



## Ansible® 438 January 2024

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 the indexed location of the secret *taynik* or *potaynik*.

### The Crown Jewels of Zembla

**Tobias Buckell** is annoyed by an AI-written online article about him: 'ChatGPT has also been utilized by award-winning author Tobias Buckell. Buckell wrote his latest novel, *It Has Come to Our Attention*, with the assistance of the platform. In an interview with *Locus Magazine*, Buckell said that using ChatGPT allowed him to create more complex, nuanced, and realistic characters without sacrificing pacing or plot. He stated that without ChatGPT's help, he would not have been able to finish his manuscript on time.' He retorts: 'I don't use ChatGPT (or LLMs), nor ever have, on my fiction.' (BlueSky, 10 December) We live in a post-truth era.

**Cait Corrain** (who?) ruthlessly sabotaged her own debut sf novel *Crown of Starlight*, now removed from the 2024 schedule at Del Rey. The author Xiran Jay Zhao assembled evidence that Corrain was responsible for a spate of 'review bombing' using multiple fake accounts at Goodreads to attack the perceived opposition with negative reviews of unreleased first novels – targeting POC authors, some from Del Rey – while giving high ratings to *Crown of Starlight*. Corrain's claim that all this was done by a 'former friend' (whose existence could not be verified) was widely disbelieved; she later tweeted a 'sincere apology' blaming everything on 'alcoholism, depression and substance abuse'. Her literary agent Becca Podos 'will not be continuing our partnership'. (xTwitter *passim*; *The Mary Sue*, 11 December; xTwitter 'apology', 12 December)

**Altany Craik**, author and long-time Labour councillor in Fife, stepped down as a 2024 general election candidate 'for family reasons', strongly rumoured to be because the party objected to his Father Andrew Steel occult crime thrillers as 'too sexy and satanic'. (*Guardian*, 13 December)

**Lauren M. Davis**, US author of a fantasy novel featuring sun-derived superpowers, made legal threats – with a generous side helping of racism – against Nigerian author Marvellous Michael Anson for the hideous copyright violation of using sun-themed powers in her *Firstborn of the Sun*. Citing such prior art as *Apollo*, *Ra* and a huge list (including Superman) in the Superpower Wiki was of no avail. (Daily Dot, 19 December)

**Diana L. Paxson** the US fantasy author was repeatedly stabbed – as was her son – in her home in Berkeley CA on 8 December. Both received hospital treatment; neither is in danger. [SB/LW] The 23-year-old attacker Byron Decles, 'a member of our extended family' with a history of mental health problems, was found and arrested on 12 December. (CBS, 8 December; Wildhunt.org, 11 December; *Berkeley Scanner*, 12 December)

**Lavie Tidhar** gleefully tweeted: 'Take that, Louis Theroux and L. Ron Hubbard!' His novel *The Circumference of the World* was in the top place (with Theroux at #4, and Hubbard at #6 with *Dianetics*) of the no doubt prestigious list 'Best Sellers in Scientology'. (xTwitter, 8 December)

### Convive

Until 17 January • **Fantasy Realms of Imagination** (exhibition), Leeds Central Library, later touring smaller community libraries. Free. See [secretlibraryleeds.net/2023/12/08/fantasy-realms-of-imagination](http://secretlibraryleeds.net/2023/12/08/fantasy-realms-of-imagination).

23 Jan • **A Billion and Fifty Year Spree** (SFF symposium), Liverpool and online. See [www.sf-foundation.org/fresh-about](http://www.sf-foundation.org/fresh-about) (26 Oct).

2-4 Feb • **Contabile** <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> (UK filk), Palace Hotel, Buxton. Now £42 reg; £32 unwaged; under-18s £1 per year of age when joining; under-5s free. The same rates apply at the door. See [www.contabile.org.uk/tripletime](http://www.contabile.org.uk/tripletime).

2-5 Feb • **Scotiacon** (furry), Crowne Plaza Hotel, Glasgow. 'Pre-historic Panic' theme. £100 reg; £45/day. See [www.scotiacon.org.uk](http://www.scotiacon.org.uk).

16-18 Feb • **UK Ghost Story Festival**, Museum of Making, Derby. £105 plus booking fee. Also online 12-15 February, £40 plus fee. See [www.ukghoststoryfestival.co.uk](http://www.ukghoststoryfestival.co.uk).

