

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 privileges of the Quantors, Tattermen or Clam Muffins.

Quadrants of the Squared Circle

Brian Aldiss is commemorated in a new award named for him, to be presented annually from 2025 for sf world-building in 'cultural artefacts (literature, games and film/TV)'. See briandaldiss.co.uk/the-aldiss-award.

Malorie Blackman of 'Noughts & Crosses' series fame has a current British Library exhibition devoted to her life and career (see below), which includes her inspirational folder of 82 rejection slips accumulated during the early days of struggle. (*Guardian*, 24 November)

Octavia Butler features in the current Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery 'Recent Acquisitions' display of portraits created by or representing women. See npg.si.edu/exhibition/recent-acquisitions-3. [LL]

John Clute's long-running Facebook posts on 'Annals of Vandalism at the British Library' have rung many changes on the message (illustrated with scans) that the BL's traditional stripping and discarding of dust jackets and flap copy destroys bibliographic context and is a Bad Thing. All this is to become a heavily illustrated volume titled *The Book Blindens*. Bets are being taken on how it will be treated at the British Library.

Mary Shelley is back in business, and not in a good way: 'Intrigued that my usual coterie of spammers are now using writers' names to inveigle me into clicking on their links for website design, SEO analysis, and so on. This morning Robert Frost and Mary Shelley were both sending me blandishments.' (Handheld Press on Xtwitter, 29 November)

Contratempo

Until 25 February 2024 • **Malorie Blackman: The Power of Stories** (exhibition), British Library, London. Free, with no booking required. Web presence expected when the BL recovers from a recent cyber-attack.

1-3 Dec • **Steampunk Christmas Weekend**, Weymouth. Various free and ticketed events as detailed at www.love-weymouth.co.uk/weymouth-steampunk-weekend-2023.

2 Dec • **Dragonmeet** (gaming), Novotel Hammersmith, London. 9am-11:30pm. Tickets £15.50 (under-18s £8) at www.dragonmeet.co.uk.

2-3 Dec • **For the Love of Sci-Fi** (media), BEC Arena, Stretford, Manchester. £49.50; under-10s £19.25. More at fortheLoveofsci-fi.com.

15 Dec • **BSFA Winter Social**, Kings Arms, Tooley Street, near London Bridge. 7:30pm onward. Free; all welcome.

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

23 Jan 2024 • **A Billion and Fifty Year Spree** (SFF symposium), Liverpool and online. See www.sf-foundation.org/fresh-about (26 Oct).

2-4 Feb 2024 • **Contabile**³, (UK filk), Palace Hotel, Buxton. £39 reg; £29 unwaged; other rates at www.contabile.org.uk/tripletime. *These rates are valid to 31 December and may rise in January.*

2-5 Feb 2024 • **Scotiacon** (furry), Crowne Plaza Hotel, Glasgow. 'Prehistoric Panic' theme. £100 reg; £45/day. See www.scotiacon.org.uk.

16-18 Feb 2024 • **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.

7-9 Mar 2024 • **Frightfest** (film), Glasgow Film Theatre. Tickets on sale mid- or late January at frightfest.co.uk/tickets.html.

14 Apr 2024 • **Stars of Time** (comics), LC, Swansea. 10am-4:30pm. £10 plus booking fee; other rates at www.starsoftime.co.uk.

8-12 Aug 2024 • **Glasgow 2024** (Worldcon) Glasgow SEC. £210 reg; first Worldcon £150; concessions/Scots residents £140; YA (under 26) £125; under-16s £85; under-11s £50; under-6s £5. *Virtual attendance now available: £75, or £35 without WSFA membership (Hugo and site selection voting rights).* See glasgow2024.org for further details.

3-6 Oct 2024 • **Grimmfest** (film), Odeon Great Northern, Manchester. Full pass for all screenings £79.99 plus fees at grimmfest.com.

25-27 Oct 2024 • **Festival of Fantastic Films**, Pendulum Hotel, Manchester. £95 reg until 21 February; then £110. See fantastic-films.uk.

