

# Ansible



Ansible® 389 December 2019

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: Sue Mason. Available for SAE or a set of five Necklin field generator rods.

## The Scholars of Night

**John M. Ford** (Mike Ford) is mostly out of print because – so the oft-told story goes – his family inherited his copyrights and chose to suppress the work since they disapproved of it, or of him. Another version of events has now been offered in a 15 November *Slate* article by Isaac Butler, which recounts his researches as a Ford fan and the discovery that family members say they repeatedly wrote to Mike's agent about reprint possibilities but had no reply; while the agent, who had given up or was in process of giving up agency work owing to various personal problems, says she never received those enquiries. Whether or not there's an element of historical revisionism here, the good news is that communication has been re-established and that Mike's 'lost' work – plus new material including his ambitious, unfinished novel *Aspects* – will be published by Tor with family consent, beginning in 2020. [ML]

**Alan Moore** is sufficiently horrified by current UK politics that he's breaking a 40-year streak of anarchist refusal to participate and voting in the upcoming General Election for ... can you guess? (20 November)

**Geoff Ryman** is puzzled by the motives of the entity that bagged his presumably expired domain ryman-novel.com – home of the hypertext novel 253 – and filled it with gushing (bot-generated?) posts about Geoff's work while removing the novel itself. (Facebook, 25 November)

**William Shatner** was made an Officer of the Order of Canada on 21 November; another actor with sf credits, Donald Sutherland, was promoted from a mere lowly Officer to a Companion of the Order.

**Navah Wolfe**, mysteriously cast out as senior editor at Saga Press (see A388), has now joined Subterranean Press. [F770]

## Conyryne

2-9 Dec • **Talos III**: SF Theatre Festival of London, Omnibus Theatre, Clapham. More at [www.cyborphic.com/talos-2019](http://www.cyborphic.com/talos-2019).

7-8 Dec • **For the Love of Sci-Fi** (comics), Trafford Park, Manchester. Tickets at various prices from [fortheLoveofsci-fi.com](http://fortheLoveofsci-fi.com).

7-8 Dec • **A Victorian Steampunk Christmas**, Crewe Heritage Centre and town centre. Free by day; tickets £6 for Saturday evening music programme 7pm-10:30pm. See [www.asylumsteampunk.co.uk](http://www.asylumsteampunk.co.uk).

8 Dec • **BSFA EGM**: Extraordinary General Meeting, Doggett's Coat and Badge pub, Blackfriars Bridge, London. Noon-2pm. Members only. See [bsfa.co.uk/bsfa-egm-sunday-8th-december-2019/](http://bsfa.co.uk/bsfa-egm-sunday-8th-december-2019/).

13 Dec • **BFS Xmas Social**, Doric Arch, Euston Station. 7pm-11:30. Free. See [britishfantasysociety.org/event/bfs-london-xmas-social](http://britishfantasysociety.org/event/bfs-london-xmas-social).

19 Dec • **London Christmas Meeting** (additional to First Thursdays), The Bishop's Finger, 9-10 West Smithfield, EC1A 9JR. All evening.

7-9 Feb 2020 • **DemiSemiQuaver** (filk), Best Western Hotel, Marks Tey, Colchester. Now £42 reg; £32 unwaged; under-18s £1 per year of age; under-5s free. See [www.contabile.org.uk/demisemiqvaiver/](http://www.contabile.org.uk/demisemiqvaiver/).

7-9 Feb 2020 • **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 2020 • **Picocon 36**, Blakett Building, Imperial College, London. Guests of honour Roz Kaveney, Tamsyn Muir and Natasha Ngan. £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/).

8 Mar 2020 • **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).

20 Mar 2020 • **Futurefest** (futurology), Tobacco Dock, London. 10am-10pm. Tickets £80; students £35. More at [www.futurefest.org](http://www.futurefest.org).

4 Apr 2020 • **Bedford Who Charity Con** (*Doctor Who*), University Theatre, Bedford, MK41 9EA. 10am-5:30pm. £42.50 reg; under-19s/students £22.50; under-14s £15. More at [bedfordwhocharitycon.co.uk](http://bedfordwhocharitycon.co.uk).

