, London, EC1Y 8ND. 5/6pm for 7pm. With Mary Robinette Kowal. Free.

25-27 Oct • **Celluloid Screams** horror film festival, Sheffield. £60 (£50 concessions). Bookings 0114 275 7727 or [celluloidscreams.co.uk](http://celluloidscreams.co.uk).

26 Oct • **Birmingham Beer and Blake's 7**, Dragon Inn, Hurst St, Birmingham, B5 4TD. 12:30pm-7pm. All welcome.

26 Oct • **BristolCon**, Ramada Hotel, Bristol. £20 reg to 25 October; £25 at the door. Cheques to 18 High Leaze Road, Patchway, Bristol BS34 5AF. See [www.bristolcon.org](http://www.bristolcon.org).

31 Oct - 3 Nov • **World Fantasy Convention**, Hilton Brighton Metropole. *Registration closes 1 October*: 'we won't have time to process memberships after that date, plus we have to get the badges printed.' No at-the-door or day memberships; no transfer of already purchased memberships after 1 October. See [www.wfc2013.org](http://www.wfc2013.org).

1-4 Nov • **Irish Discworld Convention**, Radisson Blu Limerick, Ennis Rd, Limerick, Ireland. €50 reg; €40 concessions, €20 teen (13-18), €15 junior (8-12), under-8s free. Register at [www.idwcon.org](http://www.idwcon.org).

1-2 Nov • **Horror in the East** ('horror-lit'), Aspire Centre, Denes High School, Lowestoft, NR32 4AH. See [www.horrorintheeast.com](http://www.horrorintheeast.com).

7 Nov • **Weird Reading**, Horse Hospital, Colonnade, Bloomsbury, London, WC1N 1JD. 6:40pm for 7-11pm. £10 reg. See next item.

8 Nov • **The Weird** (conference on weird fiction), Senate House, Malet Street, London, WC1E 7HU. From 9:30am. £30 reg. Linked to the above. Details at [www.ies.sas.ac.uk/events/ies-conferences/TheWeird](http://www.ies.sas.ac.uk/events/ies-conferences/TheWeird).

8-10 Nov • **Novacon 43**, Park Inn, Mansfield Road, Nottingham. GoH Jo Walton. £45 reg. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

15-17 Nov • **Armadacon 25**, Future Inn, Plymouth. GoH TBA. £30 (£25 concessions) to 18 Wadham Rd, Liskeard, Cornwall, PL14 3BD.

7-9 Feb 2014 • **2emi6breve** (filk), Ramada Grantham Hotel. £37 reg, £24 unwaged, *rising to £42/£29 on 1 November*; £45/£30 at door. Under-18s £1/year; under-5s free. Cheques: UK Filk Convention, c/o 159 Winns Avenue, Walthamstow, London, E17 5HB.

14-18 Aug 2014 • **Loncon 3** (72nd Worldcon), London Docklands. *Now £115 reg and £260 family, to 28 February 2014*. Unchanged rates: £65 YA; £30 child; £2 infant; £25 supp. See [www.loncon3.org](http://www.loncon3.org).

**Rumblings**. *Beach of the Dead 2013*: the annual Brighton zombie parade has been cancelled owing to 'health and safety fears.' That's what this troubled world needs—safer and healthier zombies.

### Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See Us**. A self-consciously sophisticated and literary formulation of the 'if it's good it's not genre' tradition: 'We do not publish genre fiction—mystery, crime, science fiction, fantasy, and the like—but are certainly not opposed to considering work that self-consciously employs the tropes of formulaic writing for more sophisticated literary ends.' (*Gettysburg Review* submission guidelines) [TE]

**Crimewatch**. A collection of sf books by the late Patrick Moore, including two complete sets of his works, has been stolen from the Tavistock area where it was housed in three fire safes. All copies signed. If you see any of this material offered for sale, call Crimestoppers (0800 555 111) or email PC 2650 Tim Brooks of the Plymouth police: Tim dot Brooks2 at [devonandcornwall.dot.pnn.dot.police.dot.uk](mailto:devonandcornwall.dot.pnn.dot.police.dot.uk). [BA]

