

ansible



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From **David Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU, UK. Website news.ansible.uk. ISSN 0265-9816 (print); 1740-942X (e). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Brad W. Foster**. Available for SAE or the address of Petty, Smilodon and Ruth.

Kit Langford (1925-2014). My beloved mother died peacefully on 20 December after a short illness; she was 89. Brother Jon and I are desolated. Though not keen on sf, Mum always loyally read *Ansible*.

The Great God Pan

Pat Cadigan is troubled by a recurrence of cancer (with chemotherapy to follow), but sneers at the 'Diagnosis of Doom' and gives warning that cancer should be very, very afraid. Good luck, Pat.

Arthur Machen is under threat: the major Machen collection in Newport, Gwent, seems at risk of being sold off or inadequately rehoused as a result of plans to save money by replacing the town's central library (home of the collection) with very much smaller 'hubs'. See wormwoodiana.blogspot.co.uk post at tinyurl.com/p67vg98. [MLV]

Gabriel García Márquez's literary archive was acquired by the University of Texas for a sum kept determinedly secret for fear of inflating future prices. However, Associated Press is demanding full details under Texas state public records law. (BBC, 11 December) [AW]

Jerry Pournelle had a small stroke in mid-December; he's recovering well. 'In a twist of fate far too strange to put into fiction, Jerry ended up in the exact same room as did Harlan Ellison a month earlier, after his own stroke.' (www.jerrypournelle.com, 16/19 December) [AP]

David Pringle may plunge all (older) fandom into war with 'a revelation that's contained in my recent interview with Fay Ballard (in *Deep Ends: The J. G. Ballard Anthology 2014* ed. Rick McGrath, Toronto: Terminal Press, 2014). She confirms that her whole family attended the 1969 British Eastercon in Oxford, and also confesses that she and her brother let off stink bombs there. She thinks the stink-bombing was done on the Sunday morning of the con, and that the main programme had to be brought to a temporary halt while the odour dispersed.'

Conquinamine

8 Jan • **'First Thursday' Pub Meeting** (displaced since Thursday 1 January was a public holiday), Melton Mowbray cellar bar, 18 Holborn, London, EC1N 2LE. All evening, 4/5pm to late; all welcome. Free.

Ending soon: Until 20 Jan • **Terror and Wonder: The Gothic Imagination** (exhibition), British Library, London. See the web page at www.bl.uk/whatson/exhibitions/gothic/.

24 Jan • **SFSF Social**, Eten Café, York Street, Sheffield, S1 2ER. 4pm-late with guest readings and Q&A; all welcome. Free.

28 Jan • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Artillery Arms, 102 Bunhill Row, London, EC1Y 8ND. 5/6pm for 7pm. With Anne Charnock. Free.

28 Jan - 1 Feb • **Conception** (RPG), Hoburne Naish, Christchurch Road, New Milton, Hampshire, BH25 7RE. See www.conceptionuk.org.

6-8 Feb • **Con27ilk** (filk), Best Western Hotel, Marks Tey, Colchester. £37 reg, £27 unwaged. Cheques to UK Filk Convention, c/o 119 Whitehill Lane, Gravesend, DA12 5LU.

7-8 Feb • **Microcon**, M&D Rooms, Exeter University campus. £12 reg; Exeter U students £10; sf club members £8. Online registration at www.exeterguild.org/societies/sciencefiction/.

14-15 Feb • **Picocon 32**, Imperial College Union, London. £10 reg; £8 concessions; £5 ICSF members; past GoHs free. Contact ICSF, Beit Quad, Prince Consort Rd, London, SW7 2BB; picocon at icsf.co.uk.

3-6 Apr • **Dysprosium** (Eastercon), Park Inn, London Heathrow. £70 reg, rising to £80 on 1 February; £25 supp/under-18s, £15 under-12s, £5 infants. Contact 101 Ninian Rd, Grovehill, Hemel Hempstead, Herts, HP2 6NB; register online at www.dysprosium.org.uk.

8 Jul • **Locating Fantastika** (conference), Lancaster University. CFP deadline: 1 April. See fantastikaconference.wordpress.com.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. Who could this be? 'I met a grand old man whose last novel I had reviewed a couple of years ago. We shook hands, he graciously thanked me, when he didn't really need to, and we agreed that science fiction, his genre, was cruelly and totally overlooked by all the books pages in this country ... It was strange, then, after the

convivial exaggeration of our evening chat, to see him complaining again, in a further letter to the editor, about his foul mistreatment and what "literary fiction" snobs we all were. (Does anybody use the term "literary fiction" who doesn't have one foot on a spaceship?)' (Michael Caines, 'Freelance', *Times Literary Supplement*, 12 December) [MLV]

Awards. *Rhysling* (genre poetry). LONG Mary Soon Lee, 'Interregnum' (*Star*Line* 36.4). SHORT Amal El-Mohtar 'Turning the Leaves' (*Apex* 12/13). [L] • **Rotsler Award** for lifetime achievement in fanzine art: our very own Sue Mason of *Plokta* fame, who has contributed nearly 40 teensy masthead cartoons to *Ansible*.