1-3 Nov 2024 • **Armadacon**, Future Inns, Plymouth. £45 reg; £35 concessions; single day £25. More at www.armadacon.org.

8-10 Nov 2024 • **Novacon 53**, Palace Hotel, Buxton. GoH Allen Stroud. £53 reg; under-16s £10, under-13s free. See novacon.uk.

Infinitely Improbable

The Rift Within the Hyperdrive. 'The fatal flaw of hard sci-fi is that it's not interesting to anyone except for fans of science fiction.' (Kusano Gengen, interview at teletype.in, 2019) [DS]

Awards. *Booker Prize*: the near-future Irish dystopia *Prophet Song* by Paul Lynch. • *Sir Arthur Clarke* (not the novel award), *Imagination in Service* to Society category: Nnedi Okorafor. [L] • *Polari Prize* (Irish LGBTQ+): *Our Wives Under the Sea* by Julia Armfield [L] • *Rotsler Award* for long-time achievement in fanzine art: James Shull. [F770]

Blurbismo. 'Time ran out swiftly and mankind was threatened by its ingenuity' (A.A. Glynn, *Plan for Conquest*, Badger Books, 1963) [JH]

As Others Commend Us. On including genre work in the school syllabus: 'Even a book like *Animal Farm* can teach the little ones to love and care for animals.' (Shilpa Shetty, *Times of India*, 28 November) [DW]

R.I.P. *Joss Ackland* (1928-2023), UK actor in *Watership Down* (1978), *Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey* (1991), *Hogfather* (2006) and *Prisoners of the Sun* (2013), died on 19 November aged 95. [LP] • *John Bailey* (1942-2023), US cinematographer and director of photography whose films include *Cat People* (1982), *Groundhog Day* (1993) and *Over Her Dead Body* (2008), died on 10 November aged 81. [SJ] • *Alan J.W. Bell* (1937-2023), director of the tv *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (1981), died on 19 October aged 85. [SF°C] • *Alexei Birger* (1960-2023), Russian author of supernatural mysteries such as *Po tu storonu volkov* (*On the Other Side of Wolves*, 1994), and translator of *Dracula* and the *Dune* series, died on 30 September. [AM] • *Michael Bishop* (1945-2023), noted and widely loved US author, active since 1970, who won Nebulas for 'The Quicken-ing' (1982) and *No Enemy But Time* (1983), died on 13 November – the day after his 78th birthday. He was one of the most distinctive humanist voices of sf, and a good man too; meeting him at OryCon long ago remains a happy memory. • *Robert Butler* (1927-2023), Emmy-winning director of the tv pilots for *Star Trek* (1966), *Batman* (1966) and *Lois & Clark* (1993), whose films included *The Computer Wore Tennis Shoes* (1969) and *Out of Time* (1998), died on 3 November aged 95. [AIP] • *A.S. Byatt* (Dame Antonia Susan Duffy, 1936-2023), noted UK author whose most overtly fantastical work is the folk/fairytale collection *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye* (1994), and who later won the Hans Christian Andersen award, died on 16 November aged 87. [JJ] • *Tyler Christopher* (1972-2023), US actor in *Raven* (2010), *Max Winslow and the House of Secrets* (2019), *Moon Crash* (2022), *Thor: God of Thunder* (2022) and others, died on 31 October aged 50. [SJ] • *D.G. Compton* (1930-2023), critically acclaimed UK author whose sf novels began with *The Quality of Mercy* (1965) and include *Farewell, Earth's Bliss* (1968), *Chronocules* (1970, with the splendid alternate title *Hot Wireless Sets, Aspirin Tablets, the Sandpaper Sides of Used Matchboxes, and Something that Might Have Been Castor Oil*) and *The Continuous Katherine Mortenhoe* (1974; filmed 1979), died on 10 November aged 93. He was honoured by SFWA as Author Emeritus in 2007 and received the 2021 Cordwainer Smith Rediscovery Award. • *William B. Ellern* (1933-2023), US engineer and author of stories set with permission in E.E. Smith's 'Lensman' universe, in particular *New Lensman* (serialized 1975 in *Perry Rhodan*; book version 1976 UK), died on 18 November aged 89. [SJ] • *Evan Ellingson* (1988-2023), US actor in *Time Changer* (2002), died on 5 November aged 35. [SHS] • *David Elliott* (1931-2023), UK director of Gerry and Sylvia Anderson's *Four Feather Falls* (1960), *Supercar* (1961-1962), *Fireball XL5* (1963), *Stingray* (1964-1965), *Thunderbirds* (1965-1966) and others, died on 10 November aged 92. [AIP] • *Peter S. Fischer* (1935-2023), US screenwriter and producer who scripted *The Last Child* (1971), died on 30 October aged 88. [SJ] • *Karl Fulves* (1938-2023), US author of books on magic and card tricks whose one sf title was *Aftermath: Stories From the Rigel War* (1976, also a gimmicked 'force book' for mentalist acts), died on 16 February aged 84. [BM] • *Andrey Galperin* (1974-2023), Crimean dolphin trainer and author whose first fantasy novel was *Lezviye vlasti* (*Blade of Power*, 2007), died on 7 November. [AM] • *Herbert Gold* (1924-2023), US mainstream author with occasional short fiction in *F&SF* and *Playboy* 1953-1973, died on 19 November aged 99. • *Gabe Hudson*

