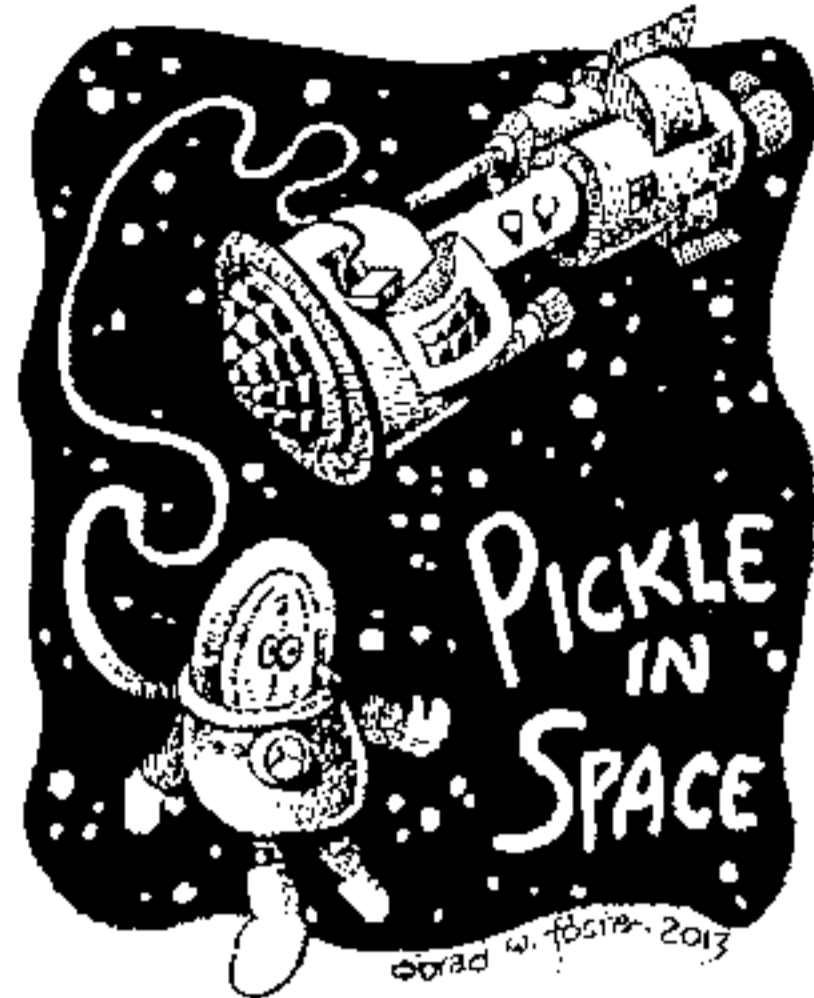


# ansible



## Ansible 317 December 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: **Brad W. Foster**. Available for SAE, the Tongs, or the Thumbcaps of Enquiry.

**Seasonal Whatsits.** A very happy festival of Mithras—or whichever celebration you prefer—and New Year to all *Ansible* readers. Although I traditionally don't campaign for awards, I can't resist a shameless mention that the two Algis Budrys critical collections published by Ansible Editions this year are eligible for the 2014 BSFA, *Locus* and Hugo awards for nonfiction or 'related work'. See [ae.ansible.co.uk](http://ae.ansible.co.uk).

### The Sands of Time

**Tim Armstrong**, US author and former singer in a Gaelic punk rock band, shared the Saltire Society's First Book of the Year prize for his debut space opera, written in Gaelic: *Air Cuan Dubh Drilseach (On a Glittering Black Sea)*. The judging panel praised this as 'the first genuine sci-fi novel in Gaelic.' (*Scotsman*, 15 November) [MV]

**Isaac Asimov's** FBI file, released after a US freedom-of-information request, revealed a lukewarm 1960s search for his alleged communist links (which even J. Edgar Hoover didn't take seriously). The evidence: his name appeared on a US Communist Party list of the 'possibly amenable', and one informant felt he had a bad attitude because 'I question the position he takes with respect to the first nuclear power plants being built by Soviet Russia.' That's it. (*Independent*, 8 November) [PDF]

**Margaret Atwood** broadcast reassurance to a Radio 4 Saturday-morning chat programme audience: 'If you get caught by the zombie apocalypse, stick with me—I'll take care of you' (30 November) [CB] But who will save us from the talking squid in outer space apocalypse?

