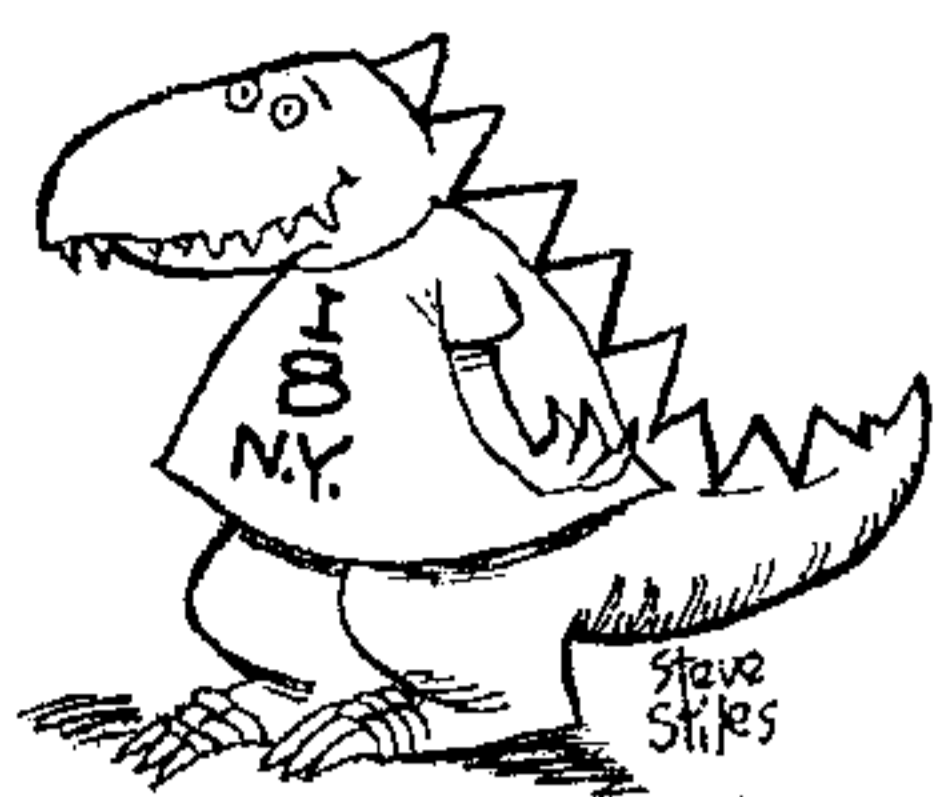


# ansible



## Ansible 275 June 2010

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: Steve Stiles. Available for SAE, though not to gnoits, ponks or snelks.

### Junebug, Calling Peewee

**Guillermo Del Toro** has dropped out as director of the two coming films of *The Hobbit*, but will continue as screenplay co-writer. [DK]

**Harlan Ellison** is full of surprises: 'Last Dangerous Visions, for the first time ever in e-book format (and soon to be in paperback), is the latest installment in E-Reads' initiative to bring back more than thirty major works by Harlan Ellison.' (E-Reads) But this web page is otherwise about the original *Dangerous Visions*, and *Last* may just be a typo.

**Neil Gaiman**, who charges high speaking fees out of sheer self-defence, was not best pleased to be used as a 'political football' after accepting \$40,000 to talk at a Minnesota library. (Which needed to use up special funding that couldn't be spent on books or salaries.) The money all went to charity, but the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* decided this shock horror payment was front-page news. Neil: 'Nobody from the Star Tribune tried to contact me or my assistant or agent for any quotes on this, which I find a bit depressing, given that they have my email and phone number from dozens of previous interviews.' [BB] So it goes.

**Muriel Gray** learned the peril of telling anecdotes, after joking in a Fantasycon 2004 interview about some chap's complaint to HarperCollins that her horror novel *The Ancient* (January 2000) was suspiciously similar to his fantasy (unpublished). Her comment 'So obviously he was a nutter' clearly rankled, but not as much as her claim that his book had been written after hers appeared. Since she didn't mention his name—Geoff Widders—this was hardly defamatory; still, he went to the Small Claims court, asking not for damages but for an official ruling that Muriel Gray had told a fib and should jolly well be ashamed of herself. The case moved to High Court and then Court of Appeal, ultimately being thrown out in December 2009 with costs against Widders. He feels a vast sense of injustice and has created a website about the whole affair (hewasanutter.com), plugging this on literary messageboards: the British Fantasy Society's because of Fantasycon, Stephen King's because *The Ancient* had a King cover quote, and (at Facebook) Gray's home-town football team Glasgow Rangers. [JS] Oh dear...