10-13 Apr 2020 • **Concentric** (Eastercon), Hilton Metropole near Birmingham NEC. Added GoH: Adam Roberts. Now £80 reg; concessions £50; under-18s £25. See [www.concentric2020.uk](http://www.concentric2020.uk). Hotel booking opened in early October, announced via social media but with no mass email to members until early November, when early booking was advised to get

the best rates. See [www.concentric2020.uk/hotel/accommodation](http://www.concentric2020.uk/hotel/accommodation).

23-26 Apr 2020 • **Dead by Dawn** (horror film festival), Filmhouse Cinema One, 88 Lothian Rd, Edinburgh, EH3 9BZ. Box office 0131 228 2688. Prices and online booking awaited at [www.deadbydawn.co.uk](http://www.deadbydawn.co.uk).

7-10 Aug 2020 • **Continuum** (RPG), John Foster Hall, Manor Road, Leicester University, Oadby. Ticket prices are a state secret, revealed only to those who register at [continuumconvention.co.uk](http://continuumconvention.co.uk).

28-30 Aug 2020 • **TitanCon**, Hilton Hotel, Belfast. GoH Jeannette Ng, Jodi Taylor and Robert J. Sawyer. £30 reg; first-timers and under-18s £25; under-15s £15; under-8s free. See [titancon.com](http://titancon.com) for day rates.

19 Sep 2020 • **International Comic Expo**, Edgbaston Stadium, Birmingham. Tickets from £10 (students £5); VIP passes £50; to go on sale in January at [internationalcomicexpo.wordpress.com](http://internationalcomicexpo.wordpress.com).

31 Oct 2020 • **BristolCon**, Hilton DoubleTree Hotel, Bristol. GoH Anna Smith Spark and Adrian Tchaikovsky. Online registration to become available in the New Year at [www.bristolcon.org](http://www.bristolcon.org).

31 Oct 2020 • **Frightfest** (film) Halloween special, Cineworld Cinema, Leicester Square, London. In addition to the 27-31 August event. Tickets awaited at [www.frightfest.co.uk/filmsevents.html](http://www.frightfest.co.uk/filmsevents.html).

13-15 Nov 2020 • **Novacon 50**, Mercure Nottingham Sherwood Hotel, Nottingham. GoH Fangorn, Emma Newman, Claire North and Christopher Priest. £50 reg. Registration awaited at [novacon.org.uk](http://novacon.org.uk).

25-29 Aug 2021 • **DisCon III** (Worldcon), Washington DC, USA. \$155 reg; YA (under 26) \$80; accompanied under-13s \$65; accompanied under-7s free. Rates may rise on 1 January 2020. See [discon3.org](http://discon3.org).

**Rumblings**. *Ytterbium* (Eastercon 2019) published its final accounts in November, showing a profit of £29,818.09. For the full details, see [www.ytterbium.org.uk/accounts](http://www.ytterbium.org.uk/accounts). The high figure is attributed to a membership surge resulting from the collapse of Nine Worlds Geekfest.

## Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See Us**. Another book cleared of genre taint: 'Ursula Todd dies over and over again in Kate Atkinson's *Life After Life* – from falling off a roof, from drowning, from succumbing to the flu. But the deaths are just a device: this is a book about living, and above all, finding new ways to do it until you finally get it right. Atkinson made her name as a mystery writer, but *Life After Life* defies genre.' (*Time*, 12 November)

**Awards**. *Rotsler Award* 'for long-time wonder-working with graphic art in amateur publications of the science fiction community': Alison Scott. • *World Fantasy Awards*: NOVEL *Witchmark* by C.L. Polk. NOVELLA 'The Privilege of the Happy Ending' by Kij Johnson (*Clarkesworld*, 8/18). SHORT (tie) 'Ten Deals with the Indigo Snake' by Mel Kassel (*Lightspeed*, 10/18) and 'Like a River Loves the Sky' by Emma Törzs (*Uncanny*, 3/18). ANTHOLOGY *Worlds Seen in Passing: Ten Years of Tor.com Short Fiction* ed. Irene Gallo. COLLECTION *The Tangled Lands* by Paolo Bacigalupi and Tobias S. Buckell. ARTIST Rovina Cai. SPECIAL – PROFESSIONAL Huw Lewis-Jones for *The Writer's Map: An Atlas of Imaginary Lands*. SPECIAL – NON-PROFESSIONAL Scott H. Andrews for *Beneath Ceaseless Skies*.