24 Feb • **Iain M. Banks Celebration** at Faversham Literary Festival, The Alexander Centre. 3pm. Tickets £6. See [tinyurl.com/2uyfcbk8](http://tinyurl.com/2uyfcbk8).

29 Mar - 1 Apr • **Levitation** (Eastercon), Telford International Centre. £125 reg; £50 concessions; £35 supporting; day £50; virtual access included. See [eastercon2024.co.uk](http://eastercon2024.co.uk). *At-the-door rates apply after 31 January – also the deadline for hotel bookings (at con rates) and child care.*

15-17 May • **GIFCon** (University of Glasgow conference), 'Conjuring Creatures and Worlds', online. See [tinyurl.com/yfdbvdwj](http://tinyurl.com/yfdbvdwj).

25-26 May • **Lawless** (UK comics), Hilton Doubletree Hotel, Bristol. Tickets sales open on 26 January. See [lawlesscomiccon.co.uk](http://lawlesscomiccon.co.uk).

6 Jul • **Tolkien Society Seminar** on his 'Romantic Resonances', Leeds Hilton and online. Free. See [www.tolkienociety.org/events/](http://www.tolkienociety.org/events/).

19-21 Jul • **Fantasy Forest** (cosplay), Sudely Castle, Cheltenham. Camping tickets sold out. £54.95 reg, under-16s £29.95 (plus booking fees); under-8s free. Other rates at [fantasyforest.co.uk](http://fantasyforest.co.uk).

16-19 Aug • **Erasmuscon** (Eurocon), Rotterdam, Netherlands. €125 reg; under-23s €75; under-13s €10, under-3s free. Under-19s must be accompanied by an adult. See [www.erasmuscon.nl](http://www.erasmuscon.nl) for day rates.

### Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See Us**. 'Science fiction is not simply politically useless, it's dangerous. Two centuries of sci-fi have been a net negative for the world, fueling the megalomaniacal fantasies of tech tyrants and inspiring the invention of untold horrors. The world would be a better place without it.' (Tyler Austin Harper, xTwitter, 9 December)

**Awards**. *Prometheus Hall of Fame* shortlist: *Orion Shall Rise* (1983) by Poul Anderson; *The Truth* (2000) by Terry Pratchett; 'The Trees' (1978 song) by Rush; *Between the Rivers* (1998) by Harry Turtledove. [F770]

**Blurbismo**. A mere author [name redacted] ascends to a higher state: 'Leadership has always been in her bones, however ... with a meticulous nature, a raw understanding of the writer's psyche and a memory for details, it was almost inevitable she would evolve from a novelist, editor and poet to then, events organiser.' (Facebook, 10 December) [JLG]

**R.I.P.** **Yuri Arabov** (1954-2023), Russian writer and poet who wrote genre film scripts – including the Strugatsky-based *Days of Eclipse* (1988) – and the alternate-history novel *Stolknoveniye s babochkoy* (*A Butterfly Encounter*, 2014), died on 27 December aged 69. [AM] • **Selma Archerd** (1925-2023), US actress in *Americathon* (1979), *Meteor* (1979), *Scrooged* (1988) and genre tv series, died on 14 December aged 98. [LP] • **Jack Axelrod** (1930-2023), US actor whose films include *Hancock* (2008), *Super 8* (2011) and *Transformers: Dark of the Moon* (2011), died on 28 November aged 93. [AIP] • **Rick (Richard) Bowes** (1944-2023), US author whose sf debut was the alternate-New York adventure *War Child* (1986, with 1988 sequel *Goblin Market*), died on 24 December aged 79. [PDF] • **Andre Braugher** (1962-2023), US actor in *Frequency* (2000), *Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer* (2007), *The Mist* (2007), *The Andromeda Strain* (2008 tv), *Superman/Batman: Apocalypse* (2010) and others, died on 11 December aged 61. [LP] • **Kathy Chow** (1966-2023), Hong Kong actress whose genre credits include *Holy Virgin vs. The Evil Dead* (1991), *Time Before Time* (1997) and *Vampire Controller* (2001), died on 11 December aged 57. • **Kamar de los Reyes** (1967-2023), Cuban-US actor in *LA Apocalypse* (2015) and *Sleepy Hollow* (2017), died on 24 December aged 56. [AIP] • **David Drake**, popular and prolific US author of sf, fantasy and horror whose first success was the 'Hammer's Slammers' military sf series opening with *Hammer's Slammers* (1979), died on 10 December aged 78. [LP] He was a co-founder in 1973 of the small press Carcosa, which received a 1976 World Fantasy Award (special non-professional category). • **Shirley Anne Field** (1936-2023), UK actress in *Horrors of the Black Museum* (1959), *The Damned* (1962), *House of the Living Dead* (1974), and *U.F.O.* (1993), died on 10 December aged 87. [SGr] • **D.G. Finlay** (Dione Venables, 1930-2023), UK author and publisher who wrote historical fantasies beginning with *Once Around the Sun* (1978), and founded the Orwell Society in 2011, died on 12 September aged 92. [BD] • **Brigit Forsyth** (1940-2023), Scots actress in *R3* (1965), *Doctor Who* (1967) and *Crystalstone* (1987), died on 1 December aged 83. [SJ] • **Richard Franklin** (1936-2023), UK actor best known as Captain Mike Yates in the Pertwee-era *Doctor Who* (42 episodes, 1971-1983), died on 25 December aged 87. He was in other genre series and *Rogue One* (2016). [SGr] • **Miguel Ángel Fuentes** (1953-2023), Mexican actor in *The Bermuda Triangle* (1978), *L'uomo puma* (*Pumaman*, 1980), *Frankenstein's Great Aunt Tillie* (1984), *Deathstalker and the Warriors from Hell* (1988) and others, died on 28 December aged 70. [LP] • **Ian Gibson** (1946-2023), UK comics artist best known for his work in *2000 AD*, including *Robo-Hunter*, the classic *The Ballad of Halo Jones* (scripted by Alan Moore)