**L. Frank Baum** will be inducted into the Chicago Literary Hall of Fame on 7 December. [BGN] Baum lived in Chicago while writing his first books, including *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. I suspect my brother Jon is not an old enough or dead enough Chicago resident to qualify.

**Samuel Butler** (1835-1902) was not available for comment on the Erewhon brand of gluten-free breakfast cereals distributed by Erewhon Markets of Los Angeles. [SL] 'Eerfnetulg,' he failed to say.

**James Joyce** gets an unexpected namecheck in the *Novacon* 43 guest-of-honour chapbook (a story by Jo Walton), whose back pages list him as author of the 1994 booklet and therefore GoH at *Novacon* 24. Splendid though it is to imagine him reading from *Finnegans Wake*, forensic analysis suggests that James is an easily made typo for Graham.... *Rog Peyton* grumbles: 'I spotted this error a few years ago, notified the committee and thought it had been corrected.'

**Mary Shelley's** original notebook drafts of *Frankenstein* can be viewed free online at [shelleygodwinarchive.org/contents/frankenstein](http://shelleygodwinarchive.org/contents/frankenstein).

### Conaphobia

13 Dec • **British Fantasy Society Open Night**, The Elephant, 119 Fenchurch Street, London, EC3M 5BA. From 7pm. All welcome.

19 Dec • **London Xmas Meeting** (additional to First Thursdays), cellar bar, Melton Mowbray, 18 Holborn, EC1N 2LE. All evening.

7-9 Feb 2014 • **SF Ball** (media), Carrington House Hotel, Bournemouth. Tickets £104; child £52; other options. See [sfbevents.com/sfball](http://sfbevents.com/sfball).

8-9 Feb 2014 • **Phenomecon** (was Epic-Con), NUIM Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland. Cost TBA? See [www.facebook.com/phenomecon](http://www.facebook.com/phenomecon).

5-6 Apr 2014 • **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](http://www.scifiscarborough.co.uk).

18-21 Apr 2014 • **Satellite 4** (Eastercon), Crowne Plaza Hotel, Glasgow. £65 reg until 4 April 2014; £50 unwaged; £20 supp/junior (12-17); £5 child (5-11); £1 infant. See [www.satellite4.org.uk](http://www.satellite4.org.uk). Contact c/o Flat 2/1, 691 Shields Rd, Pollokshields, Glasgow, G41 4QL.

14-18 Aug 2014 • **Loncon 3** (72nd Worldcon), ExCel centre, London Docklands. £115 reg; £260 family; £65 YA; £30 child; £2 infant; £25 supp. See [www.loncon3.org](http://www.loncon3.org): recent announcements include an sf photography competition (closing 30 April) and free wifi at ExCel.

22-24 Aug 2014 • **Shamrokon** (Eurocon), Burlington Hotel, Dublin. €30 reg, rising to €35 on 1 January. Join online or ask where to send a cheque (because the address is sekret) at [www.shamrokon.ie](http://www.shamrokon.ie).

5-7 Sep 2014 • **FantasyCon 2014**, Royal York Hotel, York. £40

reg, £70 for 2 adults, under-16s £20; BFS members £30, £55, £12.50; under-5s free. See [www.fantasycon2014.org](http://www.fantasycon2014.org). Rates rise 1 January.

20 Sep 2014 • **Andromeda Two**, Digbeth, Birmingham. 9am-10pm. £20 reg or £75 for a group of five, rising to £25 and £100 on 1 January 2014. Online registration at [terror-tree.co.uk/andromeda-tw](http://terror-tree.co.uk/andromeda-tw).

17-19 Oct 2014 • **Lakes International Comic Art Festival**, Kendal, Cumbria. Details awaited at [www.comicartfestival.com](http://www.comicartfestival.com).

23-27 Oct 2014 • **Bram Stoker International Film Festival**, Whitby. Further details awaited at [www.bramstokerfilmfestival.com](http://www.bramstokerfilmfestival.com).

14-16 Nov 2014 • **Novacon 44**, Park Inn, Mansfield Road, Nottingham. GoH Kari Sperring, John Gribbin. £45 reg, 'subject to review after Easter'. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

**Rumblings.** BSFA London pub meeting: as always, there is none in December. • **Dysprosium 2015**, launched at *Novacon* in November, is a bid for the UK Eastercon: 3-6 April 2015 at The Park Inn, Heathrow. More to follow at [www.dysprosium.org.uk](http://www.dysprosium.org.uk). Presupporting memberships £15 to 101 Ninian Rd, Grovehill, Hemel Hempstead, Herts, HP2 6NB.

### Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See Us.** Even *The New Yorker* ran a piece on the 50th anniversary of *Doctor Who*. Their regular writer Jill Lepore quoted what one of the show's original staff called (in a memo) its 'phoney science,' which Lepore then characterized as 'the sort of gobbledy-gook you'd come across in an Arthur C. Clarke story.' (11 November) [GF] Oh dear. If only poor Sir Arthur had had some scientific training....

**Awards.** *Arthur C. Clarke Award for Impact of Imagination on Society* (not the sf novel award): Ursula K. Le Guin. [L] • *Eleanor Farjeon Award* for 'outstanding contribution to the world of children's books': David Almond, author of *Skellig* and several others. (*Guardian*, 8 November) • *Nova Awards* for British Isles fanzine activity: FANZINE *Banana Wings*. WRITER Mike Meara. ARTIST D. West. [SG] • *UK Theatre Awards 2013*: the 'best show for children and young people' was *The Borrowers* as produced by Northern Stage, Newcastle.

**Going Postal.** The November release of twenty US stamps carrying images from the Warner Bros. Harry Potter films was deplored by the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee, whose brief is to ensure that US stamp themes 'have stood the test of time, are consistent with public opinion, and have broad national interest', and who were thus not consulted. 'Harry Potter is not American,' gibbered a former president of the American Philatelic Society: 'It's foreign, and it's so blatantly commercial that it's off the charts.' How long before the USPS follows the once proud Royal Mail further into the pit of commerce with un-American *Doctor Who* stamps? (*Washington Post*, 19 November) [MMW]

**R.I.P.** *Sheila Allen* (1929-2013), US actress who was married to Irwin Allen and appeared in several of his productions including *Lost in Space* (1965-1968), *Land of the Giants* (1969-1970) and *City Beneath the Sea* (1971), died on 15 November; she was 84. [SFS] • *Lewis Collins* (1946-2013), UK actor whose tv genre credits include *The New Avengers* (1977) and *Tarzan* (1993-1994), died on 27 November aged 67. [IC] • *Nigel Davenport* (1928-2013), UK actor who appeared in *Phase IV* (1974), *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1977) and *Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes* (1984), died on 25 October aged 85. TV credits include *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1973) and *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1974). [SFS] • *Joel Lane* (1963-2013), UK horror/urban fantasy author and editor whose collection *Where Furnaces Burn* won a 2013 World Fantasy Award, died unexpectedly on 25 November; he was only 50. [SN] He had published short stories since the 1980s, winning two British Fantasy Awards; his first novel was *From Blue to Black* (2001). [SG] • *Joseph J. Lazzaro* (1957-2013), US author of book-length nonfiction who published two collaborative stories and three essays in *Analog*, died on 18 November. [SFS] • *Doris Lessing* (1919-2013), distinguished literary author who besides many other honours in her long career won the 2007 Nobel Prize for Literature (and was splendidly cranky about this award), died on 17 November at the age of 94. Several of her novels have fantastic content; she made unashamed use of traditional



sf devices in the 'Canopus in Argos: Archives' sequence opening with *Shikasta* (1979), though this was not her finest work. She was a highly approachable if somewhat awe-inspiring guest of honour at the 1987 Brighton Worldcon: I still remember thinking, 'Gosh wow, Doris Lessing was the first to congratulate me on that Hugo!' ● *Al Plastino* (1921-2013), US comics artist whose long career at DC began in 1948, died on 25 November aged 91. [PDF] He worked extensively on *Superman* and related comics, and co-created Supergirl, Brainiac and the Legion of Super-Heroes. ● *Robert Reginald* (Michael Roy Burgess, 1948-2013), US bibliographer, editor, publisher and author whose Borgo Press (1975-1998; 2004-current as an imprint of Wildside Press) issued a great many important critical monographs about sf and fantasy, died on 20 November aged 65. [JB] Of his own extensive bibliographical work, the magnum opus was the two-volume *Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature: A Checklist, 1700-1974* (1979). ● *Graham Stone* (1926-2013), Australian sf fan, bibliographer and publisher whose reference works began with *An Index to the Australian SF Magazines, Part One* (1955) and continued to the 2010 revision of *Australian SF Bibliography, 1948-1999* (2004), died on 16 November; he was 85. [JD]