**Diana Wynne Jones**, after much consultation with her husband and specialists, has decided to abandon chemotherapy (which is serving only to make her feel very ill indeed) and resign herself to whatever may follow. Her senior oncologist fears she has 'months rather than years', but we all hope that—as once or twice before—Diana can still surprise the medical profession. May the good luck return. [via CB]

**Jonathan Lethem** is moving from New York to California, to take up the Roy Disney Chair of Creative Writing at Pomona College (held by David Foster Wallace until his death in 2008). [AIP]

**Ian McEwan's** climate-change novel *Solar* won the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse prize for comic fiction at the Hay Festival. He said: 'I have been surprised there aren't more novels [about it]. It's clearly begun to have an impact on our lives already and it has huge human consequences, on a small scale, on a private level and on a geopolitical level.' (*Guardian*, 28 May) [JY] The *Guardian* could have cited heaps of past sf about anthropogenic climate change, from George Turner's *The Sea and Summer* (1987, aka *Drowning Towers*) to Kim Stanley Robinson's 'Science in the Capital' trio (2005-7), but the invisible genre stayed invisible—apart from Michael Crichton's contrarian *State of Fear*.

**J. Neil Schulman**, whose 1979 sf novel *Alongside Night* features 'the collapse of the American economy due to massive government over-spending', announced on 21 May that he plans a copyright infringement suit against the US government for stealing his plot points and using them in real life. Co-defendants will include the Federal Reserve Bank, the European Union, the International Monetary Fund, General Motors, and the country of Greece. Sample smoking gun: 'I have Europe issue a common currency in my novel called the "eurofranc"—the European Union then goes and issues the "euro".' [LP] Is Schulman a little bit, ahem, widdershins; or is this just a tongue-in-cheek publicity ploy?

**Norman Spinrad**, unable to eat owing to a blocking tumour, had intestinal surgery on 20 May and is pleased: 'I have to tell y'all that it

went better than 100%. The surgeon in effect did the job he wanted to do after much more chemo, took out the tumor and a suspicious lymph node, didn't take my whole stomach. Thanks to y'all for your prayers of all kinds and degrees.' (Facebook, 21 May) He should be out of hospital and recovering at home by now (1 June). Get well soon!

**Jane Yolen** reports: 'Someone asked a children's book publisher recently at a panel what was the most popular trend in picture books these days. He thought carefully for a long moment, then said, "Pink and sparkly covers." I think I shall go and drown myself forthwith.'

### Conteschoun

Until 30 Oct • **The Weirdstone of Brisingamen** 50th-anniversary events: Chester, Alderley Edge, Nantwich. See [www.weirdstone.org.uk](http://www.weirdstone.org.uk).

12 Jun • **Alt.Fiction**, QUAD art centre, Derby, DE1 3AS. With many authors, editors, publishers. £25 reg. Box office 01332 290 606.

18 Jun • **Dreams with Sharp Teeth** (H. Ellison documentary), Southbank Center, London. Ticket required—free from SC ticket office, £1.45 online transaction fee, £2.50 by phone to 0844 875 0073.

19 Jun • **SF Foundation/BSFA** mini-con & AGMs: Royal Astronomical Society, Piccadilly, London, W1J 0BQ. 9:30am-4pm. Free.

30 Jun • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Antelope, 22 Eaton Tce, London, SW1W 8EZ. 5pm for 6pm. With Eric Brown (interview).

26 Jun • **Tolkien Society Seminar**, Birmingham Central Library. Advance booking is closed; no at-the-door memberships.

28-30 Jun • **Science for Fiction**, Imperial College, London. Workshop for published authors (SFWA definition) to discuss science with scientists. Limited numbers. Contact d.clements at ic dot ac dot uk.

31 Jul - 1 Aug • **Caption** (small-press comics), East Oxford Community Centre, Princes St/Cowley Rd corner. Usually £10 at door; £5 day.