and *Judge Dredd*, died on 11 December aged 77. [GW] Later work included *Mister Miracle* for DC and *Star Wars* titles for Dark Horse. ● *Dan Greenburg* (1936-2023), US author and humorist/satirist whose many genre books for children include the 'Zach Files' (paranormal), 'Maximum Boy' (superhero) and 'Secrets of Dripping Fang' (horror) series, died on 18 December aged 87. [AIP] ● *Eva Hauser* (Eva Hauserová, 1954-2023), Czech writer, editor, translator and fan who was a founding editor of *Ikarie* magazine in 1990 and whose books include an sf novel, died on 22 December aged 69. [CS] She was the 1992 GUFF winner. ● *Roger Hill* (1948-2023), US comics historian who wrote for the EC appreciation fanzine *Squa Tront* (launched 1967), and compiled and wrote the text of art books such as the Wally Wood showcase *Galaxy Art and Beyond* (2016), died on 6 December. [AIP] ● *Dr James Hosek* (1964-2023), US author active in SFWA as Nebula Commissioner since 2017, died on 3 December aged 59. (SFWA) ● *Bob Johnson* (1944-2023), UK Steeleye Span guitarist whose concept albums include the Dunsany-based *The King of Elfland's Daughter* (1977) and the Pratchett-based *Wintersmith* (2013), died on 15 December aged 79. (*Guardian*, 20 December) ● *Ken Kelsch* (1947-2023), US cinematographer for *Spookies* (1986), *Killer Dead* (1992 aka *Non Vegetarian Zombies from Outer Space*), *The Addiction* (1995), *4:44 Last Day on Earth* (2011) and others, died on 11 December aged 76. [SJ] ● *Norman Lear* (1922-2023), US producer and screenwriter whose credits include *All that Glitters* (1977, as writer) and *The Princess Bride* (1987), died on 5 December aged 101. [LP] ● *David Leland* (1941-2023), UK director and actor in *Scars of Dracula* (1970), *Time Bandits* (1981) and the tv *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (1981), died on 24 December aged 82. [AIP] ● *David McKnight* (1936-2023), US actor in *J.D.'s Revenge* (1976), *The Astral Factor* (1978), *Superhero Movie* (2008) and genre tv series, died on 3 December aged 87. [AIP/LP] ● *Vladimir Mitypov* (1940-2023), Russian author of five novels, three of them sf – beginning with *Zelyonoye bezumiyе Zemli* (*Earth's Green Madness*, 1966), died on 11 December. [AM] ● *Olexandr Mokrovolsky* (1946-2023), Ukrainian translator of Richard Adams, Brian Aldiss, Eoin Colfer, Neil Gaiman and J.R.R. Tolkien, died on 22 December. [AM] ● *Marilyn 'Fuzzy Pink' Niven* (1940-2023), US fan and convention worker active since the 1960s in MITSFS, NESFA (as a founder member), LASFS and SCIFI, died on 3 December aged 83. [F770] All sympathy to Larry Niven, her husband since 1969. ● *Mike Nussbaum* (1923-2023), US