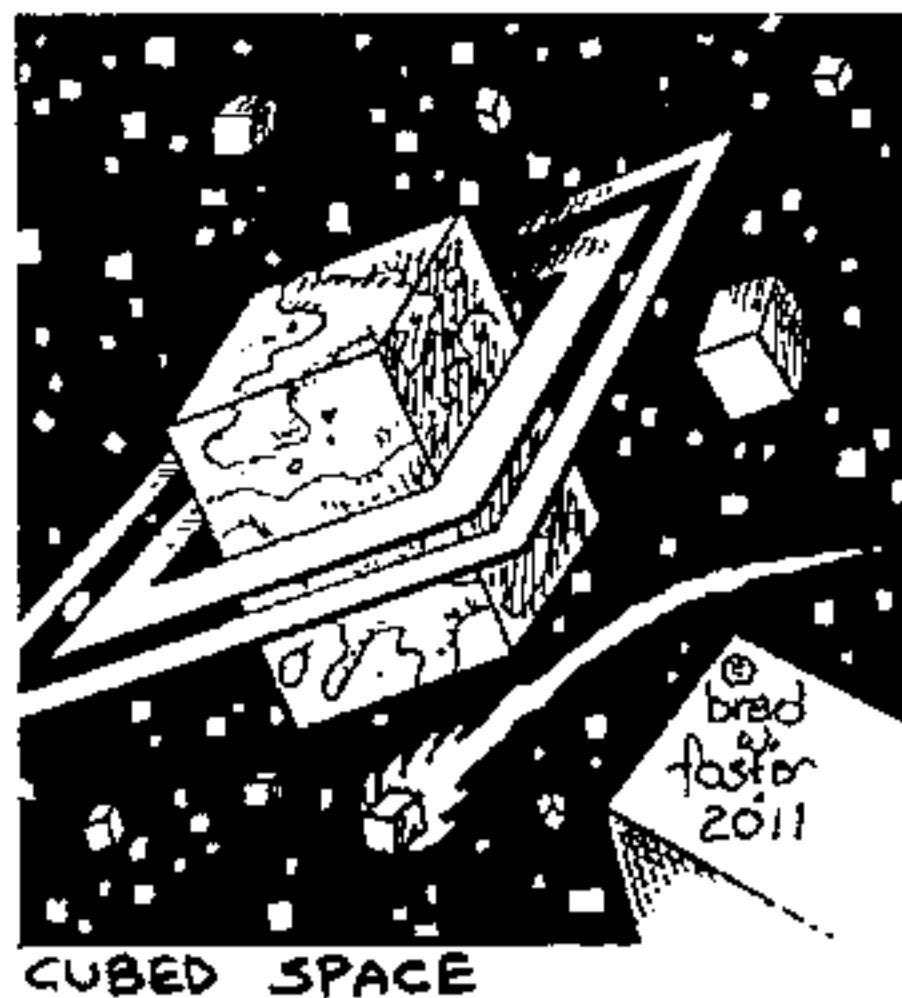


ansible



Ansible 283 February 2011

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 remainders of *The Boke of Palimpsest*.

Theories of Everything

Orson Scott Card had a minor stroke on 1 January. From his website: 'He is now back home, retraining his brain so that the fingers of his left hand strike the keys he's aiming for. [...] He is grateful for your good wishes and he promises not to die with any series unfinished.' [L]

Neil Gaiman and Amanda Palmer were married on 3 January.

John Grisham explained his 2010 move into children's fiction: 'I'm trying to catch Harry Potter [...] Back in the Nineties I was routinely introduced as the bestselling author in the world and I was trying to act like it was no big deal, then along came Harry Potter and, suddenly, I became No 2. I really miss being No 1.' (*Independent*, 30 January) [MPJ]

Alan Garner was awarded an honorary Doctor of Letters degree by the University of Warwick on 20 January, following 2010's celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen*. [NJ]

Jack Ketchum (pseudonym of Dallas Mayr) is to be this year's World Horror Convention Grand Master for life achievement. [L]

Ursula K. Le Guin mocked HarperCollins's new contract clause threatening cancellation if 'Author's conduct evidences a lack of due regard for public conventions and morals, or if Author commits a crime or any other act that will tend to bring Author into serious contempt ...' Le Guin reveals: 'There is nothing for it now but to confess everything. Before I wrote my book *Emily Brontë and the Vampires of Lustbaden*, which you published this fall and which has been on the Times Best Seller List for five straight months, I committed bad behavior and said bad words in public that brought me into serious contempt in my home town of Blitzen, Oregon. In fact the people there found me so seriously contemptible that I am now living in Maine under the name of Trespassers W.' (© Ursulaklequin.com, January) There is much more.