26-29 Aug • **Tricon** (Eurocon), Gieszyn/Gesky Tesin, Polish/Czech border. Foreign GoH: Orson Scott Card. Now €22.50 reg, rising to €25 on 1 August. Online registration and other details at <http://tricon.info/>.

### Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See Us.** Restoring the lost footage of *Metropolis* has also miraculously rescued it from the taint of sf: 'The cumulative result is a version of "Metropolis" whose tone and focus have been changed. "It's no longer a science-fiction film," said Martin Koerber, a German film archivist and historian who supervised the latest restoration and the earlier one in 2001. "The balance of the story has been given back. It's now a film that encompasses many genres, an epic about conflicts that are ages old. The science-fiction disguise is now very, very thin.'" (*New York Times*, 4 May, sent by dozens of you) As Andy Sawyer wearily commented, 'That's apart from the futuristic setting, the dystopian cityscapes, the videophones, the vast machines and the robot, I guess.'

**Nebulas.** NOVEL Paolo Bacigalupi, *The Windup Girl*. NOVELLA Kage Baker, *The Women of Nell Gwynne's*. NOVELETTE Eugie Foster, 'Sinner, Baker, Fabulist, Priest; Red Mask, Black Mask, Gentleman, Beast' (*Interzone* 2/09). SHORT Kij Johnson, 'Spar' (*Clarkesworld* 10/09). RAY BRADBURY (film) *District 9*. ANDRE NORTON (YA) Catherynne M Valente, *The Girl Who Circumnavigated Fairyland in a Ship of Her Own Making*.

**Publishers & Sinners.** Angry Robot, the year-old HarperCollins UK sf imprint, is becoming an independent publisher (same Nottingham office, Marc Gascoigne's team and all) backed by Osprey Publishing, best known for military history and the Shire Books heritage titles.

**As Others See Our Young.** *Teenaged son*: 'I'm the only one of my friends who hasn't lost his virginity.' *Narrow-eyed mother*: 'We've seen your friends, and trust me, Pimples, Braces and Beam Me Up Scotty are not getting any.' (*Desperate Housewives*, Channel 4, 12 May) [MPJ]

**R.I.P.** John Birchby (1930-2010), long-time UK fan, the last 1940s White Horse attendee still to be a regular at London first-Thursday meetings in 2010, died on 29 May after a short illness; he was 79. [BA] John was a dedicated *Ansible* correspondent. • Phyllis Douglas (1936-2010), US former actress whose 1960s credits included episodes of *Batman* and *Star Trek*, died on 12 May; she was 73. Her first cinema