actor in *Field of Dreams* (1989), *The Water Engine* (1992) and *Men in Black* (1997), died on 23 December aged 99. [F770] ● *Ryan O'Neal* (1941-2023), US actor in *Epoch* (2001) and *Waste Land* (2007), died on 8 December aged 82. [LP] ● *K.M. Peyton* (Kathleen Wendy Peyton, 1929-2023, often with her husband Michael P. Peyton), noted UK author of YA fiction including the fantasies *A Pattern of Roses* (1972) and *Unquiet Spirits* (1997), died on 19 December aged 94. ● *Richard Romanus* (1943-2023), US actor in *Wizards* (voice 1977), *Heavy Metal* (voice 1981), *Ghost of a Chance* and others, died on 23 December aged 80. [SHS] ● *Mark Samuels* (1967-2023), UK weird fiction author and Lovecraft/Machen enthusiast whose first collection was *The White Hands* (2003), died on the night of 2/3 December aged 56. [DAA] ● *Kenpachiro Satsuma* (1947-2023), Japanese actor who played rubber-suit monsters – often mighty Godzilla/Gojira himself – in many kaiju films beginning with *Godzilla vs. Hedorah* (1971), died on 16 December aged 76. [LP] ● *Ann Schlee* (1934-2023), US-born UK author whose one sf novel is the dystopian *The Vandal* (1979) – which won the *Guardian* Children's Fiction Prize – died on 1 November aged 89. [A] ● *Tom Smothers* (1937-2023), US comedian and actor whose genre credits include *The Great Bear Scare* (1983), *Timmy's Special Delivery* (1993) and *Once Upon a Mattress* (2005), died on 26 December aged 86. [LP] ● *Lee Sun-kyun* (1975-2023), South Korean actor in *Doraemon: Nobita's Chronicle of the Moon Exploration* (2019), *2036 Apocalypse Earth* (2019) and *Dr Brain* (2021), died on 27 September aged 48. [LP] ● *Camden Toy* (1955-2023), US actor who played memorable villains in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1999-2003), died on 11 December aged 68. [CM] Films include *Immortally Yours* (2009), *Big Bad Bugs* (2012), *Bedeveled* (2016) and *Average Joe* (2021). ● *Mario Valdemarin* (1926-2023), Italian actor in *Hercules Conquers Atlantis* (1961) and *La città dell'ultima paura* (1975), died on 12 December aged 96. ● *Natalia Vitko* (1977-2023), Russian sf editor for various publishers and an organizer of the St. Petersburg Fantastic Assembly sf critics' convention, died on 23 December. [AM] ● *Tom Wilkinson* (1948-2023), UK actor in *Black Knight* (2001), *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004), *Batman Begins* (2005), *The Exorcism of Emily Rose* (2005) and others, died on 30 December aged 75. [F770] ● *Nikolay Yutanov* (1959-2023), Russian sf publisher – CEO of Terra Fantastica – novelist and an organizer of the annual Congress of Russian SF Writers, died on 23 December. [AM]

