

ansible



Ansible® 440 March 2024

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: Ulrika O'Brien. Available for SAE, or the latest IKEA manual for assembling a parapattern.

The Worm That Flies

Susan Cooper has been named as SFWA's fortieth Damon Knight Grand Master for life achievement. (SFWA email, 7 February)

China Miéville's coming novel collaboration with Keanu Reeves provoked a comment deemed worthy of Pseud's Corner in *Private Eye* (16 February): 'Put it this way: remember when Eleanor of Portugal married Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III, and they weren't an obvious fit, but created an empire that held the throne continuously for the next 400 years? It's that order of magnitude. Reeves and Miéville will wear the Weird Novel crown, conceivably forever.' (Zoe Williams, *The Guardian*)

Samantha Mills feels that the 2023 Hugos are so compromised by recent revelations (see 'Random Fandom' below) that she can no longer claim to be a winner for 'Rabbit Test' as best short story, and has deleted this win from her online biography. (Samtasticbooks.com, 17 February) Adrian Tchaikovsky made the same decision about his announced win for 'Children of Time' as best series. (adriantchaikovsky.com, 21 February)

Jo Fletcher is suffering the traditional fate of departed founding editors: Quercus has mass-emailed past and present Jo Fletcher Books authors with the 'exciting news' that JFB is being rebranded this month – or rather, absorbed into the parent company's existing imprint Arcadia.

Conky

7-9 Mar • **Frightfest** (film), Glasgow Film Theatre. Tickets £83; individual films £11.80 or £9.50 concessions. See frightfest.co.uk/tickets.

7 Mar • **SF by Gaslight** (performance), Birmingham. 6:30-8:40pm. £10 (students £5) plus booking fee. Tickets at tinyurl.com/5n8fm4b8.

8-10 Mar • **MinamiCon** (anime), Novotel Hotel, Southampton. £75 reg. Further details at www.minamicon.org.uk.

9-10 Mar • **Dublin Comic Con**, Convention Centre, Dublin. Various ticket prices (extra for early entry, etc.) at dublincomiccon.com.

14-17 Mar • **Camp SFW**, Vauxhall Holiday Park, Great Yarmouth. Weekend pass £130; more options at www.scifiweekender.com.

16 Mar • **Gollanczfest 2024**, Leonardo Royal London, St Paul's, London. 9:30am-6pm. £63; concessions £42. See www.gollancz.co.uk/news/2023/10/06/gollanczfest-2024/.

23 Mar • **Darkness in the Fields** (folk horror film festival), QUAD, Derby. £30 reg. See www.derbyquad.co.uk/events/darknessinthefields/.

23 Mar • **Picocon 41**, Blackett Lecture Theatre 1, Imperial College, London. £5 for ICSF members, £8 for non-members, and (mysteriously) £10 for alumni. See picocon41.carrd.co for further information.

24 Mar • **Paperback & Pulp Book Fair**, Holiday Inn Bloomsbury, Coram St, London WC1N 1HT. 9:30am-3pm. £3 admission. Combined with the Bloomsbury Ephemera Fair: see etcfairs.com/ephemera-fairs/.

29 Mar - 1 Apr • **Levitation** (Eastercon), Telford International Centre. £140 reg; £60 concessions; £35 supporting/virtual only; day £35 Friday or Monday, £50 Saturday or Sunday. See eastercon2024.co.uk. *The Dealers' Room and Art Show are both fully booked.* (Email, 26 February)

30-31 Mar • **Compulsion** (games), The Pleasance, Edinburgh, EH8 9TJ. Tickets £20 or £10 each day. See compulsion.org.

6 Apr • **Bedford Who Charity Con** (*Doctor Who*), King's House, Amptill Road, Bedford, MK42 9AZ. 10am-5:30pm. Tickets £49.50; under-14s £20. See bedfordwhocharitycon.co.uk.

31 May - 2 Jun • **FunCon One**, Palace Hotel, Buxton. £65 reg, rising to £70 after Eastercon; £40 concessions. See funcon.lol.

7 Jul • **Aintree Comic Con**, Aintree Racecourse. 10am-4pm. Adult tickets £11; other rates at www.ljeventsentertainment.com.