appearance, in *Gone with the Wind* (1939), was at the age of two. [MPJ] ● **David Durston** (1921-2010), US writer-director best known for his satanic-hippies-get-rabies horror film *I Drink Your Blood* (1970)—he also wrote scripts for the tv sf anthology series *Tales of Tomorrow*—died on 6 May aged 88. [AIP] ● **David Everitt** (1953-2010) freelance writer and co-editor of *Fangoria* with Bob Martin from 1981 to 1985, died on 7 May aged 57. [JHB] ● **George Ewing** (1945-2010), author of technical articles and a number of sf stories beginning with 'Black Fly' (1974 *Analog*), died on 18 May aged 64. [BH] ● **Frank Frazetta** (1928-2010), legendary US fantasy artist who after early work in pulps and comics rose to fame with film posters and (from the 1960s) book covers, died after a stroke on 10 May; he was 82. [HB] His best-known images were inspired by Robert E. Howard's Conan and various Edgar Rice Burroughs novels; he won the Hugo as best professional artist in 1966, the corresponding World Fantasy Award in 1976, WFA Life Achievement in 2001, and three Chesley Awards. ● **Martin Gardner** (1914-2010), US polymath famed for his long-running 'Mathematical Games' column in *Scientific American* (collected in 15 volumes) and for many books and articles attacking pseudoscience, died on 22 May. [MB] Gardner was 95 and still publishing new work, such as his piece in the March/April *Skeptical Inquirer*. He contributed mathematical puzzles to Asimov's 1977-1986; his sf and fantasy stories are assembled in *The No-Sided Professor* (1987); he wrote extensively about favourite fantasy authors, especially L. Frank Baum, Lewis Carroll (see *The Annotated Alice* and *The Annotated Snark*), G.K. Chesterton and Lord Dunsany. Gardner was a US national treasure. ● **Robert Gary** (1920-2010), US script supervisor for the original *Star Trek* and also *ST:TNG*, *ST: Voyager* and *ST: DS9*, died on 3 May aged 90. [AIP] ● **Dennis Hopper** (1936-2010), noted US actor/director whose genre credits (though not his most acclaimed work) included *The Twilight Zone*, *My Science Project* (1985), *Super Mario Bros.* (1993), *Witch Hunt* (1994), *Waterworld* (1995), *Space Truckers* (1996) and *Land of the Dead* (2005), died on 29 May. He was 74. [SG] ● **Peter Keefe** (1953-2010), US writer/producer of *Widget*, *the World Watcher* (1990) and other animated tv sf series, died on 27 May. [SFS] ● **Peter O'Donnell** (1920-2010), UK comics writer and novelist who created Modesty Blaise—both as an *Evening Standard* comic strip (1963-2001) and as a novel sequence opening with *Modesty Blaise* (1965)—died on 3 May; he was 90. [GW] O'Donnell also contributed notable scripts to the science-fantasy strip *Garth*. ● **Lynn Redgrave** (1943-2010), UK actress whose genre credits include *Lion of Oz* (2000) and *Peter Pan* (2003), died on 2 May; she was 67. ● **Jeanne Robinson** (1948-2010), dancer and choreographer, wife and collaborator of Spider Robinson, died on 30 May after weeks of palliative care for no longer treatable cancer. [DB] Their 1977 *Analog* story 'Stardance' won both Hugo and Nebula awards, and grew into the novel *Stardance* (1979); sequels were *Starseed* (1991) and *Starmind* (1995). All sympathy to Spider and family. ● **Joy K. Sanderson** (née Goodwin, 1923-2010), active in UK fandom for several years before her 1960 break with Vince Clarke and emigration to America with Sandy Sanderson, and in US fandom thereafter, died on 22 April; she was 86. [JH] ● **Kei Sato** (Keinosuke Sato, 1928-2010), Japanese actor whose best-known (in the West) genre roles were in the 1984 *Godzilla* remake and the supernatural films *Onibaba* and *Kwaidan*, died on 2 May aged 81. [PT] ● **Randolph Stow** (1935-2010), Australian-born author whose novels include the post-holocaust *Tourmaline* (1963) and the fantasy *The Girl Green as Elderflower* (1980), died on 30 May aged 74. ● **Sharon Webb** (1936-2010), US author and nurse who based sf on her medical experience, died on 29 April aged 74. Her books include *The Adventures of Terra Tarkington* (1985) and the Earth Song trilogy. [NSFCN]

**As Others See Us II.** George Nolfi, director of *The Adjustment Bureau*, explains that this film—though based 'very loosely' on Philip K. Dick's sf story 'Adjustment Team' (1954)—is Not Science Fiction: 'Sci-fi to me conjures up lasers and spaceships and time travel. This movie is told very realistically.' (*Entertainment Weekly*, 23 April) [MMW]

**Random Fandom.** *George Locke* is closing his sf bookshop off the Charing Cross Road, planning to be 'out of Cecil Court at the end of August (lease expiry; too old to sign up for another five years).' [R]

**More Awards.** *Compton Crook* (first novel): Paolo Bacigalupi, *The Windup Girl*. ● **National Movie Awards**, voted by the general public, all went to genre work. The *Twilight* saga won three: Fantasy Movie, *New Moon*; Performer, Robert Pattinson; Most Anticipated Movie, *Eclipse*. Also: Best Family Movie, *Harry Potter And The Half Blood Prince*; Special Recognition, the entire Potter franchise; Action/Thriller, the steampunk *Sherlock Holmes*; Breakthrough Movie, *The Time Traveller's Wife*. The remaining award, Screen Icon, went to the very sci-fi Tom Cruise. [MPJ]

**Court Circular.** More legal action regarding Neil Gaiman's rights to characters he created for Todd McFarlane's *Spawn* comics. Joe Gordon relishes US District Judge Barbara Crabb's austere summation of the similarities between three female characters who 'are warrior angels with voluptuous physiques, long hair and mask-like eye makeup [...] Their "uniforms" consist of thong bikinis, garters, wide weapon belts, elbow-length gloves and poorly adjusted armor bras.' [FPI blog]

