

# ansible



## Ansible® 390 January 2020

From **David Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU, UK. Website [news.ansible.uk](http://news.ansible.uk). ISSN 0265-9816 (print); 1740-942X (e). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Ulrika O'Brien**. Available for SAE or details of how to live with the fluxus quo.

### The Dark Is Rising

**Brian Aldiss** was headline news at the *Oxford Mail* for 24 December – as ‘Brain Aldiss’ until they fixed it – thanks to his daughter Wendy’s photo sequence ‘My Father’s Things’. Some of these, including a Hugo, various books and magazines, and Brian’s last Scrabble game, are linked from the *Mail* story at [tinyurl.com/sc3mrk6](http://tinyurl.com/sc3mrk6). All will be on view 22-26 January at Photo50, part of the London Art Fair: see events below. [AW]

**Mark Bould**, looking back over his experiences in 2019, made special mention of ‘the not-so-rare distinction of being mocked in *Private Eye*’s Pseudos Corner’ for his International Conference for the Fantastic in the Arts GoH speech titled ‘Our Frightful Hobgoblin, or, Notes Towards Full-On Fully-Automated Luxury Green Interspecies Feminist Queer Space Communism of Colour’. ([Markbould.com](http://Markbould.com), 28 December)

**Lois McMaster Bujold** is the latest recipient of the SFWA Damon Knight Grand Master award for life achievement. (SFWA, 9 December)

**Christine Feehan**, following predictable outrage at her application for a US trademark on the word ‘Dark’ as a series title (see A389), has back-pedalled – after ‘a crash course in trademark law’ that might have been more useful at an earlier stage – and ‘asked my trademark lawyer to withdraw all of the current single word applications that have been filed and are causing so much distress.’ She added: ‘clearly I’m pretty clueless on these types of legal issues.’ (Twitter, 5 December) [F770]

**Vonda N. McIntyre** (1948-2019) left her literary copyrights and a cash bequest of \$387,129 to the Clarion West sf/fantasy writers’ workshop that she founded in 1971. (*Locus*, 7 December) Clarion’s ‘Sentient Squid’ scholarship programme – named for a McIntyre character – is to become the Vonda N. McIntyre Sentient Squid Scholarship. [F770]

**Kim Newman** captained the University of Sussex alumni team for Christmas University Challenge, defeating Royal Holloway but not with a high enough score to reach the semi-finals. (BBC2, 27 December) [DG]

### Consuetude

22-26 Jan • **London Art Fair**, Business Design Centre, Islington. £18.75/day; concessions £14.75; see [10times.com/london-art-fair](http://10times.com/london-art-fair). (The official site [www.londonartfair.co.uk](http://www.londonartfair.co.uk) has a dodgy security certificate.)

25-26 Jan • **Science of the Time Lords**, National Space Centre, Leicester. £15. See [spacecentre.co.uk/event/science-of-the-timelords/](http://spacecentre.co.uk/event/science-of-the-timelords/).

7-9 Feb • **DemiSemiQuaver** (fillk), Best Western Hotel, Marks Tey, Colchester. £42 reg; £32 unwaged; under-18s £1 per year of age at time of joining. See [www.contabile.org.uk/demisemiquaver/](http://www.contabile.org.uk/demisemiquaver/).

7-9 Feb • **Sci-Fi Ball** (media), Grand Harbour Hotel, Southampton. Tickets £145, £35 child; day rate £15, children free; more expensive options (‘mingle with our guests’ etc.) at [scifiball.com](http://scifiball.com).

22 Feb • **Picocon 36**, Blackett Building, Imperial College, London. £12 reg; £10 concessions; £8 for ICSF members; past GoHs free. See [www.union.ic.ac.uk/scc/icsf/picocon/](http://www.union.ic.ac.uk/scc/icsf/picocon/).

25 Feb • **Women in SF and Fantasy** (Bristol Women’s Literature Festival panel) with Emma Geen, Kate Macdonald (moderator), Cheryl Morgan, Emma Newman and Liz Williams. Foyles, Philadelphia St, Bristol, BS1 3BU. 7:30pm-9pm. £8; £6 concessions. Online booking at [www.ideasfestival.co.uk/events/women-in-science-fiction-and-fantasy](http://www.ideasfestival.co.uk/events/women-in-science-fiction-and-fantasy).