8-12 Aug • **Glasgow 2024** (Worldcon) Glasgow SEC. *New rates:* £230 reg; first Worldcon £165; Scots residents £150; under-26s £135 or £95 Scots; under-16s £90; under-11s £55; under-6s £5. Virtual £80; £40 without WSFA membership (Hugo/site voting). See glasgow2024.org. *Hugo nominations are still open but close for good on 9 March.*

29 Aug - 2 Sep • **Oxonmoot** (Tolkien Society), St Anne's, Oxford. £120 reg. See www.tolkienociety.org/events/oxonmoot-2024/.

28 Sep • **Innsmouth Literary Festival**, Kings House Centre, 245 Amptill Rd, Bedford MK42 9AZ. GoH Charles Stross. 10am-5pm. More

details awaited at innsmouthgold.com/innsmouth-literary-festival.

25-27 Oct • **Festival of Fantastic Films**, Pendulum Hotel, Manchester. *Registration now £110.* See fantastic-films.uk for day rates.

26-27 Oct • **BristolCon**, Hilton DoubleTree Hotel, Bristol. GoH Peter F. Hamilton, Joanne Harris. £60 reg; £45 under-18s, concessions, disabled; under-14s free; £20 supp. Day rates at www.bristolcon.org.

16-17 Nov • **Thought Bubble Comic Convention**, Harrogate Convention Centre, as part of comics festival. £33 weekend; £24/day; under-12s, over-65s and carers free. See thoughtbubblefestival.com.

7-9 Feb 2025 • **Contabile 35** (filk), 'central UK' venue and membership rates to be announced at www.contabile.org.uk/c35/.

7-10 Feb 2025 • **Scotiacon** (furry), Crowne Plaza Hotel, Glasgow. 'Magical Mayhem' theme. More awaited at www.scotiacon.org.uk.

Rumblings Seattle Worldcon 2025: the 'January' price rise is still delayed for technical reasons. See seattlein2025.org. • **Worldcon 2026:** the Los Angeles bid at lain2026.org is unopposed; too late for any rival bid now. • **Worldcon 2027:** Montréal, Canada, at bid.montreal2027.ca (2-6 September) is challenging the Tel Aviv bid at worldcon.sf-f.org.il.

Infinitely Improbable

As We Do Our Own Thing. What fan could not be inspired to cosplay glory by the news headline 'I made my *Star Wars* Chewbacca suit from 45 bags of hair extensions'? (BBC Scotland, 17 February)

Awards. BAFTA animated film: *The Boy and the Heron*. • SFPA Grand Master (poetry) F.J. Bergmann. [F770] • *Skylark*: belated 2023 presentation to John Scalzi; 2024, Ellen Kushner and Delia Sherman.

As Others Promote Us. Once again, journalists are amazed by the wholly new concept of fantasy novels that appeal to women: a *Guardian* (2 February) article on the 'romantasy' marketing category quotes various pundits enthusing about the staggering innovations. 'The genre's appeal may also be down to its "bold heroines" and "strong yet nuanced female characters"', says Kathleen Farrar at Bloomsbury. "These stories have attracted huge numbers of female readers who may previously not have felt particularly welcome or catered for in the fantasy market." [JDN]