(1971-2023), US author whose genre novel was the YA *Gork, the Teenage Dragon* (2017), died – reportedly by suicide – on 24 November aged 52. [AIP] ● **Douglas Ibold** (1940-2023), US film editor for *The Capture of Bigfoot* (1979) and genre tv series including *Xena: Warrior Princess* (3 episodes 1995-1996), died on 8 November aged 83. [SHS] ● **Pat E. Johnson** (1939-2023), US stuntman/stunt coordinator whose genre credits include *The Ultimate Warrior* (1975), *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (1990 plus sequel), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1992), *Batman & Robin* (1997) and *Wild Wild West* (1999), died on 5 November. [AIP] ● **Marc Jones** (1946-2023), US visual effects artist and creator of *Robot Wars*, whose credits include *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980 plus sequel), *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981 plus sequels) and *Poltergeist* (1982), died on 24 November aged 77. [LP] ● **Roger Kastel** (c1931-2023), US artist known for the *Jaws* and *Empire Strikes Back* film posters plus various genre fiction covers, died on 8 November. [SJ] ● **Nina Katerli** (1934-2023), Russian author whose work includes fantasy/magic realism such as *Chervets* (Cochineal, 1992), *Skazaniye o Gromushkinykh* (*Saga of the Gromushkins*, 2006) with her daughter Yelena Efros, and *Kostilyov* (2014), died on 20 November. [AM] ● **Victor J. Kemper** (1927-2023), US cinematographer whose many genre credits include *The Reincarnation of Peter Proud* (1975), *Oh, God!* (1977), *Eyes of Laura Mars* (1978), *Magic* (1978) and *The Final Countdown* (1980), died on 27 November aged 96. [AIP] ● **Marty Krofft** (1937-2023), US puppeteer and producer who with his brother Sid created many genre tv series including *H.R. Pufnstuf* (1969-1970), *Land of the Lost* (1974-1976), segments of *The Krofft Supershow* (1976-1978) and others, died on 25 November aged 86. [LP] ● **Janet Landgard** (1947-2023), US actress in *Moonchild* (1972), died on 6 November aged 75. [SHS] ● **L. (Len) H. Maynard** (1953-2023), prolific UK horror author and anthologist active since 1979 in collaboration with M. (Mick) P.N. Sims – they also wrote together as *Maynard Sims* – died on 11 November aged 70. [MS] ● **Jan (James Albert) Needle** (1943-2023), UK children's author whose many books include *Wild Wood* (1981, a subversive retelling of *The Wind in the Willows*) and *Dracula* reworked for young readers, died on 9 October aged 80. [AIP] ● **Weston Ochse** (1965-2023), prolific US author of horror, sf and supernatural fiction whose debut novel was the Stoker-winning *Scarecrow Gods* (2005), died on 18 November aged 58. [F770] ● **Piotr 'Raku' Rak** (1962-2023), noted Polish fanzine editor, con-goer and club/award organizer who won special Eurocon awards in 1991 and 1993, died on 2 November aged 61. [JV] ● **Taraja Ramsess**, US stuntman in *Marvel's Avengers: Infinity War/Endgame* (2018/2019) and *Black Panther* (2018 plus sequel), died in a car crash on 31 October, aged 41. [F770] ● **Deborah Reed** (1950-2023), US actress in *Troll 2* (1990), died on 18 November aged 73. [LP] ● **Lolita Rodrigues** (1929-2023), Brazilian actress in 221 episodes of the Tarzan-like *Uga Uga* (2000-2001), died on 5 November aged 94. [SJ] ● **Nina Sadur** (1950-2023), Russian playwright who combined the theatre of the absurd with supernatural horror in *Pannochka* (1985, after Gogol's 'Viy'), *Devil in Love* (1987, after Jacques Cazotte) and others, died on 12 November. [AM] ● **Peter Spellos** (1954-2023), US actor in *Freddy's Dead* (1991), *Men in Black II* (2002), *Transformers: Car Robots* (2000) and others, died on 19 November aged 69. [AIP] ● **Frances Sternhagen** (1930-2023), Tony-winning US actress in *Outland* (1981), *Independence Day* (1983), *Communion* (1989), *The Mist* (2007) and genre tv series, died on 27 November aged 93. [AIP] ● **Kevin 'Geordie' Walker** (1958-2023), UK guitarist with the band *Killing Joke*, whose soundtrack credits include *Weird Science* (1985) and *The Covenant* (2006), died on 26 November aged 64. [LP] ● **Mike Wathen**, UK fan and essayist active in the British Fantasy Society from the 1980s, who with his then wife Di chaired the 1989 and 1990 Fantasycons, died on 16 November aged 75. [SJ] ● **Peter White** (1937-2023), US actor in *Flubber* (1997), *Armageddon* (1998) and genre tv series, died on 1 November aged 86. ● **Tim Woodward** (1953-2023), UK actor whose genre tv series credits include *Jekyll and Hyde* (2015), died on 9 November aged 70. [AIP]