8 Mar • **Hitchhikers Guide** 42nd anniversary event, Knowledge Centre, British Library, London. Noon-8pm. Adults £30; for other rates see [www.bl.uk/events/the-hitchhikers-guide-to-the-galaxy-at-42](http://www.bl.uk/events/the-hitchhikers-guide-to-the-galaxy-at-42).

13-14 Mar • **Starburst Film Festival**, The Landing, Salford. 5pm-1am. Tickets £33.25. See [starburstmagazine.com/filmfestival/](http://starburstmagazine.com/filmfestival/).

20 Mar • **Futurefest** (futurology), Tobacco Dock, London. 10am-10pm. Tickets £80; students £35. More at [www.futurefest.org](http://www.futurefest.org).

23-26 Apr • **Dead by Dawn** (horror film festival), Filmhouse Cinema One, 88 Lothian Rd, Edinburgh, EH3 9BZ. Box office 0131 228 2688. Tickets available at £80 from [www.deadbydawn.co.uk](http://www.deadbydawn.co.uk).

16-17 May • **HorrorCon UK**, Magna Science Adventure Centre, Sheffield Rd, Rotherham, S60 1DX. Tickets £45 for 11am entry, £55 for 10am; accompanied under-17s £20. Day rates etc at [horrorconuk.com](http://horrorconuk.com).

2-6 Jun • **Outlander Conference**, Glasgow University. Call for

papers by 31 January. See [www.outlanderconferenceglasgow.com](http://www.outlanderconferenceglasgow.com).

26 Jul • **Forever Avon** (*Blake’s 7*; formerly Maximum Power), Steventon Village Hall, Steventon, Oxfordshire. Eventbrite booking link awaited. See [www.facebook.com/TeamBlakeForeverAvon](http://www.facebook.com/TeamBlakeForeverAvon).

7-10 Aug • **Continuum** (RPG), John Foster Hall, Manor Road, Leicester University, Oadby. £35 reg, rising to £45 after 1 April; day and room rates at [continuumconvention.co.uk](http://continuumconvention.co.uk) (see the ‘Other Stuff’ menu).

30-31 Aug • **Stars of Time** (media), Tropicana, Weston-super-Mare. 10am-5pm. £7.50; under-12s, OAP and disabled £4; under-4s free. Family of 2+2 kids £18; 2+3 kids £19. See [www.starsofetime.co.uk](http://www.starsofetime.co.uk).

25-27 Sep • **Fantasycon 2020**, Resource for London, 356 Holloway Road, London, N7 6PA. (Previously announced for Sheffield.) Guests TBA. £55 reg, rising to £75 after 100 ticket sales or in any case on 1 February. More information at [www.fantasycon.org](http://www.fantasycon.org).

9-11 Oct • **Octocon**, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15. €60 reg; concessions €40; under-18s €35; accompanied under-13s free. At-the-door rates will be higher. More at [octocon.com](http://octocon.com).

5-6 Dec • **For the Love of Sci-Fi** (comics), BEC Arena, Stretford, Manchester. Tickets at various prices from [fortheloveofsci-fi.com](http://fortheloveofsci-fi.com).

25-29 Aug 2021 • **DisCon III** (Worldcon), Washington DC, USA. \$155 reg; YA (under 26) \$80; accompanied under-13s \$65; accompanied under-7s free. *These rates are now valid to 31 May 2020 rather than 31 December 2019 as previously announced.* See [discon3.org](http://discon3.org).

### Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See Us.** ‘Lists of the worst films of all time always generally comprise plenty of space movies.’ (Geoffrey Macnab reviewing *Lucy in the Sky in The Independent*, 6 December)

**Awards.** *New Year Honours* list includes Felicity Bryan, literary agent for various genre authors, MBE for services to publishing; and Sam Mendes, director of *Skyfall* (2012) and *Spectre* (2015) and producer of *Penny Dreadful* (2014-2016), knighted for services to drama.