Michael Moorcock reported new toe woes: 'All efforts to save my wounded foot without resort to surgery have been made and now, somewhat inconveniently, I'm seeing a surgeon tomorrow (Monday) re-amputation. Shouldn't be too serious, though, as I said somewhere, I feel a bit fed up with constantly supplying Mrs Lovett for tidbits for her bloody pies...' (www.multiverse.org, 9 January) [RH] *Ansible* gathers that only one (more) toe was involved; the operation was a success; and Mike seems cheerful: 'Main problem now is finding a shoe store that will sell me a size 11 and a size 8 as a pair...' (*Ibid*, 13 January)

Shaun Tan's film *The Lost Thing*, which he based on his illustrated book of the same name and co-directed with Andrew Ruhemann, is a 2011 Oscar finalist in the Short Film (Animated) category. [L]

Condorcet

3-6 Feb • **SFX Weekender 2**, Pontin's Holiday Park, Camber Sands, E Sussex. Charged by accommodation; shared chalets only; no single rooms. See www.sfxweekender.com. Contact 08700 110034.

4-6 Feb • **Cre2c3ndo** (filk), Ramada Hotel, Grantham. £38/\$60/€45 reg; £25/\$47/€30 unwaged; 5-18s £1/\$1.50 per year; under-5s £1. Cheques to UK Filk Con, 16 Ann's Rd, Cambridge, CB5 8TN.

5-6 Feb • **QED** (science/skeptics), Piccadilly Hotel, Portland St, Manchester, M1 4PH. £99 (students £75) via www.qedcon.org only.

11-13 Feb • **SF Ball 17** (media), Carrington House Hotel, Bournemouth. Tickets from £84, £20/day Sat/Sun. See www.sfball.com.

17 Feb • **SF & International Orders**, Sheikh Zayed Theatre, LSE, London. J.C. Grimwood, K. MacLeod, P. McAuley. 1:15pm. Free.

19 Feb • **Picocon 28**, Imperial College Union, London. 10am-7/8pm. £10 reg at door; £8 concessions; £5 ICSF members; past GoHs free. Contact ICSF, Beit Quad, Prince Consort Road, London, SW7 2BB.

19-20 Feb • **Epic Con**, NUIM Campus, Maynooth, Ireland. €12 reg at the door only; €8 per day; €5 for local Omega Soc members; under-8s €2. Contact nuim_dot_omega_at_gmail_dot_com.

23 Feb • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Antelope, 22 Eaton Terrace, London, SW1W 8EZ. 5pm for 6pm. Free. With Matt Brooker.

25-27 Feb • **Alt.Fiction** writing weekend, Diamond House, South Leverton, DN22 0BX. Added speaker: Sarah Pinborough. £180 including

food and two nights' accommodation. Contact 07896 228367.

25-27 Feb • **Redemption '11** (multimedia sf), Britannia Hotel, Fairfax St, Coventry, CV1 5RP. £60 reg. *Advance booking closes 11 February*; £65 at door, £40/day. Under-18s £15, £10/day; under 3 free. Contact 61 Chaucer Road, Farnborough, Hampshire, GU14 8SP.

26 Feb • **Cardiff International Comic Expo**, Mercure Cardiff Holland House Hotel, 24-26 Newport Road, CF24 0DD. Day ticket £5 via PayPal only at www.fantasyevents.org/cice/.

5-6 Mar • **Microcon 31**, Junior Common Room, University of Exeter. Various speakers. £14 reg at the door only; EUSFS members £8. Contact mp236@exeter.ac.uk.

10-24 Mar • **Oxfam Bookshop**, Market Place, Reading: sf events/displays linked with sale of Brian Stableford's huge donation of books.

9-10 Apr • **Kapow!** (comics), Business Design Centre, Islington, London. Tickets £25.50 or £15.30/day from www.kapowcomiccon.com in advance only. Maura McHugh and others have noted without great surprise that the 40 confirmed guests include no women at all.