**The Weakest Link.** *SF clue in the US Jeopardy show:* 'This French author's tomb was featured on the frontispiece of *Amazing Stories Magazine* for many years.' Contestant: 'Who is H.G. Wells?' [AIP]

**Court Circular.** After Hummingbird Productions' announcement in November of a 2015 sequel to Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), Paramount Studios made ominous noises about owning all the 'necessary rights' which according to Hummingbird are in the public domain. (BBC, 21 November) Capra's son Tom asks: 'Why would you even attempt to make a sequel to such a classic film?' (Money.) ● Stef Coburn, whose father Anthony Coburn scripted the first ever *Doctor Who* storyline and introduced the Tardis, now claims copyright on the police-box time machine concept (registered by the BBC in the 1980s, never previously challenged) and demands better recognition of his father's 'seminal contribution' plus 'proper lawful recompense to his surviving estate', i.e. money. (*Independent*, 10 November)

**Science Masterclass.** This Irish creationist refutation of the Big Bang theory is now a few years old but retains its charm: 'You're telling me that cosmic balls of dust gathered and there was an explosion. We've had lots of explosions in Northern Ireland and I've never seen anything come out of that that was good.' (Edwin Poots [DUP], NI Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety; *Grauniad*, 11 November)

**As Others See Us II.** Doris Lessing was caught letting the literary side down: 'By the late 1970s Lessing abandoned social themes for science fiction with her Canopus in Argos series, which she describes as her best work. / In it she outlined a bleak vision of the future with tyranny and natural catastrophes becoming the norm.' (Nick Higham, BBC obituary, 17 November) No social themes there, then. [SW]

**SFWA** will raise its qualifying payment rates from 5 to 6 cents per word on 1 July 2014. 'SFWA considers it important to urge markets to pay writers more, and we hope this increase will encourage publishers to adjust their rates accordingly.' (sfa.org, 26 November) The last such increase, from 3 to 5 cents per word, was in 2004. Runaway inflation!

**We Are Everywhere.** China Miéville storms the ultimate bastion of cultural acceptance—cricket commentary on the Ashes (Australia v England, 1st Test, Brisbane): 'And should England not deliver, exhaustion will make the disappointment all the greater, a sense as China Miéville had it in Perdido Street Station, of scraping long nails against the surface of the moon.' (ESPNcricinfo.com, 20 November) [TK]

**Random Fandom.** *Ed Kramer's* severance from Dragon\*Con (as prematurely announced: see A313, A314) is now total, following a final out-of-court settlement on 25 November: Kramer's long-delayed trial on child molestation charges begins on 2 December. ● *Sam Long* on this issue's publication day: '2 December is the feast of St Bibiana or Vivian, patron of (i.e., invoked against) hangovers. I kid you not.' ● *Chris Morgan* overheard these sound-bites at Novacon 43: "'I can't remember where we were before I deviated.'"—Farah Mendlesohn interviewing Jo Walton. "I've found a new on-line source for tentacles."—Peter Harrow. ● *Washington DC SF Museum:* a group of US fans is raising funds for a 'preview location' as preliminary to 'the world's first comprehensive science fiction museum'—a phrase whose dismissal of the existing Seattle sf museum and Maison d'Ailleurs raised some fannish hackles. See [www.museumofsciencefiction.org](http://www.museumofsciencefiction.org). Money pledged via Indiegogo is less than \$29,000 of the \$160,000 goal aimed for by 11 December.

**Censored!** The Saudi Arabian Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice has reportedly raided bookshops and ordered them to stop selling the sf novel *H W J N* by Ibraheem Abbas

and Yasser Bahjatt (translator of the English edition). This apparently treats jinni in sf terms and features human/jinn romance, horrifying the Saudi equivalent of our 'Harry Potter is satanic and must be burnt!' loons. A shocked Facebook post which may have led to the ban warned that the book not only includes jinni but could tempt teenage girls to experiment with ... Ouija boards. (BoingBoing, 29 November)