**Magazine Scene**. *Startling Stories* (first published 1939) is to be revived as an annual publication by John Betancourt's Wildside Press.

**As Others See Us II**. 'Given how swiftly *The Handmaid's Tale* catapulted Atwood into global literary stardom, it's easy to miss the on-the-ground work that went into what many (over Atwood's objections) promptly labeled "science fiction," suggesting its distance from real events.' (Sophie Gilbert, *Atlantic*, December) [MMW]

**R.I.P.** *Allen Adams*, long-time UK fan – especially of *Doctor Who* – organizer of two *Who*-themed 'Writers Gate' conventions in Peterborough 1994-1995, and co-author with Jim Mortimore and Roger Clark of *Babylon 5 Security Manual* (1998), died on 9 or 10 November. [CC] • *Stephen Dixon* (1936-2019), prolific US author of absurdist and surreal humour that sometimes verged on sf/fantasy – as in *Letters to Kevin* (2016) – died on 6 November aged 83. [PDF] • *Jack Enyart*, US cartoon artist and writer who scripted various Bugs Bunny specials plus episodes of *Bionic Six* (1987), *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes* (1990) and others, died on 13 October aged 69. [PDF] • *Godfrey Gao* (1984-2019), Taiwanese-born actor whose films include *The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones*

(2013) and *Shanghai Fortress* (2019), died on 27 November aged 35. [MMW] ● *Michael Hanson* (1940-2019), US radio broadcaster and jazz drummer whose *Mindwebs* radio series of sf/fantasy readings featured 188 stories in its main run from 1976 to the mid-1990s, died on 9 September aged 78. [F770] ● *Diarmuid Lawrence* (1947-2019), UK tv director of *The Witches and the Grinyog* (1983), episodes of *Dramarama* (1983-1985), and *Peter and Wendy* (2015), died on 20 September aged 71. [AIP] ● *Virginia Leith* (1925-2019), US actress who starred as a disembodied head in *The Brain That Wouldn't Die* (1962), died on 4 November aged 94; other credits include *On the Threshold of Space* (1956). [LP] ● *Lisa Lepovetsky* (1951-2019), US author who published over 100 genre stories and poems since 1985, died on 11 October aged 68. [BC] ● *Tom Lyle* (1953-2019), US comics artist who worked on *Airboy* for Eclipse, *Starman* and *Robin* for DC, and *Spider-Man* for Marvel, died on 19 November aged 66. [PDF] ● *Spike McPhee*, US fan, collector and dealer who ran the Science Fantasy bookshop in Harvard Square 1977-1989, died on 13 November. [F770] ● *Taku Mayumura* (Takuji Murakami, 1934-2019), Seiun Award-winning Japanese author of many sf novels (both adult and YA), several adapted as anime productions, died on 3 November aged 85. [JonC] He translated Wells's *The Time Machine* and also enjoyed mainstream success. ● *Jonathan Miller* (1934-2019), noted UK director, scriptwriter and actor who made his debut in *Beyond the Fringe* (1960) and whose genre credits include *Alice in Wonderland* (1966) and the M.R. James adaptation *Whistle and I'll Come to You* (1968), died on 27 November aged 85. [JM] ● *Walter J. Minton* (1923-2019), US publisher who was president and later chairman of Putnam's from 1955 to 1978 – publishing *Lord of the Flies* and notable sf by Blish, Dick, Heinlein, Herbert, Knight (as editor of *Orbit*) and others, died on 19 November aged 96. [AIP] ● *Jin Nakayama* (1942-2019), Chinese-born actor whose credits include *Ultraman 80* (1980-1981), *Space Travelers* (2000) and *Ghost Shout* (2004), died on 12 October aged 77. [BE] ● *Anne Page*, long-time UK fan, convention runner and costumer who was on the 1987 Brighton Worldcon steering committee and was a guest of honour at the 1990 Eastercon, died in November. [GC] ● *Lawrence G. Paull* (1938-2019), US production designer for *Blade Runner* (1982), *Back to the Future* (1985) and *Escape from L.A.* (1996), died on 10 November aged 81. [SF²C] ● *Maria Perego* (1923-2019), Italian animation artist who created the popular puppet character Topo Gigio ('Louie Mouse') – seen in 94 episodes of *The Ed Sullivan Show* and several films including *Topo Gigio and the Missile War* (1967) – died on 7 November aged 95. [MMW] ● *Michael J. Pollard* (1939-2019), US character actor in *Scrooged* (1988), *Dark Angel* (1990), *The Arrival* (1991) and others, died on 22 November aged 80. ● *Alison Prince* (1931-2019), UK author of children's fiction including many ghost/supernatural stories and the genre novels *The Others* (1986) and *Bird Boy* (2000), died on 12 October aged 88. [SH] ● *Tom Spurgeon* (1968-2019), Eisner Award-winning US comics writer, editor and historian who edited *The Comics Journal* 1994-1999, co-wrote *Stan Lee and the Rise and Fall of the American Comic Book* (2003) with Jordan Raphael and was an influential writer at his blog site *The Comics Reporter* (launched 2004), died on 13 November aged 50. [PDF] ● *Joan Staley* (1940-2019), US actress in *Valley of the Dragons* (1961) and genre tv series including *Batman* (1966), died on 24 September aged 79. [PDF] ● *Niall Tóibín* (1929-2019), Irish actor whose rare genre credits include *Rawhead Rex* (1986) and *Rat* (2000), died on 13 November aged 89. [JM] ● *Gahan Wilson* (1930-2019), much-loved US cartoonist with a special gift for macabre humour and grotesque figures, died on 21 November aged 89. [PW] His drawings appeared regularly in *Playboy*, *The New Yorker* and *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, and are collected in many books from *Gahan Wilson's Graveside Manner* (1965) to *Gahan Wilson's Out There* (2016). He received World Fantasy Awards as best artist in 1996 and for lifetime achievement in 2004.