**We Are Everywhere.** The scientific paper ‘Preventing undesirable behavior of intelligent machines’ (*Science*, 22 November 2019) contains the interesting words ‘This expression has the following form, which we call a Seldonian optimization problem after a fiction character(13) ...’ where footnote 13 reads: ‘I. Asimov, *Foundation* (Gnome 1951).’ [MLO]

**R.I.P.** *Tom Adams* (1926-2019), American-born UK artist best known for his Agatha Christie paperback covers, who also produced cover art for several genre and near-genre books including *The Magus*, *The Alteration* and *Ghost Story*, died on 17 December aged 93. [PDF] • **Javier Aguirre** (1935-2019), Spanish director of many films including *Count Dracula’s Great Love* (1974), died on 4 December aged 84. • **Gerry Alan-guilan** (1968-2019), Filipino comics creator who published the graphic novel *Elmer* (2009) and inked various comics for DC (*Superman: Birth-right*) and Marvel (*Fantastic Four*, *Wolverine*, *X-Men*), died on 29 December aged 51. • **Patricia Alice Albrecht**, US actress in *The Ghost Dance* (1982), *Jem and the Holograms* (1985-1988), *Snorks* (1987-1988) and others, died in late December. [LP] • **René Auberjonois** (1940-2019), US actor whose genre credits include *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* (1993-1999), *Batman Forever* (1995), *Xyber 9: New Dawn* (1999-2007) and *Ben 10: Omniverse* (2012-2014), died on 8 December aged 79. • **Claudine Auger** (1941-2019), French actress in *Thunderball* (1965, as Bond girl Domino), *The Devil in Love* (1966) and *The Bermuda Triangle* (1978), died on 18 December aged 78. [MMW] • **John Briley** (1925-2019), US screenwriter whose credits include *Children of the Damned* (1963) and *The Medusa Touch* (1978), died on 14 December aged 94. • **Tony Britton** (1924-2019), UK actor whose rare genre credits include *The Risk* (1960) and *The People That Time Forgot* (1977), died on 22 December aged 95. [PDF] • **Andrew Clements** (1949-2019), US author of many children’s/YA books including an sf trilogy opening with *Things Not Seen* (2002), died on 28 November aged 70. [PDF] • **Lester Cole**, long-time US fan who chaired the 1954 San Francisco Worldcon and – with his wife Esther – was inducted into the First Fandom Hall of Fame in 2017, died in September aged 93. [EC/RL] • **Ian Covell** (1953-2019), long-time UK fan, critic and bibliographer whose books include *J.T. McIntosh, Memoir and*