**The Weakest Link**. *Dan O'Connell*: 'How many dwarfs were there in the Snow White story?' *Caller*: 'Ten.' (XFM) • *Nick Knowles*: 'What are the first two books in the Old Testament?' *Contestant*: 'Genesis ... and Exorcist.' (BBC1 *National Lottery: Break the Safe*) [PE]

**R.I.P.** *Patricia Anthony* (1947-2013), US author whose 1987 story debut was followed by seven idiosyncratic novels from the sf *Cold Allies* (1998) to the World War I slipstream fantasy *Flanders* (1998), was reported on 2 August as having died; she was 66. [JDB] • *Martha Bartter* (1932-2013), US critic, editor and author of some short sf whose major work was *The Way to Ground Zero: The Atomic Bomb in American Science Fiction* (1988), died on 18 June aged 80. • *Bob Booth*, US writer, editor and publisher who founded the Necon workshop, Necon E-Books and (with others) the World Fantasy Convention, died on 7 September. [AIP] • *Gary Brandner* (1933-2013), US horror/thriller author best known for his werewolf novel *The Howling* (1977), its two sequels and the film franchise it spawned, died on 23 September; he was 80. [GW] • *A(nn) C. Crispin* (1950-2013), US author made Grandmaster by the International Association of Media Tie-In Writers for her *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, *V* etc franchise novels, died on 6 September aged 63. Her solo work includes the sf *StarBridge* sequence; she was co-founder and chair of the essential scam-alert service *Writer Beware*. [SHS] • *Bobbie DuFault* (1958-2013), US organizer of 150+ conventions and co-chair of the 2015 Spokane Worldcon (Sasquan), died unexpectedly on 14 September; she was 55. [BH/L] • *Haji* (Barbarella Cotton, 1946-2013), Canadian-US actress whose early career in Russ Meyer films included the sorceress role in *Good Morning ... and Goodbye!* (1967), died on 9 August aged 67. She was in the sf *Wham! Bam! Thank You, Spaceman!* (1975). [MPJ] • *Delphyne Joan Hanke-Woods* (1945-2013), US artist whose professional cover and interior illustrations appeared 1977-1984 and who contributed art to many fanzines, died in mid-September aged 67. [RN] She won FAAn awards for artwork in 1979 and 1980, and—in her seventh successive



year of nomination—the 1986 fan artist Hugo. ● *David Jacobs* (1926-2013), popular UK radio/tv broadcaster for over 65 years, died on 2 September aged 87. He played 22 parts in Charles Cilton's 1950s sf radio drama *Journey into Space*. [GD/CM] ● *Frederik Pohl* (1919-2013), US author, editor, agent and fan whose astonishingly long career ran from 1937 to a blog post on the day of his death, died on 2 September. He was 93. Highlights include editing *If* (winning three 1960s Hugos), such classic satires as *The Space Merchants* (1953) with Cyril Kornbluth, many memorable shorts including 'Day Million' and 'The Gold at the Starbow's End', a new maturity as novelist with *Man Plus* (1976) and the multi-award-winning *Gateway* (1977), and several life-achievement honours including 1993 SFWA Grand Master status. His *SF Encyclopedia* bibliography lists 150 books. One of the long-time greats. ● *Nick Robinson*, UK editor and publisher who founded Robinson Publishing in 1983 and chaired Constable & Robinson (merged 1999) from 2009, died on 30 August aged 58. He published a great many genre anthologies including the 'Mammoth Book Of' titles edited by Mike Ashley, Stephen Jones and others, and the UK editions of Gardner Dozois's *Year's Best SF*. ● *Herbert Thiery* (1955-2013), popular German fan who organized the 1996 Saar-Con in Saarbrücken Dudweiler, died on 21 September aged 58. [MAH] ● *Bill Wallis* (1937-2013), UK actor who played Mr Prosser and Prostetnic Vogon Jeltz in the original radio *Hitchhiker* and appeared in *Brazil* (1985), died on 6 September aged 76. TV credits include *The Avengers* (1966-1967), *The Box of Delights* (1984) and *The Silver Chair* (1990). [AW] ● *Jon Manchip White* (1924-2013), UK author and screenwriter whose genre works included borderline-fantasy novels, supernatural shorts, radio versions of *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (1949) and *The War of the Worlds* (1950), and tv scripts for *The Avengers* and *Undermind*, died on 31 July aged 89. [SH]