**The Weakest Link.** *Jeopardy* on 'Authors' Fictional Places' ... Answer: 'Loompaland.' Contestant: 'Who is Baum?' (20 November) [AIP]

**Publishers & Sinners.** The horror-oriented Canadian small press ChiZine Publications, run by Sandra Kasturi and Brett Savory, has been in the news thanks to a growing storm of allegations about slow payment, non-payment and an often contemptuous or bullying attitude to authors and even ChiZine's own staff. SK and BS announced on 11 November that they were stepping down in favour of 'interim publisher' Christie Harkin and hoped to 'clear all outstanding arrears as soon as possible'. [F770] Many ChiZine authors have asked for reversion of rights and/or withdrawn stories from this publisher's planned Christmas anthology. See multiple links at news.ansible.uk/misc/link19.html#chiz.

**The Alternate 1930s.** 'Yahoo message boards and email lists were crucial to the early days of fandom.' (*Daily Dot*, 17 October)

**Her Dark Materials.** Christine Feehan, fantasy/romance author, has applied for a US trademark on the word 'Dark' to describe her series with amazingly original titles like *Dark This* and *Dark That*. Whether the trademark will be granted remains to be seen. (*File 770*, 26 November)

**BSFA Awards.** Longlist nominations are open to members, closing on 31 December: [tinyurl.com/BSFA2019suggestions](http://tinyurl.com/BSFA2019suggestions). Shortlist voting then follows, closing on 31 January; voting on the resulting ballot will run from early February until noon on presentation day at Eastercon.

**As Others See Us III.** 'Lest you think this concept is limited to snake-oil salesmen and science-fiction writers, the idea that aging is not inevitable is now in the mainstream of modern medical research at major institutions around the world.' (Arthur C. Brooks, *Washington Post*, 16 November.) [MMW]

**Random Fandom.** *John Nielsen Hall* had his long-awaited kidney transplant on 19 November. [LRAK] Get well soon, boss, says *Ansible* imperiously. ● *Meredith MacArdle's* Diana Wynne Jones fan website at [leemac.freeserve.co.uk](http://leemac.freeserve.co.uk) vanished with the demise of Freeserve and is being slowly recreated at the posher venue [dianawynnejones.com](http://dianawynnejones.com).