*Bibliography* (1987) and *An Index to DAW Books* (1989), and who provided the UK book listings for *Locus* 1994-2019, died on 11 December aged 66. [DP] ● **Howard Cruse** (1944-2019), US cartoonist best known for gay-themed work, who drew the surreal strip *Barefootz* and was art director of *Starlog* 1977-1978, died on 26 November aged 75. [PDF] ● **D.C. (Dorothy Catherine) Fontana** (1939-2019), US tv scriptwriter and story editor – notably for the original *Star Trek*, to whose long sequence of novel spin-offs she contributed *Vulcan's Glory* (1989) – died on 2 December aged 80. [LP] She worked on several further sf series including *ST:TNG* and *ST:DS9*. ● **David Foster** (1929-2019), US producer of *Cave-man* (1981), *The Thing* (1982), *Short Circuit* (1986) plus sequel, *The Core* (2003) and others, died on 22 December aged 90. ● **Alasdair Gray** (1934-2019), distinguished Scots author and artist who famously designed and illustrated his own books – from the monumental *Lanark* (1981) onward – died on 29 December aged 85. Other works of genre relevance include *1982*, *Janine* (1984), *Poor Things* (1992, which won the Whitbread and Guardian awards), *A History Maker* (1994) and many fine short stories, his first major collection being *Unlikely Stories, Mostly* (1983). He had published two volumes of his new translation of Dante. Many UK fans fondly remember his appearance as guest of honour at *Tynecon II: The Mexicon* in 1984. [MKS] ● **Nicky Henson** (1945-2019), UK actor whose credits include *Old Dracula* (1974), *The Green Man* (1990) and *Narcopolis* (2015), died on 15 December aged 74. ● **Neil Innes** (1944-2019), UK musician – The Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band, The Rutles – and actor in *Monty Python's Flying Circus* (1974), several Python-team films and *Puddle Lane* (1985-1988), died on 29 December aged 75. ● **Anna Karina** (1940-2019), Danish-born French 'Nouvelle Vague' actress whose films include *Scheherazade* (1963), *Alphaville* (1965), *The Magus* (1968) and *Morel's Invention* (1974), died on 14 December aged 79. [AIP] ● **Johanna Lindsey** (1952-2019), best-selling US romance author whose novels (mainly historical) include the sf *Ly-San-Ter* trilogy (1990-2001) and the time-travel fantasy *Until Forever* (1995), died on 27 October aged 67. [TM/AIP] ● **Sue Lyon** (1946-2019), US actress best known for *Lolita* (1962) and also seen in *End of the World* (1977), *The Astral Factor* (1978) and *Alligator* (1980), died on 26 December aged 73. [MMW] ● **Syd Mead** (1933-2019), US 'visual futurist' whose influential designs featured in *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (1979), *Blade Runner* (1982), *TRON* (1982), *2010* (1984), *Aliens* (1986) and many more to 2017, died on 30 December aged 86. [JB] ● **Sonny Mehta** (1942-2019), noted publisher – with Knopf since 1987 – whose 1972-1987 stint at Pan Books saw Douglas Adams's debut and much upmarket fantasy (Borges, Angela Carter, Rushdie et al) in the revived Picador imprint, died on 30 December aged 77. [DP] ● **Lee Mendelson** (1933-2019), US tv producer/executive producer of a great many animated *Peanuts* films and shorts 1965-2006, died on 25 December aged 86. [MMW] ● **Shelley Morrison** (1936-2019), US character actress in *Castle of Evil* (1966), *The Flying Nun* (1967-1970), *The Night That Panicked America* (1975), *Shark Tale* (2004) and others, died on 1 December aged 83. [MMW] ● **Elizabeth Spencer** (1921-2019), noted US author who five times won the O. Henry award and whose considerable output includes a handful of genre stories listed at ISFDB, died on 23 December aged 98. [PDF] ● **Caroll Spinney** (1933-2019), US actor/puppeteer who played Big Bird and Oscar the Grouch in *Sesame Street* (1969-2018), with spinoff appearances including *The Muppet Movie* (1979) and *Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian* (2009), died on 8 December aged 85. ● **Brian Taves** (1959-2019), author, critic and film/Jules Verne scholar whose works include *The Jules Verne Encyclopedia* (1996) with Stephen Michaluk Jr and *Hollywood Presents Jules Verne: The Father of Science Fiction on Screen* (2015), died in December aged 60. [JT] ● **Tatsuo Umekiya** (1938-2019), Chinese-born actor in many Japanese films including *Prince of Space* (1959) and *World War III Breaks Out* (1960), died on 12 December aged 81. [LP] ● **Robert Walker Jr.** (1940-2019), US actor whose credits include *Star Trek* (1966), *Beware! The Blob* (1972) and *Death in Space* (1974), died on 5 December aged 79. [F770] ● **Andrew Weiner** (1949-2019), UK-born Canadian author whose debut was in *Again, Dangerous Visions* (1972), followed by many stories and three novels beginning with *Station Gehenna* (1987), died on 3 December aged 70. [GVG] ● **Martin West** (1937-2019), US actor whose films include *Mac and Me* (1988), died on 31 December aged 82. [LP] ● **Wendy Williams** (1934-2019), UK actress in *Doctor Who: 'The Ark in Space'* (1975), died on 17 October aged 84. [SF²C]

**We Are Everywhere II.** Wakanda, the imaginary East African home of Marvel superhero Black Panther, interestingly appeared on a list of US free trade partners at the US Department of Agriculture website. It was used for systems testing, said a USDA spokesman, and should never have become visible. Now gone. (*Guardian*, 18 December) [AS]

**As Others See Us II.** 'The novel is both comically amoral and insufferably pretentious. To be fair, these traits were common in 1970s sci-fi.' (Vice.com on Donald Barr's *Space Relations*, 16 August) [TM]

**Prediction Corner.** Paul Valéry foresees the Internet and, very nearly, the mouse-click: 'A work of art will cease to be anything more than a kind of source or point of origin whose benefit will be available and quite fully so, whenever we wish. Just as water, gas, and electricity are brought into our houses from far off to satisfy our needs in response to a minimal effort, so we shall be supplied with visual, or auditory, images, which will appear and disappear as a simple movement of the hand, hardly more than a sign.' (*The Conquest of Ubiquity*, 1928) [MMW]