**Genre Purity Masterclass.** Outing Lois McMaster Bujold as a writer of romance rather than True SF: 'Bujold tips her hand in the eloquence of her language (normally a good thing) and the attention to detail that only women would find attractive: balls, courts, military dress, palace intrigues, gossiping, and whispering in the corridors. All of this is right out of Alexander Dumas.' (Paul Cash, 'When Science Fiction is Not Science Fiction', *Amazing*, 4 September) [NL/JDN]

**Court Circular.** Gary Friedrich, creator of the hotheaded comics character Ghost Rider, came to a settlement with Marvel Comics about the film/spinoff rights after legal action beginning in 2007. Details of this settlement remain excitingly obscure. (BBC, 10 September) [MPJ]

**As Others See Us II.** A reminder that we are spurned all the way to the bank: 'What do the books of Terry Pratchett, the film *Iron Man 3* and the video game *Grand Theft Auto V* have in common? The answer is that they are all regarded as "geek" pursuits, and therefore are not part of the cultural mainstream. That is bizarre. Mr Pratchett has sold more than 70m copies of his Discworld series of novels. *Iron Man 3*, based on a character from Marvel Comics, has the best box-office receipts of any movie this year. And *Grand Theft Auto V*, released yesterday by Rockstar of Edinburgh, is expected to take in more than \$1bn in sales.' (Helen Lewis, *Financial Times*, 18 September) [MMW]

**Outraged Letters.** *John Dallman* on Chris Tookey's seeming disdain for fan fiction (see A314): 'Since Tookey's media career started by writing and producing an opera based on the works of a long-dead US fantasy author (James Branch Cabell), he might be thought to be in danger of calling the kettle black when it come to fan-fiction.' ● *Martyn P. Jackson* feels jubilee mania is getting out of hand, with the arrival of a Steiff/Danbury Mint flyer for the BBC-authorized 'Doctor Who 50th Anniversary Bear' in a limited edition of 5000. 'The teddy bear is dressed as Matt Smith's Doctor, complete with bowtie and sonic screwdriver. The pad of the bear's right foot is embroidered with a Tardis bearing the legend "50 Years", along with the BBC logo.' Only £255!

**Magazine Scene.** Andy Cox speaks: 'If anybody would like to submit a story to *Interzone*, but has previously been put off by postage charges, why not email it instead?' *Interzone* at [ttapress.com](http://ttapress.com).

**The Dead Past.** *80 Years Ago*, without comment: '... he had heard of the impending execution of Scalzi, a member of that ill-begotten tribe who live and die by violence and whose passing is a boon to the rest of mankind.' ('Barnaby Ross', *The Tragedy of Z*, 1933) ● *50 Years Ago*, British fandom belatedly discovered *Mars Attacks*: 'SF has hit the bubble gum card world. Wonderful stuff, depicting insects eating people, men burning alive, burning cars falling off the Golden Gate Bridge, men charred by Martians, men crushed to death, giant flies, a tidal wave, removing victims etc etc. All good clean fun.' (Ron Bennett, *Skyrack* 58, October 1963) How different, how very different, from the home life of our own dear Dr Fredric Wertham. Speaking of whom, 40

*Years Ago*: 'If they're keeping to their publication schedule, Southern Illinois Univ. Press should be putting out Dr. Fredric Wertham's 208 page *The World of Fanzines: A Special Form of Communication* this November. It'll cost \$10, but should prove interesting, to say the least. Part of the pre-publicity stuff (which included a poster!) talks of Dr. Wertham analyzing the influence of fanzines "as a manifestation of youth subculture".' (Peter Roberts, *Checkpoint* 42, October 1973) Even then, some of us were a visibly ageing and greying youth subculture.

**C.o.A.** *Noel Collyer & Diane Young*, 22 Kingsway, Hayling Island, Hampshire, PO11 0LZ. *Shelby Vick*, [planetarystories at gmail dot com](mailto:planetarystories@gmail.com).