In Typo Veritas. From the *Radio Times* Quest Channel listings: '9.00pm. Attack of the Giant Jellyfish: A history of the British Isles from the Roman era to the present day, featuring re-enactments of major events and historic turning points.' (30 November) [CMG] Jellyfish?

Passing for Literature. Here's how to do it: 'Last month, when the fiction finalists for the National Book Awards were announced, one stood out from the rest: "Station Eleven," by Emily St. John Mandel. While the other nominated books are what, nowadays, we call "literary fiction," "Station Eleven" is set in a familiar genre universe, in which a pandemic has destroyed civilization. The twist—the thing that makes "Station Eleven" National Book Award material—is that the survivors are artists.' (Joshua Rothman, *The New Yorker*, 6 November 2014) [KF]

R.I.P. **Booth Colman** (1923-2014), US actor who appeared in *Them!* (1954) and tv series including *Science Fiction Theatre* (1955), *The Outer Limits* (1964), *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* (1964), *I Dream of Jeannie* (1966-1967) and *Planet of the Apes* (1974), died on 15 December aged 91. [SFS] • **Robert Conroy** (1938-2014), US author of a number of alternate-history novels beginning with *1901* (1995) and including the Sidewise Award winner *1942* (2009), died on 30 December. [SFS] • **Donna Douglas** (1933-2014), US actress whose best-known sf role was in her debut *Twilight Zone* episode 'The Eye of the Beholder' (1960), died on 2 January aged 81. [PDF] • **Lesley Hatch** (1954-2014), UK fan who wrote for the SCIS fanzine *Inception*, reviewed for *Vector* 1998-2005, and belonged to the Prophecy APA from its first mailing to the present, died on 6 December. [SJM/L] • **Edward Herrmann** (1943-2014), US actor whose best-known genre role was in the vampire film *The Lost Boys* (1987), died on 31 December aged 71. [MPJ] Other credits include *The Electric Grandmother* (1982), *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985), *Here Come the Munsters* (1995), *Wonder Woman* (2011) and *Heaven's Door* (2013). • **Kris Jensen** (Kristine Marie Jensen, 1953-2014), US author of the Ardel sf trilogy comprising *FreeMaster* (1990), *Mentor* (1991) and *Healer* (1993), died on 21 November; she was 61. • **Sidney Kramer** (1915-2014), US publisher, agent and book dealer who was a founder of Bantam Books and later New American Library, died on 10 December; on 21 January he would have been 100. [GVG] • **Roberta Leigh** (1926-2014), UK author of romances and children's fiction who created and produced the tv puppet series *Torchy the Battery Boy* (1957-1959), *Twizzle* (1957) and *Space Patrol* (1963-1968; US *Planet Patrol*), died on 19 December; she was 87. [MPJ] • **Donald Moffitt** (1931-2014), US author of sf from 1960, his first sf novel being *The Jupiter Theft* (1977), died 10 December aged 83. As Patrick Kenyon he wrote eight borderline-sf spy thrillers about the Modesty Blaise-like 'Baroness'. • **Patricia Nurse**, whose one sf story was the much-anthologized 'One Rejection Too Many' (July 1978 *Asimov's*), died on 3 March 2014. [AM] • **Francisco Porrúa** (1922-2014), Spanish editor whose Ediciones Minotauro published his own translations of *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Martian Chronicles*, *The Left Hand of Darkness* and many more, died on 18 December. [SFS] • **David Ryall** (1935-2014), long-time UK actor who played Elphias Doge in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows 1* died on 25 December aged 79. Other genre credits include *Truly Madly Deeply* (1990), *City of Ember* (2008) and *The Tractate Middoth* (2013). [PDF] • **Robert San Souci** (1946-2014), US author of children's fiction who specialized in retelling international folktales, myths and ghost/supernatural stories—as in *Short & Shivery: Thirty Chilling Tales* (1987) and its successors—died on 19 December