R.I.P. Alev Alath (1944-2024), Turkish author of the 'Schrödinger's Cat' sf diptych – *Kabus* (1999) and *Rüya* (2000) – died on 2 February. [AM] • Alan Brownjohn (1931-2024), UK author and poet whose sf novels were *The Way You Tell Them* (1990) and *Enjoyment* (2016), died on 23 February aged 92. [JC] • Carlos Buiza (1940-2024), Spanish sf author and editor most active 1965-1972, whose first collection was *Un mundo sin luz* (*A World Without Light*, 1967), died on 27 January aged 83. [MVG] • Tamás Deák (1928-2024) Hungarian composer who scored the animated sf series *A Mézga család különös kalandjai* (*Strange Adventures of the Mézga Family*, 1969/1973/1978), died on 12 February. [AM] • Charles Dierkop (1936-2024), US actor in *Invisible Dad* (1998), *Superguy: Behind the Cape* (2000), *Reverse Heaven* (2018) and genre tv series, died on 25 February aged 87. [LP] • Peter Fagan (1956-2024), Australian fan and Worldcon-goer active in the Nova Mob and Melbourne and Canberra SF Clubs, died on 15 January aged 67. [MM] • Greg Finley (1947-2024), US actor known for voice work in the US *Robotech* (1985 and spinoffs), *Star-chaser: The Legend of Orin* (1985) and others, died on 1 February aged 76. [AIP] • Ramona Fradon (1926-2024), US comics artist who worked on DC's 1959 *Aquaman* reboot, co-created the DC character Metamorpho and entered the Will Eisner Hall of Fame in 2006, died on 24 February aged 97; she had retired in January. [PDF/O] • Chris Gauthier (1976-2024), UK-born Canadian actor in *Freddy vs. Jason* (2003), *Watchmen* (2009) and genre tv series including *A Town Called Eureka* (2006-2012) and *Once Upon a Time* (2011-2018), died on 23 February aged 48. [AIP] • Mark Gustafson (1959-2024), US writer, director and animator with credits for *Claymation Easter* (1992), *Fantastic Mr Fox* (2009) and *Pinocchio* (2022), died on 1 February aged 64. [AIP] • Michael Jayston (1935-2024), UK actor in *Doctor Who* (The Valeyard in "Trial of a Time Lord", 1986), *Highlander III* (1994) and *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1997), died on 5 February aged 88. [MY] • Richard Lewis (1947-2024), US comedian and actor in *Robin Hood: Men in Tights* (1993), *The Maze* (1997), *Vamps* (2012) and genre tv series, died on 27 February aged 76. [LP] • Jackie

Loughery (1930-2024), US beauty queen and actress in *Abbott and Costello Go to Mars* (1953) and *Son of Sinbad* (1955), died on 23 February aged 93. [LP] ● **Richard Mathews** (1944-2024), US publisher (University of Tampa Press) and critic whose books include *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination* (1997) and studies of Aldiss, Anthony Burgess, William Morris and Tolkien, died on 3 January aged 79. [DAA] ● **Steve Miller** (1950-2024), US author of the popular 'Liaden Universe' space operas (1988-present) with his long-time wife and writing partner Sharon Lee, died on 20 February aged 73. [SL] Condolences to Sharon Lee. ● **Kenneth Mitchell** (1974-2024), Canadian actor in *Jericho* (2006-2008), *Frequency* (2016-2017), *Star Trek: Discovery* (2017-2021) and *Captain Marvel* (2019), died on 24 February aged 49. [F770] ● **Don Murray** (1929-2024), US actor in *Conquest of the Planet of the Apes* (1972), *Radioactive Dreams* (1984), *Peggy Sue Got Married* (1986), *Twin Peaks* (2017) and others, died on 2 February aged 94. [LP] ● **Paul Neary** (1949-2024), UK comics artist, writer and editor who worked for Warren, *2000 AD*, Marvel (both UK and US, on titles including *The Ultimates*) and DC, died on 10 February aged 74. [POM] ● **Mojo Nixon** (1957-2024), US musician and actor in *Super Mario Bros* (1993) and *A Four Course Meal* (2005), with music credits for *Astro Loco* (2021), died on 7 February aged 66. [LP] ● **William O'Connell** (1929-2024), US actor in *The Haunted* (1991) and several genre tv series including *Star Trek* (1967), died on 15 January aged 94. [AIP] ● **John Powell**, UK BBC producer responsible for the first full radio version of *The Hobbit* in 1968, died in February aged 92. [AIP] ● **Christopher Priest** (1943-2024), UK author of great distinction whose works appeared from 1966 to 2023 and include the hauntingly memorable 'Dream Archipelago' sequence, died on 2 February aged 80. Among his honours are BSFA Awards for *Inverted World* (1974) and others, Ditmars for *The Space Machine* (1976) and *The Affirmation* (1981), the World Fantasy Award and the non-genre James Tait Black Memorial Prize for *The Prestige* (1995, memorably filmed 2006), the Arthur C. Clarke Award for *The Separation* (2002) and a shared John W. Campbell Memorial Award for *The Islanders* (2011). *The Book on the Edge of Forever* (1994), his unsparing analysis of what went wrong with *The Last Dangerous Visions*, was a 1995 Hugo finalist. On a personal note, Chris was my friend for over 50 years, my partner in software and publishing ventures, my literary agent, and an ever-entertaining correspondent. I miss him very much. All sympathy to his widow Nina Allan, and to his twin children from an earlier marriage to Leigh Kennedy. ● **Romero** (Enrique Badía Romero, 1930-2024), Spanish comics artist who drew *Modesty Blaise* 1970-1978 and contributed to *2000 AD* and *Judge Dredd Magazine*, died on 15 February aged 93. [SJ] ● **Pamela Salem** (1944-2024), UK actress in *Never Say Never Again* (1983) and genre tv series including *Doctor Who* (1977-1988) and *Into the Labyrinth* (1981-1982), died on 21 February aged 80. [AIP] ● **John Savident** (1938-2024), UK *Coronation Street* actor whose credits include *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), *The Mystery of the Disappearing Schoolgirls* (1980) and *Hudson Hawk* (1991), died on 21 February aged 86. [AVM] ● **Brian Stableford** (1948-2024), hugely prolific UK author, critic and translator active since the mid-1960s, whose first sf novel was *Cradle of the Sun* (1969), died on 24 February aged 75. [KS] His numerous series included the 1972-1975 'Hooded Swan' space operas; he wrote many entries for the *SF Encyclopedia* (1979, 1993) and received the Eaton Award for his nonfiction *Scientific Romance in Britain: 1890-1950* (1985), plus the 1999 Pilgrim career award for sf studies; *The Empire of Fear* (1988) notably reworked the vampire myth in rationalized scientific-romance terms; more recently he translated huge amounts of French sf and proto-sf not previously available in English. I'm sad to lose an old friend and sometime collaborator – e.g. on *The Third Millennium: A History of the World AD 2000-3000* (1985), where Brian was very much the senior partner. My sympathy to his family. ● **Matt Sweeney** (1948-2024), Oscar-winning US special effects artist whose films include *The Lost Boys* (1987), *Arachnophobia* (1990), *Galaxy Quest* (1999) and *The Time Machine* (2002), died on 19 February aged 75. [AIP] ● **Ira von Fürstenberg** (1940-2024), Italian actress in *Matchless* (1967), died on 18 February aged 83. [SJ] ● **Carl Weathers** (1948-2024), US actor in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977), *Predator* (1987), *The Mandalorian* (2019-2023), *Toy Story 4* (2019) and others, died on 1 February aged 76. [LP] ● **Dan Wilcox** (1941-2024), US tv producer and screenwriter who wrote 30 episodes of *Sesame Street* (1969-1990), died on 14 February aged 82.