**The Dead Past.** 72 Years Ago. Maurice K. Hanson had a vision of the future: 'The Government will set about the business of annexing the moon to the British Empire, for it is doubtful whether at that date there will have been any great steps towards the cultivation of a spirit of internationalism, and no one dare impute that the first men on the moon will be other than British!' (*Tomorrow* 7, 1938) [RH]

**Outraged Letters.** *Pete Young* reports from the front: 'Three quarters of the Bangkok fandom I know about (ie, myself, wife and son) hightailed it out of the city before the curfew was announced. The building in which I did a teacher training course last year, opposite the now-destroyed Centreworld, was also firebombed, and the massive cloud of tyre smoke that hung over the city as we left was vaguely apocalyptic. / The remaining quarter of Bangkok fandom that I know of, ie. Somtow Sucharitkul, stayed put and has become a bit of an unofficial media star again via Facebook.... His best comment: "If the redshirt leaders had read science fiction, they'd have known the consequences of 'creating a monster'." (25 May)

**Unsolicited Shrug.** A *Washington Post* article on books read by past US presidents led to a flood of suggestions for what President Obama should read. Top choice, after the Constitution and the Bible: Ayn Rand's massive *Atlas Shrugged*. 'He needs to read [it] at least ten times,' insisted one cruel taskmaster. (*Washington Post*, 25 April) [KM]

**As Others Quote Us.** Conservative MP David Davies showed his sf erudition before the election, citing 'one of Heinlein's Laws which says that the only way of discovering the limits of the possible is to venture a little way past them into the impossible.' (*Guardian*) [R] Oops.

**The Dead Past II.** 50 Years Ago, Kenneth F. Slater brought good news: 'ORDERS ARE NOW BEING TAKEN by the publishers for Professor J.R.R. Tolkien's promised new work, provisional title, THE SILMARILLION, which recounts the earlier history of The Ring. The publishers still can't give a date or a price for the work, but this acceptance of orders is a step forwards.' Only 17 more years to wait! In the same column, KFS expressed his disapproval: 'A new low is achieved by the latest Beacon Book (Galaxy Selection—or should it be Salaction?), Philip Jose Farmer's FLESH which out-does such things as R.L. Finn's CAPTIVE ON THE FLYING SAUCERS for undisguised pornography and sadism. The additives to some of the reprint Beacon titles have been pretty erotic, but so far as I read this one is pure sexology. The time would seem to be ripe for the much rumoured Spicy Science Stories.' (*Skyrack* 20, June 1960)

**C.o.A.** *Publishers Weekly* (moving just 'a few blocks down the street'), 71 West 23rd Street, Suite 1608, New York, NY 10010, USA.

**Chog's Masterclass.** *Crossing the Jordan Dept.* 'Suddenly he pressed the looking glass to his eye as a woman galloped a tall black horse.' 'Worry [...] ate inside him like a ferret trying to burrow out of his middle.' 'Perrin shut out the rest, no easy task, with his ears.' 'That old woman reminded Sevenna of a landslide plunging down a mountain.' 'He sounded like a bumblebee the size of a cat instead of a mastiff.' 'The Ajas sent to the Keeper whatever dribbles from their own eyes-and-ears they were willing to share.' (all Robert Jordan, *A Crown of Swords*, 1994) [AR] 'Her eyebrows climbed as she directed her gaze back to them, eyes black as her white-winged hair, a demanding stare of impatience so loud she might as well have shouted.' (Robert Jordan, *The Path of Daggers*, 1998) [AR] 'The tea had gone cold, but honey exploded on her tongue.' 'After a moment, his chin moved, the vestige of a nod.' 'Loial's ears trembled with caution, now.' (all Robert Jordan, *Crossroads of Twilight*, 2003) [AR] ● *Shapeshifter Dept: The Final Frontier.* "Ling!" Meg snapped at one point. "Human beings have two ears, and each is at the side of the face. That's better." (H.J. Campbell, *Another Space—Another Time*, 1953) [BA] ● *Third Eye Dept.* "There was a long silence while Kitty, still with arms tightly folded, studied him from between narrowed eyes.' (John Dickson Carr, *The Devil in Velvet*, 1951) [PB]

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