aged 68. [PDF] ● *Joseph Sargent* (1925-2014), US actor and Emmy-winning director who amid much else directed *Colossus: The Forbin Project* (1970) and episodes of *Star Trek* (1966), *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* (1964-1966) and *The Invaders* (1967-1968), died on 22 December aged 89. [PDF] ● *Roy Scarfo* (1926-2014), US space artist who was creative art director at the General Electric Space Technology Center and illustrator/consultant for NASA and others, died on 8 December; he was 88. [AIP] ● *Eckhard Schwettmann* (1957-2014), German publisher and publicist who from 1996 to 2001 was head of marketing (as E S) and then head of publishing for the vast Perry Rhodan franchise, died on 4 November; he was 57. [SF2C] ● *Martha Sigall* (1917-2014), US inker and painter of animation cels who in her 53-year career worked on many classic Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies films, died on 13 December; she was 97. Her autobiography is *Living Life Inside the Lines: Tales from the Golden Age of Animation* (2005). [PDF] ● *Peter Underwood* (1923-2014), UK ghost-hunter (once described as 'the Sherlock Holmes of psychical research') and author of some 50 books on the subject, died on 26 November; he was 91. [JE] ● *Ken Weatherwax* (1955-2014), US actor best known as young Pugsley in *The Addams Family* (1964-1966), died on 7 December; he was 59. [MPJ] ● *Billie Whitelaw* (1932-2014), UK actress whose genre credits included *The Secret Garden* (1952; 1987), *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1968), *The Omen* (1976), *The Dark Crystal* (1982) and *The Cloning of Joanna May* (1992), died on 21 December; she was 82. [PDF] ● *Rocky Wood* (1959-2014), New Zealand-born expert on Stephen King whose critical books include *The Complete Guide to the Works of Stephen King* (2003), died on 1 December aged 55. He was the current president of the Horror Writers Association. [L]

The Weakest Link. *Sandi Toksvig*: 'In which river did John the Baptist baptize Jesus?' *Contestant*: 'The Amazon.' (Channel 4, *Fifteen-to-One*) ● *Ben Shephard*: 'According to Arthurian legend, King Arthur's sword was forged on which island?' *Contestant*: 'I think I know this one. Yes, it's either the Isle of Man or the Isle of Wight. I think I'll say ... the Isle of Wight.' (ITV, *Tipping Point*) [PE]

Court Circular. The UK Home Office, having feebly resisted the issue of a passport to Laura Skywalker Matthews (middle name acquired by deed poll) on grounds of trademark infringement, and then backed down after her threat of legal action, has rallied and cancelled the recently issued 'L. Skywalker' passport because they cannot be doing with frivolity. It seems that the triumphantly quoted guidelines say, or now say, '... we will refuse to recognise a change of name ... if it is made for a bet or frivolous purpose.' (BBC, 4 December) [MPJ]

As Others See Us II. From a review of David Mitchell's *The Bone Clocks*: 'First, the cosmology, which has the demented intricacy of science fiction.' (James Wood, *The New Yorker*, 8 September) [MMW]

Finding Someone Worf Fighting For ... was the strapline of this irresistible email sent to *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*: 'We all have our "thing". Sometimes finding someone to love who has the same quirky interests as you can be difficult, even more so when your interests involve pointy ears and phasers. / Trek Dating is a US online dating site for people who love Star Trek. If you want a partner that's passionate about Spock and isn't afraid to go with you at Warp Speed then TrekDating.com is the dating site for you.' [GVG]

Publishers and Sinners. Writer Beware posted its 'Alert: Questionable Terms of Use in HBO's Game of Thrones Compendium' on 11 December. The Compendium is to be a crowdsourced volume financed with typical corporate minginess—payment for contributors to this likely bestseller is limited to one copy of the book—and with a typical corporate rights grab: 'HBO will consider any Submissions and/or anything you contribute to this Service as available for its use free of any obligations to you.' In perpetuity. With moral rights automatically waived. HBO later (18 December) modified these draconian terms to make the rights seizure non-exclusive, but the deal remains one that no professional would touch with the traditional ten-foot pole.

The Weakest Baskerville. *Host*: 'The peat bogs of Dartmoor inspired the title of this 1902 novel.' *Contestant 1*: 'What is Dracula?' *Contestant 2*: 'What is Frankenstein?' (*Jeopardy*, 9 December) [AIP]