Willy's Chocolate Experience, a February 'chocolate factory' event for children (cashing in without apparent permission on Roald Dahl's book and films), was miserably set in a grim Glasgow warehouse with a few hangings, and props like plastic mushrooms. Kids expecting a chocolate fountain were rationed to one jelly bean and a quarter-cup of lemonade. An actor playing Willy Wonka found that 'The script was 15 pages of AI-generated gibberish' and was told: 'You're spending too much time with

the kids, we need to get them through as quickly as possible.' Riot loomed and police were called in. The inept organizer Billy Coull refunded many £35 tickets; actors reportedly went unpaid. (*Independent*, 29 February)

The Dead Past. 30 Years Ago: 'Cecelia Holland has finally read William James's "Sunfall" trilogy, noted here last year as bearing a Curious Resemblance to her 1969 historical novel *Until the Sun Falls*. Ms Holland seems to agree, in an incandescent letter which we may publish after she's taken legal advice. Latest rumour: devotees of her mediaeval novels *The Earl* (in UK, *A Hammer for Princes*) and *Great Maria* may also find happy memories in the pages of "Sunfall".' (*Ansible* 80, March 1994) ● **50 Years Ago**, a new but short-lived UK newszine launched: 'The appalling NEL tax-write-off *Science Fiction Monthly* has begun to wreak its effect on fandom. Following a notice in the first issue [...] the February Globe meeting was overrun with a peculiar mixture of drunken cretins and sf freaks (who were not disappointed as John Brunner showed up from the Depths of Devon to prove to them science fiction writers really are other than human after all)'. (Greg Pickersgill, *Grim News* 1, March 1974)