27 Apr • **Clarke Award** presentation, London. By invitation.

17-21 Aug • **Renovation** (69th Worldcon), Reno, NV, USA. \$180 reg until 28 February; \$50 supp; \$100 under-21s; \$75 under-17s; under-7s free. Contact PO Box 13278, Portland, OR 97213-0278, USA. Hugo nominations are now open, closing 26 March; hotel booking from 17 January; see PR3 at renovationsf.org/progress-reports.php.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. It's well known that Kazuo Ishiguro's clone-themed novel *Never Let Me Go* (shortlisted for the 2006 Clarke Award) can't be sf, simply because the author is too respectable ever to write such stuff. Now comes the rigorous explanation which makes it all clear: 'It isn't science fiction—indeed its procedures are the very reverse of generic, for there is no analogy at work in the text, which instead labours to produce its iterative naturalism as a kind of sub-set or derivation of our own.' (Rachel Cusk, *Guardian*, 29 January) Q.E.D. [CM]

Award Shortlists. **BSFA:** NOVEL Paolo Bacigalupi, *The Windup Girl*; Lauren Beukes, *Zoo City*; Ken Macleod, *The Restoration Game*; Ian McDonald, *The Dervish House*; Tricia Sullivan, *Lightborn*. **SHORT** Nina Allan, 'Flying in the Face of God' (*Interzone* 227); Aliette de Bodard, 'The Shipmaker' (*Interzone* 231); Peter Watts, 'The Things' (*Clarkesworld* 40); Neil Williamson, 'Arrhythmia' (*Music for Another World*). **NON-FICTION** Paul Kincaid, Blogging the Hugos: Decline (Big Other); Abigail Nussbaum, review: *With Both Feet in the Clouds* (Asking the Wrong Questions); Adam Roberts, review: *Wheel of Time* (Punkadiddle); Francis Spufford, *Red Plenty*; Jonathan Strahan and Gary K. Wolfe, the Notes from Coode Street podcast. **ART** (all covers) Andy Bigwood, *Conflicts*; Charlie Harbour, *Fun With Rainbows* by Gareth Owens; Dominic Harman, *Cat's Cradle* by Kurt Vonnegut; Joey Hi-Fi, *Zoo City* by Lauren Beukes; Ben Greene, *Crossed Genres 21*; Adam Tredowski, *Finch* by Jeff Vandermeer. • **Edgar** (mystery) nominations include three fantasies: Barnabas Miller & Jordan Orlando, *7 Souls* and Robert Paul Weston, *Dust City* in YA; Duane Swierczynski, *Expiration Date* in PB Original. [L] • **Oscars:** Best Picture nominees include *Inception* and *Toy Story 3*. (And the corresponding Razzies 'Worst Picture' shortlist features *The Last Airbender*, *Twilight: Eclipse* and *Vampires Suck*.) • **Philip K. Dick:** Jon Armstrong, *Yarn*; Elizabeth Bear, *Chill*; Alden Bell, *The Reapers are the Angels*; Sara Creasy, *Song of Scarabaeus*; Mark Hodder, *The Strange Affair of Spring Heeled Jack*; Project Itoh (translated by Alexander O. Smith), *Harmony*; James Knapp, *State of Decay*. [GVG]

Weakest Links. *John Humphrys:* 'Which legendary king owned a magic sword called Excalibur??' *Alleged Celebrity:* 'Herod.' (*Celebrity Mastermind*, BBC1) [PI] • *Anne Robinson:* 'The surname of which *Star Trek* character is also the Swahili word for freedom?' *Female contestant:* 'Sulu.' (*The Weakest Link*, BBC1, 11 January) [MPJ]

R.I.P. Neil Barron (1934-2010), US bibliographer and editor best known for the five editions of his massive *Anatomy of Wonder: A Critical Guide to Science Fiction* (1976 to 2004), died on 5 September 2010. [L]