**Random Fandom.** *Don Ashby*, long-time Australian fan, lost his home in the devastation of Malleacoota by east Victoria bush fires on 31 December. [MF] ● *Europa SF*, the sf news portal at sciportal.eu, was to cease on 20 December: 'hosting costs and portal's maintenance are the main reasons' (Facebook, 10 December). Several fans volunteered to help keep the site going, and a January 2020 relaunch was announced on 18 December. See sciportal.eu/we-need-your-help/. ● *Fancyclopedia 3* moved to a new platform – Mediawiki rather than Wikidot – in mid-December, while keeping the traditional fancyclopedia.org address. It looks much nicer now, though some links need to be fixed because linking is now case-sensitive (e.g. 'Serious Scientific Talks' no longer auto-links to the entry 'Serious scientific talks'). ● *Fan Activity Achievement (FAAn) Awards for 2019*: the ballot is now available at corflu.org.

**The Dead Past.** *20 Years Ago*, the answer was for once not 42: 'ITV teletext (5 Jan) announced the winners of their challenging *Watership Down* quiz, featuring tough questions like "Who wrote *Watership Down*?" Their answer: Douglas Adams.' ... 'Douglas Adams has withdrawn his claim of not writing sf (see A144). Over the radio on 2 January he admitted that he'd tried not to write sf, but those damned robots and spaceships still kept creeping in....' (*Ansible* 150, January 2000) ● *70 Years Ago*, the future was big: '... Progressive Sequence Memory Recording Selective Electronic Calculator, that fabulous man-made mechanical brain of thousands upon thousands of moving parts and vacuum tubes, uncounted miles of wire, hundreds of fuses, valves, cables, leads and switches that had taken a year, and three quarters of a million dollars, to build ...' (Paul Gallico, *The Terrible Answer*, 1950) [BA]

**Fanfundery.** *TAFF 2020* voting continues, closing on 12 January 2020: see [taff.org.uk](http://taff.org.uk) for a printable PDF ballot, the online voting form, and the *TAFF* administrators' December newsletter *TAFFish* 1, with candidate interviews and a report on the fund's current finances. ● *DUFF 2020* nominations are still open, closing on 17 January 2020; voting runs to 27 March 2020. See [tinyurl.com/vp5v8e4](http://tinyurl.com/vp5v8e4).

**Editorial.** Further free ebooks at the *TAFF* site are the Walt Willis collection *The Willis Papers* (1961), covering the first 11 years of his fanwriting career – [taff.org.uk/ebooks.php?x=WaWP](http://taff.org.uk/ebooks.php?x=WaWP) – and his and James White's sequel to *The Enchanted Duplicator* (1954), *Beyond the Enchanted Duplicator ... To the Enchanted Convention* (1991, illustrated by Stu Shiffman): [taff.org.uk/ebooks.php?x=BEDEC](http://taff.org.uk/ebooks.php?x=BEDEC). ● During 2019 we added 20 ebooks to the site: there are now 51 titles. Coming soon is *Homefront: Fandom in the UK 1939-1945* edited by Rob Hansen, a huge (158,000 words) collection of wartime fanwriting showing how fans kept in touch and even had fun despite call-up, the Blitz and all the rest.

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Unnatural Habitat Dept.* 'It was as beautiful as watching a jaguar run across the plains of Africa.' (Jamie Hyneman quoted in Keith and Kent Zimmerman's *Mythbusters*, 2005) [PL] ● *Audible Eyeballs.* 'Her eyes were deep, deep green, large and elfin. They laughed by themselves, and promised things without names.' (Norman Spinrad, 'A Child of Mind', *Amazing*, January 1965) [JB] ● *Arcane Physics Dept.* '[The lyre's] body was made of a metallic material that is closest to platinum, an element that has never been classified and cannot be considered an earthly element.' (Danielle Trussoni, *Angelology*, 2010) [PB] ● *Neat Tricks.* 'I felt the sharp decline in the floor as we walked and adjusted my weight to bolster myself.' (*Ibid*) [PB] I could feel him shaking his head on the other side of the phone.' (Kent Kiehl, *The Psychopath Whisperer*, 2014) [SS] ● *Fairly Safe Bet Dept.* 'The reader has probably never experienced the very grateful embrace and caress of a nearly naked primordial female ...' (John Bloodstone [J. Stuart Byrne], *Thundar, Man of Two Worlds*, 1971) [BA]

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