**The Dead Past.** *40 Years Ago:* 'Some time ago, just before Christmas, Malcolm Edwards came up to me at the Globe and said "How about a British Worldcon, then?" Choking quietly on my Guinness, I managed a casual nod of agreement and produced a likely date. / So, let it be known that Great Britain intends to bid for the 1979 World Sf Convention.' (Peter Roberts, *Checkpoint* 44, December 1973) ● *30 Years Ago:* 'William Golding—you must have heard this—picked up a Nobel Prize for *Lord of the Flies* (1954) and there was a terrific bust-up just like the Hugos, when one of the judges felt it ought to have gone to a French novel so obscure it's never been read or translated...' (*Ansible* 36, December 1983) ● *25 Years Ago,* our genre was boosted in North Korea: 'After a speech delivered by Kim Jong-Il in October 1988 called for the development of science fiction on a larger scale, the number of sci-fi works grew significantly. From space travel to immortality or underwater exploration, sci-fi stories cover a wide range of subjects within settings that usually exceed the national boundaries of North Korea.' (Sinonk.com) [AH] Weapons-grade sf on a larger scale, threatening several neighbouring countries.... ● *20 Years Ago:* 'Tanith Lee won new fame in *Literary Review's* "Bad Sex in Fiction" competition; an extract from her *Heart-Beast* was a runner-up. "A fine piece of bad writing, lacking only the element of perfunctoriness to reach high art in the field"—Auberon Waugh, judge.' (*Ansible* 77, December 1993)

**C.o.A.** *Ed Meskys*, 3111 Hidden Pond Dr 205, Raleigh, NC 27613, USA (temporary to 15 March; 1st/2nd-class mail will be forwarded).

**As Others See Us III.** The 1963 BBC background notes on *Doctor Who* explained what genre this isn't: 'Evidently, Dr. Who's "machine" fulfils many of the functions of conventional Science Fiction gimmicks. But we are not writing Science Fiction. We shall provide scientific explanations too, sometimes, but we shall not bend over backwards to do so ...' ([www.bbc.co.uk/archive/doctorwho/6403.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/doctorwho/6403.shtml)) [BB]

**Fanfundery.** *TAFF 2014.* Candidates so far announced for the coveted TAFF trip from North America to Loncon 3: Brad and Cindy Foster are running as a couple, and Curt Phillips solo. I'm a Foster nominator—Brad has contributed more than 50 illustrations to *Ansible* over the years—but Curt would also be a worthy winner. There's time for others to step forward, as nominations are open until 31 December. For details of how to become a candidate, see [taff.org.uk](http://taff.org.uk). ● *GUFF 2014.* Candidates for the northbound race from Australasia to Loncon are Alison Barton, Samara Morgan, Gillian Polack and Shay Telfer. See their platforms at [splanky.livejournal.com/250547.html](http://splanky.livejournal.com/250547.html); ballot to follow shortly at [splanky.livejournal.com](http://splanky.livejournal.com) and [taff.org.uk/guff.html](http://taff.org.uk/guff.html).

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Many a Slip Dept.* 'With two fingers Karim picked up a banana slice and dropped it on the cement. ... Then he picked up a cherry, dropped it, and watched it rolling around underfoot. "You see?" he asked. "Cherries run away, but bananas hang in there. You are more a banana, my friend."' (Herbert Gold, *She Took My Arm as If She Loved Me*, 1997) [PB] ● *Dept of Avian Villains Who Do Not In Fact Have Laser Eyes.* 'Displeased, Turnatt stared down his beak at his nervous captain, his bright eye burning a hole into the bothersome crow's face.' (Nancy Yi Fan, *Swordbird*, 2007) [PB] ● *Eyeballs in the Sky.* 'Then his eyes moved up along the rough tweed of his trousers to the shorter motion of his thighs ...' (Lester del Rey, 'The Monster', June 1951 *Argosy*) [BA] 'Her eyes sat on purple cushions, not eye shadow.' (Ellery Queen, *Cop Out*, 1969) [PB] ● *Sudoku Addiction Dept.* 'Hinch was spreadeagled in the entrance with a puzzle written on his face.' (*Ibid*) ● *Dept of Purple Skies.* 'An indistinctly outlined, pearly moon seemed to drip down the sky, like a clot of incandescent tapioca thrown up against the night by a cosmic comic.' (William Irish [Cornell Woolrich], *The Bride Wore Black*, 1940) [CJM via BA] ● *Arithmetic Dept.* 'The three of us have been a couple from the beginning ...' (Laurell K. Hamilton, *Kiss the Dead*, 2012) [TMcD] ● *Secret Kung-Fu Death Grip.* 'Feng held the man's eyes, shook his head.' (Ramez Naam, *Nexus*, 2013) [PM]

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