He received a 1982 Pilgrim Award for his work. ● *John Barry* (1933-2011), UK composer and conductor whose film credits included *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1972), *King Kong* (1976), *Starcrash* (1979), *The Black Hole* (1979), *Howard the Duck* (1986), *Peggy Sue Got Married* (1986) and 11 James Bond films, died on 30 January aged 77. [SG/AW] ● *Charlie Callas* (1924-2011), US comedian who voiced Elliot the dragon in *Pete's Dragon* (1977) and had small parts in various genre films (also *The Munsters*), died on 27 January; he was 86. [AIP] ● *Nicholas Trofimovich Chadovich* (1948-2011), Byelorussian author who wrote much sf since 1983 in collaboration with Yuri Mikhailovich Brayder, died on 21 January; he was 62. [JCo] ● *Bernd Eichinger* (1949-2011), German film producer/director whose genre work includes *The NeverEnding Story* (1984), *Prince Valiant* (1997), three *Fantastic Four* films, four *Resident Evil* films, and much more, died on 24 January. He was 61. [AW] ● *John Iggulden* (1917-2010), Australian writer whose one sf novel was the dystopian *Breakthrough* (1960), died on 8 October last year; he was 93. [SL] ● *Melissa Mia Hall* (1956-2011), US author of short fiction for various anthologies and magazines, and editor of the anthology *Wild Women* (1997), died unexpectedly on 29 January. [HW via LP] ● *Dick King-Smith* (1922-2011), UK author whose more than 130 books for children include animal stories such as *The Sheep-Pig* (1983, filmed as *Babe*) and magical fantasies such as *The Queen's Nose* (1983; three BBC series 1995-1998), died on 4 January aged 88. He received the OBE in 2010. ● *Ruth Kyle* (1930-2011), popular US fan and convention-goer who was secretary of the 1956 NYC Worldcon and married for 53 years to Dave Kyle (who survives her), died on 5 January; she was 81. [AIP] ● *Jerry Weist* (1949-2011), US author, book/comics dealer and comics expert who wrote *Ray Bradbury: An Illustrated Life* (2002) and three editions of *The Comic Art Price Guide*, died on 7 January aged 61. [L] ● *Lan Wright* (Lionel Percy Wright, 1923-2010), UK author whose first sf story appeared in *New Worlds* in 1952, and who published six novels 1957-1968, died last October aged 87. [JC] ● *Peter Yates* (1929-2011), UK-born film director whose sf venture was *Krull* (1983), died on 9 January; he was 81. [PDF] Yates directed the 1964 film of N.F. Simpson's bizarrely surreal play *One Way Pendulum* (1960). ● *Susannah York* (1939-2011), noted UK actress whose best-known genre part was as Superman's mother Lara in three *Superman* films (1978, II 1980, IV 1987), died on 14 January aged 72. [GD/AW]

As Others Avoid Us. The BBC's forthcoming *Outcasts* takes place on a far world colonized after Earth's nuclear holocaust: 'But don't call it sci-fi, which is pretty much a banned word on set,' warns the *Daily Mail*. Set designer James North of *Doctor Who* explains: 'Sci-fi has its own dedicated TV channel, and the BBC doesn't want to give the impression it's putting out a sci-fi show on prime-time BBC1.' Unthinkable! 'This is futuristic drama with the focus on pioneering humans who, out of necessity, just happen to be living on a planet that isn't Earth. There are sci-fi elements to the drama. But in terms of the sets and the dressing, we've tried to make it as Earthbound as possible. So no sonic screwdrivers.' Admittedly the South African setting has 'such spectacular and unusual scenery you could almost believe you were on an alien planet.' But series creator Ben Richards nervously adds '... an alien planet without scary monsters. Little green men and fearsome creatures isn't what *Outcasts* is about at all.' (all *Daily Mail*, 29 January) [JB]

Awards. *American Library Association (ALA)*, YA division: Margaret Edwards award for life achievement, Terry Pratchett; Prinz for novel, *Shipbreaker* by Paolo Bacigalupi. [FM] ● *Crawford* (fantasy by a new author): Karen Lord, *Redemption in Indigo*. ● *Fan Activity Achievement (FAAn)*: note that voting closes on 4 February, 8am PST. Email votes are allowed. See corflu.org/FaanBallot2011.pdf. ● *The Widely Derided Golden Globes*: Best Animation was won by *Toy Story 3*. [MPJ]

We Are Everywhere, Unfortunately. Let's all hope that future US profiling intended to spot potential lunatic gunmen doesn't focus too much on the genre content of Jared Loughner's reading list: 'Among the books that he would later cite as his favorites: "Animal Farm," "Fahrenheit 451," "Mein Kampf" and "The Communist Manifesto." Also: "Peter Pan."' (*New York Times*, 15 January) [TW]

As Others See Our Literati. 'You Brits lack a daffy, antic, nin-compoop side to your character. This is not to say that you're all in your right minds. But you do not do things by halves. You are never slightly weird. In my personal experience everyone in the British Isles is either frightfully normal or Jeanette Winterson.' (P.J. O'Rourke, 1995)

Magazine Scene. The Czech sf magazine *Ikarie* ceased with its 247th issue (November 2010): the publisher wanted to focus on lifestyle magazines. *XB-1*, launched in December, has the same editors and uses much material that had been prepared for *Ikarie* 248. [JS via SW]

Blurbismo. Cemetery Dance, announcing the publication of a new collection by Brian Hodge, quotes Stanley Wiater's alluring judgement that Hodge offers 'dark fiction so numbing cold and cutting edge you had better hold on to your ass with your free hand.' [MMW]

Court Circular. In January, US judge Shira Sheindlin threw out the claim by the Adrian Jacobs estate that J.K. Rowling's huge great fat *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* plagiarized Jacobs's 36-page *The Adventures of Willy the Wizard*: 'The contrast between the total concept and feel of the works is so stark that any serious comparison of the two strains credulity.' The identically meritless UK lawsuit continues.