**Wormsign.** A public poll has named San José BART's huge new tunnel-boring machine 'Shai-Hulud'. (*Mercury News*, 19 December) [F770]

**Random Fandom.** *Caroline Mullan* asked Bing AI chat about her years as a Clarke Award judge: 'I could not find any information that suggests Caroline Mullan is a judge for the Arthur C. Clarke Award. However, I did find that Caroline Mullan has served as a judge for the Rotsler Award and the British Science Fiction Association awards. She has also won several fanzine awards.' All wrong! (Facebook, 28 December)

**Publishers & Sinners.** Small Beer Press is closed to submissions, perhaps forever, owing to the publisher Gavin Grant's post-Covid health problems; but existing titles will stay in print. (Tor.com, 20 December)

**Court Circular: Legal Advice Dept.** 'Meta Platforms' (META.O) lawyers had warned it about the legal perils of using thousands of pirated books to train its AI models, but the company did it anyway, according to a new filing in a copyright infringement lawsuit initially brought this summer.' (Reuters, 12 December) [AIP] We live in a post-expert-advice era. ● Meanwhile at *The Register*: 'The Science Fiction Writers Association (SFWA) has asked us all to imagine a future in which builders of AI models offer a price they're willing to pay for the copyrighted material they need, and creators choose whether to pay [presumably meaning 'accept'] it until enough deals are struck that all stakeholders achieve satisfaction.' (Torrentfreak, 14 December; *The Register*, 15 December)

**The Dead Past.** *20 Years Ago*, *Instant Message* 538 confirmed that the New England SF Association notoriously plans for every contingency: 'The rules for other organizations suing the clubhouse were re-stated ...' (*Ansible* 78, January 1994) ● *50 Years Ago*, early rumblings of the first Brighton Worldcon: 'No sooner does Kansas City abandon 1979 than a triumvirate of Pete Weston, Pete Roberts and Malcolm Edwards step forward with a U.K. bid for that year. Things are just in the talking stage now ...' (*Fiawol* 8, January 1974) ● *60 Years Ago*, a newszine fate which *Ansible* has so far been spared: 'A Checklist of Typographical Errors and Misspellings in *Starspinkle's First Year* has been arduously compiled by and is available from Walter Breen as part of *Fanac 97* [address here omitted]. It's warming and comfortable to know I've such an enthusiastic fan and proofreader ...' (Ron Elik, *Starspinkle* 29, 16 January 1964)

**Fanfunder.** *TransAtlantic Fan Fund*. Final warning: nominations for the 2024 TAFF race from North America to the Glasgow Worldcon close on 7 January. Full details in *Taffluorescence!* at [taff.org.uk](http://taff.org.uk). ● *European Fan Fund*: nominations are open for the 2024 EFF race to the coming Eurocon (Erasmuscon in Rotterdam, 16-19 August) and close on 25 January; voting will then run to 1 April. Details at [fandomrover.com/2023/12/05/2024-eff-call-for-nominations-for-the-second-race](http://fandomrover.com/2023/12/05/2024-eff-call-for-nominations-for-the-second-race). ● *TAFF Paperbacks* at [ae.ansible.uk/?id=taff](http://ae.ansible.uk/?id=taff) have now raised over £1000 for the fund.

**Magazine Scene.** *Dark Matter's* November-December 2023 issue is its last after 3 years of publication; publisher Rob Carroll is switching to a series of *Dark Matter Presents* anthologies. See [darkmattermagazine.shop](http://darkmattermagazine.shop). [F770] ● Not content with relaunching *Worlds of IF*, Justin T. O'Connor Sloane is doing the same with the sister magazine *Galaxy*, perhaps semi-annually with one short story per issue. (From new editorial in *Galaxy*, February 1951, reissued at [Starshipsloane.com](http://Starshipsloane.com), 14 December)

**Scientific Units Redux.** NASA's sample capsule from asteroid Benu may in fact hold less than the expected 250g, 'likened by one space agency official to the weight of a large hamster.' (BBC, 12 December)

**Court Circular II.** The Tolkien Estate won two lawsuits against US author Demetrios Polychron, who was ordered to withdraw his blatant Tolkien rip-off *The Fellowship of the King* and destroy all physical and electronic copies. The estate and Amazon were also awarded \$134,000 in legal fees for his 'frivolously and unreasonably filed' plagiarism suit against the *Rings of Power* tv series. (Press release, 18 December) [DVB]

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Now You See It ...* 'Now if you break a drop of water into its component atoms of hydrogen and oxygen you do not get less water. You get nothing at all.' (W.E. Johns, *To Outer Space*, 1957) ● *True Romance*. 'He contented himself with kissing her knuckles, like a gourmand licking the skin off a well-roasted chicken leg.' (Kim Newman, 'Angel Down, Sussex', 1999) [BA] ● *Headbutt Dept.* 'Jarid wiped his brow with his trembling palm, then slammed it on his map.' (Brandon Sanderson channelling Robert Jordan, *A Memory of Light*, 2013) [AR] ● *Savour That Simile*. 'Karam began to tie a coin pouch at his waist: the gold coins inside had melted into a single lump, like pigs' ears in a jar.' 'Sweat crept down Mat's brow like ants.' (*Ibid*) [AR] ● *High Fantasy Diction*. 'A middle-aged woman entered [...] She was squat, shaped kind of like a bell.' 'The dragons probably looked busted up something good.' (*Ibid*) [AR]

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