Random Fandom. *Chris M. Barkley and Jason Sanford* published the lengthy and depressing 'The 2023 Hugo Awards: A Report on Censorship and Exclusion' on 14 February. See file770.com/the-2023-hugo-awards-a-report-on-censorship-and-exclusion/. [F770] Leaked emails suggest that Hugo administrator Dave McCarty and his North American team were less concerned with voters' preferences than with avoiding even hypothetical offence to PRC/CCP authorities. Political dossiers on Hugo nominees were sloppily assembled: it was a black mark against fan writer Paul Wiemer that he had allegedly visited Tibet (in fact Nepal, but these mountainous places are all much the same), while an actual visit to Tibet by novel winner T. Kingfisher (Ursula Vernon) was somehow not a problem. *Babel* by the outspoken R.F. Kuang was removed from the novel finalists even though its Chinese publisher evidently had no such qualms. It also appears that ballots following recommendations in the huge-circulation Chinese *Science Fiction World* were disqualified en masse as slate votes – just imagine doing that for titles on the *Locus* Recommended Reading List – implying that an untampered count would have seen the fiction categories dominated by Chinese work. *The Plain People of Fandom: Wasn't it repeatedly stated during the Puppy debacle that Hugo administrators can't just dump perceived 'slate' ballots like that? Myself: Some administrators may consider themselves more equal than others.* ● *Glasgow 2024* announced the resignation of its Hugo admin Kat Jones, who now regrets helping to research those dubious dossiers. (Email, 15 February)

Small Press. Kate Macdonald's Handheld Press, champion of forgotten works, will publish its last book in July. See handheldpress.co.uk.

Fanfundery. *Get Up and Over Fan Fund (GUFF):* nominations are open for the 2024 northbound race from Oceania to the Glasgow Worldcon, closing on 23 March. Nominators and candidate platforms required as usual. Contact [guffeurope\[at\]gmail\[dot\]com](mailto:guffeurope[at]gmail[dot]com) or see ozfanfunds.com/?page_id=6. ● *TransAtlantic Fan Fund:* voting in the 2024 race ends on 2 April. See taff.org.uk. ● *European Fan Fund:* voting in the 2024 race ends on 1 April. See latest posts at fandomover.com/category/eff/. ● *TAFF Benefit Books.* Rob Hansen has greatly expanded his 2019 *Challenging Moskowitz: 1930s Fandom Revisited* to 71,000 words. The new ebook, along with the first paperback edition, should appear in April or May.

Yo-Ho-Ho. Online fan fiction set in commercial franchises often gets a free pass despite technical illegality, because it's not offered for sale. Alas, cowboy entrepreneurs are now printing and selling physical copies, to the horror of authors who didn't expect to be paid (and aren't) but fear their hobby will be shut down by corporate lawyers. (Xitter, *passim*)

Thog's Masterclass. *Olfactory Logic.* 'He could smell the sea on the breeze. Things always smelled better when one was up high. Perhaps that was because heads smelled better than feet did.' (Brandon Sanderson channelling Robert Jordan, *A Memory of Light*, 2013) [AR] ● *The Gourmet Male Gaze.* 'Mat thought eating a meal these days was like going to a dance where there were only ugly girls.' (*Ibid*) [AR] ● *True Romance Dept.* 'Her principal weapon of seduction is a mento-activated brassiere, a device she can snap open by sending a thought command from her brain-implanted mento transmitter to a sensor in the bra.' (Brian Herbert, *The Garbage Chronicles*, 1985) [FM] ● *Banned in Florida, Ineligible for the Hugo in China.* 'Sufficient is to tell that in New York one night, reading over what is perhaps the most sensational of my books – *The Poppies and Primulas of Southern Tibet ...*' (A. Merritt, *The Metal Monster*, 1946)

Ansible © 440 © David Langford, 2024. Thanks to Douglas A. Anderson, John Clute, *File 770*, Paul Di Filippo, C.C. Finlay, Steve Jones, Sharon Lee, Pádraig Ó Méalóid, Murray McLachlan, Farah Mendlesohn, Andrey Meshovkin, James D. Nicoll, Omega, Lawrence Person, Andrew I. Porter, Adam Roberts, Steven H Silver, Katy Stableford, Mariano Villarreal Gonzalez, Andrew Wells, Mark Young and as always our Hero Distributors: Durdles Books (Birmingham SF Group), SCIS/Prophecy and Alan Stewart (Australia). 1 March 2024