Random Fandom. *Wendy Bradley* is quietly smug at having published her write-up of Loncon 3's panel on the future of taxation in no less a magazine than *Taxation* (18 December 2014), with the tasteful subtitle 'From androids to zombies: taxation of the undead'. ● *Team Fan Magazine* (no other contact name given) may soon supersede *Ansible's* free event listings and allow me a well-deserved rest: 'The reason I am contacting you is we are looking to starting a brand new magazine about conventions, exhibitions and meet ups with in the UK. / Our

magazine will be a lot different to others that you find as will be a free magazine handed out at the events across the UK and articles will be written by the fans rather than someone in the media. This would give both a non biased view and can help expand the interest in to small and larger events that people may never of heard of or gone to before. [...] As this will be a free magazine we will have advertising space available which we can discuss costs later if you would wish.' [SG] ● *Art Widner* (97) is now the first Lifetime Member of FAPA, 'forever freed of any obligations to pay dues and/or to contribute to the mailings.' [F770]

The Dead Past. *30 Years Ago*: 'Dire warning from Little, Brown accompanying review copies of Gary Haynes's *Carrion*: "No review should not appear before the date of publication."' (*Ansible* 90, January 1995) ● *40 Years Ago*, eternal truth was uttered: 'The Eastercon has become too large; there are so many people about that there are always a lot of fans I'd like a quiet talk with, but never get around to.' (Darroll Pardoe in *Checkpoint* 58, January 1975) The terrifying figures for the then most recent Eastercon, Tynescon '74, had been revealed in an earlier issue: 'Attendance was a record; about 350 people actually turned up at the convention out of a total registration of 504. This is the first time the total has topped 500 at an Eastercon.' (*Checkpoint* 47, April 1974) ● *50 Years Ago*, an alleged response from that nice Mr Michael Moorcock at *New Worlds* magazine: 'Thank you for letting me have advance news of your 400 word novel about Father Christmas being mistaken for an alien. Unfortunately, we are stocked up on Father Christmas stories for the next twelve years, and do not anticipate the continuation of the magazine or the world beyond that point. However, if you would care to submit the story, changing the words "Father Christmas" to "Easter Bunny", we may just have room for it. Could you do it in three parts of 133 1/3 words?' (*Skyrack* 74, January 1965)

C.o.A. *Tony Cullen* (from 6 January), 45 Glenforth St, Greenwich, London, SE10 0JQ. *Peter Wareham & Gwen Funnell* (since August), 1 Benfield Way, Portslade, East Sussex, BN41 2DA.

Outraged Letters. *Yvonne Rousseau* on the A329 claim that '*Interstellar* is not a science fiction film ...': 'The Australian government is not so easily deceived. Here, *Interstellar* is rated "M" because of "science fiction themes and occasional coarse language." The classification "M" signifies "for mature audiences" (that is, recommended for teenagers aged 15 years and over). According to the Australian government, classifiable elements under "M" may include "violence and nudity of moderate impact that are not recommended for children under 15 years." As for "science fiction themes"—I can only conjecture which kind of threat to innocence is deemed to lurk there.'

Blurbismo. 'In 1857, Charles Dickens was probably the most famous and beloved Englishman alive—a cross between J.K. Rowling and Princess Diana.' (Blurb for DVD, *Dickens' Secret Love*) [JB]

Fanfundery. *TAFF*: the 2015 Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund race to the 2015 Worldcon in Spokane opened promptly on 1 January with two European candidates, Nina Horvath and Wolf von Witting. The online ballot can be found at tafftrip.com/taff-ballot-form-2015/. PDF ballot form downloadable at taff.org.uk. Voting continues to Tuesday 7 April.

Media Madness. The American Film Institute jury's top 11 films of 2014 include *Interstellar* and the Disney version of Stephen Sondheim's musical *Into the Woods*. (BBC, 9 December) [MPJ]

Thog's Masterclass. *Dept of Punchy Opening Lines*. 'At first there was only the cold, the Stygian inky iciness that held every muscle of his body in thrall and made his thoughts flow with the turgid slowness of treacly molasses.' (Wilbur S. Peacock, 'Spider-Men of Gharr', Summer 1945 *Planet Stories*) [MFD] ● *Quickness of the Hand Dept.* '... he laughed, and before I could stop him, stroked my face with the speed of light.' (Debbie Johnson, *Dark Vision*, 2014) [AR] ● *Neat Tricks*. 'He stood tall, in fact even taller than he usually was.' (*Ibid*) ● *Like a Huge Springing Beast Dept.* 'The redhead springs deep and soars through the air. Flying like a spread-eagled amoeba ...' (Kieran Shea, *Koko Takes a Holiday*, 2014) [AR] ● *Dept of Useful Add-Ons*. 'He rose to his spare elbows.' (Charles E. Gannon, *Fire with Fire*, 2013) [AL] ● *Shock of Hair Dept.* 'His ginger hair with its generous dashes of grey sat on his head like an electrified cat.' (J.D. Robb [Nora Roberts], *Strangers in Death*, 2008) [O]

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