As Others Saw Us. 'You may say you can't read this stuff without laughing, but hundreds of thousands of teen-agers can, as well as half a million adult illiterates who defend, with a kind of locker-room machismo, what Harlan Ellison pretends is a "revolution" in science fiction today.' (Peter S. Prescott on sf, *Newsweek*, 29 November 1971) [TW/BB]

Desperately Seeking C'Mell. The SiegedSec collective of self-styled 'gay furry hackers' has again been breaching cybersecurity, this time at the US Idaho National Laboratory nuclear reactor centre, and posting some of the stolen information. 'We're willing to make a deal with INL. If they research creating IRL [in real life] catgirls we will take down this post.' The news report demurely notes that creating cat-human female hybrids is not this lab's speciality. (*The Register*, 22 November)

Court Circular. Although Jerry Pournelle is no longer with us and the service-mark protection of 'Jerry Pournelle's Chaos Manor' (title of his

old *Byte* magazine column and later his blog) has reportedly expired, using that name for a Facebook fan group still leads to a stern takedown demand from the lawyers of the Estate of Roberta Pournelle. The group name was nervously changed to *XaosManor*. [F770]

The Dead Past. 20 Years Ago, 'Neal Stephenson received an approving thumbs-up from *Word* magazine (December 2003): "Neal Stephenson doesn't deal in science fiction – what he writes is fiction with science in it." (*Ansible* 197, December 2003) ● 60 Years Ago, there was a great sigh of fannish relief: 'Henry Stine promised on 8 Dec 63 before seven witnesses not to write a book he had planned to title *The Sex-Fiends of Oz*.' (*Starspinkle* 27, December 1963) ● 80 Years Ago, John W. Campbell reported a war casualty: 'I am afraid that *Unknown Worlds* is finished, certainly for the duration. The paper shortage has become so great that a comparatively inefficient user of paper like *Unknown* has been forced from the scene....' (*Fantasy Fiction Field* 152, 28 December 1943)