**The Dead Past.** *80 Years Ago*, the secrets of pre-CGI special effects were revealed: 'The bluebird used in the technicolor version of the Maeterlinck fantasy *The Bluebird* was actually a yellow bird made up for the part, because it was impossible to obtain a bird sufficiently blue naturally to reproduce on the film.' (*Fantasy News* 79, December 1939) ● *40 Years Ago*, the first shy hint of what was to become Thog's Masterclass: 'Great Moments of SF Prose: "Dimly they/it perceived the final annihilation of a minuscule agglutination of refined masses ..."' (Alan Dean Foster, *The Black Hole*, 1979) (*Ansible* 5, December 1979)

**Fanfundery.** TAFF 2020 voting began on 4 November when the ballot form was released: see [taff.org.uk](http://taff.org.uk) for a printable PDF and the online voting form. Both candidates – Michael 'Orange Mike' Lowrey and Ann Totusek – are standing on a 'Vote for Lowrey' platform, which has confused some fans. Voting closes on 12 January 2020. TAFF is again active on Twitter as @taffnews, after a heroic struggle to transfer this account from Jim Mowatt to the current NA administrator Geri Sullivan. ● DUFF 2020 nominations opened on 1 December and will close on 17 January 2020; voting runs to 27 March 2020. See [tinyurl.com/vp5v8e4](http://tinyurl.com/vp5v8e4).

**As Others Saw Us.** 'I sincerely hope that science and scientists differ from science fiction and its practitioners. Heaven help us if they don't: We may be headed for a very boring world indeed.' (*Star Wars* review in *New York*, 26 June 1977 – by John Simon [1925-2019], the acerbic US critic who died on 24 November aged 94.) [MMW]

**Editorial.** *Ansible Editions* continues remorselessly, with more than one project on the go. The latest ebook is *All Our Yesterdays: The Fanzine Columns* by Harry Warner Jr, now added to the free library at the TAFF site. Discerning readers will understand this isn't his history of 1940s fandom – *All Our Yesterdays* (1969) – but a book of columns that appeared under the same overall title, published by Chuck Connor in 1991, released on disk in 1997 and added to Bill Burns's eFanzines site in 2006. Now with many corrections, restorations of lost text, and even a previously uncollected column: [taff.org.uk/ebooks.php?x=AOY](http://taff.org.uk/ebooks.php?x=AOY).

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Anatomy Dept.* 'Picard felt his shoulder muscle contract with expectation.' (Leslie Whitten, *Progeny of the Adder*, 1965) [LP] ● *Wobbly Bits.* '... breasts like poached eggs ...' (Jilly Cooper, *Riders*, 1985) ● *Astrogation Dept.* 'We're moving away from the Milky Way, which means we must be travelling in the direction of our solar system.' (Vargo Statten [John Russell Fearn], *Laughter in Space*, 1952) [DR] ● *In Space No One Can...* 'fear was a sibilant whispering in the ether'. (Lee Gregor [Milton A. Rothman], 'Asteroid', *Astonishing*, February 1940) ● *Dept of Bodily Enhancement.* 'Her powerful, supple arms were corded with the smooth-flowing muscles of a boa constrictor.' (Don A. Stuart [John W. Campbell], 'Cloak of Aesir', *Astounding*, March 1939) [BA] ● *As We See Us Dept.* 'It's axiomatic that a man with a rifle is the most efficient predator.' (H. Beam Piper, *Fuzzies and Other People*, 1984) ● *Flowers of Rhetoric.* 'She put her book in her lap and squinted at him as if he were a marmalade cat she happened upon in a cemetery on the moon.' '... because he was nothing but a little impotent nothing – a Dutchman with his canals drained and sluices clogged.' '... the coup de foudre, into his brain into his heart into his cock and balls, straight down to his big toe.' '... forms suggestive of blurry sexual organs decomposing in space.' (all Frederic Tuten, *Van Gogh's Bad Café*, 1997) [PB]

*Ansible* © 389 © David Langford, 2019. Thanks to Brian Ameringen, Paul Barnett, Graham Charnock, Bill Contento, Jonathan Clements, Cardinal Cox, Paul Di Filippo, Bob Eggleton, *File 770*, Steve Holland, Leroy Kettle, Joe McNally, Making Light, Lawrence Person, Andrew I. Porter, David Redd, *SF² Concatenation*, Paul Winters, Martin Morse Wooster, and as always our Hero Distributors: Durdles Books (Birmingham SF Group), SCIS/Prophecy and Alan Stewart (Australia). Merry Christmas to all. 2 December 2019