Random Fandom. *The Australian SF Bullsheat*, the monthly newsletter which suspended publication last August, restarted with Wendy Palmer as editor. News to sfbullsheat@gmail.com. ● *Mike Glicksohn* is again being treated for cancer, and for the first time in 38 years had to miss Confusion in Michigan (January). [AIP] Wish him luck.

Library of Babel. Philip Pullman's tirade against Oxford library closures (<http://tinyurl.com/pullman-wrath>) has been much admired. Imagine his reaction to the associate director of a US library that's going digital, who identifies the two main sources of Bad Attitude: 'I blame Ray Bradbury and Hitler. People think of getting rid of books as being almost an immoral thing.' (*Johns Hopkins Magazine*, 6 December) [PL]

The Dead Past. *50 Years Ago*, Kingsley Amis was announced as the Eastercon GoH: 'I believe that this is the first time in the history of sf fandom that a main stream writer who has but dabbled in sf has been invited to a convention in this honoured capacity and the move certainly reflects the committee's enterprise.' (*Skyrack* 29, February 1961)

O Pioneers. 'The internet has altered our lives in ways television never did or could, but mainstream literary novelists—by which I mean writers who specialise in realistic, character-based narratives—have mostly shied away from writing about this, perhaps hoping that, like TV, it could be safely ignored. They've ceded the field to authors of speculative fiction, such as William Gibson and Cory Doctorow, whose hacker and brand-ninja characters exist primarily to explain or propound ideas about bleeding-edge technology, or thriller writers who concoct ingenious but outlandish tales about the potential nightmares lurking in same' (Laura Miller, *Guardian*, 15 January) [MMW]

Fanfundery. *Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund* candidates for the 2011 race (from Europe to North America and Renovation) emerged in a rush as the deadline neared, until there were four: Graham Charnock, John Coxon, Liam Proven and Paul Treadaway. Ballots—revised since first release, to include PayPal payment details—are available in HTML, PDF and Word formats at taff.org.uk. The voting deadline, first announced as 12 March, has been extended to just after Eastercon: 26 April 2011.

Yo-Ho-Ho! 2010's most net-pirated films were *Avatar* (16.58 million downloads), *Kick-Ass* (11.4) and *Inception* (9.72), with further genre titles in the top ten. (BBC/TorrentFreak, 22 December) [MPJ] Tut-tut.

C.o.A. *Melbourne SF Club*, PO Box 23047, Docklands, Vic 8012, Australia. *Alan Stewart*, PO Box 7111, Richmond, Vic 3121, Australia. (Australia Post shut down their former World Trade Centre PO boxes.)

Prophet and Loss. Michael Flynn looked at *Analog* predictions in the magazine's 60th anniversary issue (January 1990), noting Hayden Howard's 'The Biggest Oil Disaster' (February 1970) as a title that 'may conjure thoughts of the Exxon Valdez, except that it involved a blowout of an off-shore oil platform. As usual, the *Analog* story involved the conflict between those who try to fix the problem and those who try to fix the blame.' Cut to 2010 and *Deepwater Horizon*.... [AL]

Thog's Masterclass. *Monster Metaphor Dept.* '... when beholding the tranquil beauty and brilliancy of the ocean's skin, one forgets the tiger heart that pants beneath it; and would not willingly remember, that this velvet paw but conceals a remorseless fang.' (Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 1851) [ECL] ● *Dept of Female Emotion.* [She falls into his arms crying:] 'The teacup-sized tears splashed down the front of his shirt ...' (Silas Water, *The Man with Absolute Motion*, 1955) ● *Alternative Energy Sources Debunked.* '... you dare not use the power of the tides, for that would slow the Earth and destroy its entire ecology ...' (*Ibid*) ● *Neat Tricks Dept.* 'Her eyebrows did a confused dance across her forehead.' 'Her smile slid to the floor, melting with the frozen snow.' (both Sonny Whitelaw, *Stargate SG-1: City of the Gods*, 2005) [SM]

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