Fanfundery. *TransAtlantic Fan Fund*. Nominations are open for the eastbound race from North America to the 2024 Glasgow Worldcon, and close on 7 January; voting will close on 2 April. Full details for nominators and candidates can be found in the fund newsletter *Taffluorescence!* at taff.org.uk. [SB] ● **TAFF Ebooks.** Rob Hansen's *Beyond Fandom: Fans, Culture & Politics in the 20th Century*, telling the stories of sf fans who in various ways made their impact on the mundane world, is now available for free download at taff.org.uk/ebooks.php?x=BeyondFan. There's also a trade paperback edition – see link on the above page and in the list of books sold in aid of TAFF at ae.ansible.uk/?id=taff. Another newly added paperback there is *Graham Charnock's UK convention report anthology Running Amok in the Fun Factory*, one of the most popular TAFF ebooks.

Number Crunching. A timely comparison of Davids from the *Private Eye* statistics slot: '71% Public YouGov says expressed approval of David Tennant, who made a surprise return to *Doctor Who* this month / 18% Public YouGov says expressed approval of David Cameron, who made a surprise return to government this month.' (1 December)

Random Fandom. 2023 *Hugo Voting Statistics* are delayed by real-world complications; pressed to name the release date, administrator Dave McCarty crossly announced it as 19 January 2024, being 90 days after the Worldcon as laid down by the WSFS constitution. [CF] ● **Sandra Bond** will score a fannish first by releasing a segment of her TAFF report as part of a podcast, the upcoming *Octothorpe* #98. ● **World Fantasy Con 2025:** the move to the Brighton Metropole has led to concern about that hotel's notorious accessibility problems, especially for wheelchair users. See worried note and committee reply at *File 770*, 27 and 28 November.

Editorial. I was surprised to find one of my long-ago computer magazine articles (from 1987, referencing Fredric Brown's famous 1954 story 'Answer' cited in a Crooked Timber post irresistibly titled 'What OpenAI shares with Scientology'). Well worth a look despite the Langford taint: crookedtimber.org/2023/11/21/what-openai-shares-with-scientology. ● **SF Encyclopedia:** Autumn statistics include the revelation that John Clute's contributions are now over 3 million words of the current 6.9 million total. As a very late starter I have yet to notch up my first million....

Thog's Masterclass. *Eyeballs in the Sky.* 'Her troubled gray eyes touched Conan's face, then jerked away.' (Robert Jordan, *Conan the Magnificent*, 1984) [AR] ● *She Shoots, She Scores.* 'Up and down the line she galloped, scoring men with her tongue.' (*Ibid*) [AR] ● *Neat Tricks.* 'He's hit him above the shoulder but luckily didn't hit his neck or head.' (Alastair Eykun, TNT Sports commentary) [PE] ● *Translator on the Moon.* '... night so biting cold that a man's only protection was his specially designed double-ply Thermoslike space suit, which even in the Moon's thinner atmosphere weighed like holy hell.' (Stanislaw Lem, *Tales of Pirx the Pilot*, trans Louis Iribarne, 1979) [JV] ● *Adventures in the Asteroid Belt.* 'In the first place the little planet had no orbit. By some curious freak of gravity it remained practically stationary in space. Secondly, it had ceased to revolve.' 'The next planetoid on Borron's chart was, in his own language, named Stontum. They did not reach it. They never saw it. It was one of the larger bodies on the outer edge of the galaxy, the most distant from Mars, and the turning point from which the return journey would begin.' At this point our heroes are distracted by sudden 'blinding white light' from a nova and get stuck in 'a zone of atmosphere caused by the explosion'. (Captain W.E. Johns, *Now to the Stars* [i.e. the asteroids], 1956) ● *Mobile Features.* 'Yeats's lips were like worms crawling across his face.' (John Blackburn, *Nothing But the Night*, 1968) [BA]

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