**Fanfundery.** *Steven H Silver* on accepting Joss Whedon's Hugo for *The Avengers*: 'I raised \$176 at LoneStarCon 3 for the Fan Funds by letting people hold the Hugo as I wandered around the party floors. I started this fundraiser in 2009 in Montreal when Aliette de Bodard and Christopher Kastensmidt asked if they could hold it and I jokingly asked for \$5. After they reached for their wallets, I kept it up and raised over \$200 that year to be divided between TAFF, DUFF and CUFF. Figured I'd continue this year, donating \$88 each to TAFF and DUFF.'

**UK TV Choice Awards.** The Best Drama Series and Outstanding Contribution categories were both won by *Doctor Who*. [MPJ]

**Random Fandom.** *Martin Hoare* recalls a brush with fame: 'When I collected your Hugo in 1989 it was handed to me by Fred Pohl. He described it as "a heavy sucker".' ● *Nova Awards* for fanzine work: voting is open to all British Isles residents and Novacon members. The ballot is at [www.novacon.org.uk/nova\\_award\\_ballot.php](http://www.novacon.org.uk/nova_award_ballot.php). [SG] ● *Elliot Shorter*, long-time US fan and 1970 TAFF delegate, has been diagnosed with untreatable cancer. Letters may be sent to the hospice: Harris Health Center, 833 Broadway, East Providence, RI 02914, USA. [F770]

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Wilde Inaccuracy Dept.* 'As Sherlock Holmes had said to Watson, to lose one wife was tragic, two was careless, and three—well, Holmes hadn't had a word for that, as Whitney recalled.' (Laura Lippman, *The Girl in the Green Raincoat*, 2008) [PB] ● *Dept of Ineluctable Insight.* 'When she fixed her blue eyes on him he felt that he was seen.' (Camilla Läckberg trans Steven T. Murray, *The Ice Princess*, 2010) [PB] ● *True Romance.* 'She circled her finger round her nipples until they hardened and then purred, "Forgive me ..."' (*Ibid*) 'Cormac was silent for a time and she felt the emotions soften. His fingers slid across her hand, squeezing it gently. She smiled. "Are you feeling yourself again?"' (David Gemmell, *Last Sword of Power*, 1988) [BA] ● *Mnemonic Dept.* 'He tried to remember how many rungs there were, but with his brain bearing this gravest of news and him wondering whether this ladder would still hold his weight, it was impossible to remember.' (R.S. Johnson, *The Genesis Project: The Children of CS-13*, 2011) [AR] ● *Dept of Unobtrusive Entrances.* 'He knocked several times at the door in a sort of rhythmic fashion, pushed it open and crawled through.' (*Ibid*) ● *Eyeballs in the Sky.* "'The first move has been made," he said, not tearing his eye from the body.' (*Ibid*) ● *Dept of Bilocation.* 'A single walnut door stood either end of the long, grand hallway.' (*Ibid*) ● *Secrets of Elegant Sentence Construction.* 'But Zuberi did not see this, nor did anyone else, and as he slid his pistol back into its holster, the main door to the room flew open and about a dozen men and women, who had been sleeping only moments earlier, poured in, their weapons held and ready to fight if need be, a few more arrived soon after.' (*Ibid*) ● *Multiple Messianic Mot Juste Dept.* 'The look of Polish had begun finally to fit his eye-sockets without estrangement ...' "'He's on his way," he heard Heidi call from the back room. A moan: or not exactly a moan. Rather, the sound of indecipherable syllables evaporating at the bottom of the sea.' 'Lars threw off the quilt and stared as if his own eyeballs were two breathing bellows inflated by the bottommost power of his pumping lungs. His head was filled with the battering, plodding, butting force of that staring, that bulging.' 'Lars, looking with all his strength, felt his own ordinary [eye] pupil consumed by a conflagration in the socket. As if copulating with an angel whose wings were on fire.' 'Dr. Eklund, meanwhile, was nodding his big face up and down, cheering her on like a human baton.' 'One idea remained like an exclamation mark in the sweet-tasting pink wax of their heads: the stewpot, the stewpot!' (all from Cynthia Ozick, *The Messiah of Stockholm*, 1987) [PB]

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