

# ansible



## Ansible 311 June 2013

From **David Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU, UK. Web [news.ansible.co.uk](http://news.ansible.co.uk). ISSN 0265-9816 (print); 1740-942X (e). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Brad W. Foster**. Available for SAE, Lenlu Om, or a Sheffth with a Zug-gun.

**Editorial.** In mid-May the *SF Encyclopedia* launched a 'Picture Gallery' of (mostly) sf book cover images—well over 3000 so far, all linked to relevant entries in the *SFE*'s 4.1 million words of text. See the pretty pictures at <http://sf-encyclopedia.co.uk/gallery.php> ...

### A Diet of Thistles

**Iain Banks** reports a faint hope that chemotherapy may after all be possible for him. His main message: 'I want to say thank you to all of you for your messages, your memories, your wit, your sympathy and your kind, supportive thoughts.' ([friends.banksophilia.com](http://friends.banksophilia.com), 20 May)

**Neil Gaiman's** *Doctor Who* episode 'A Nightmare in Silver' (11 May) includes a dialogue homage to Ursula Le Guin, or perhaps Orson Scott Card.... About nine minutes in, a character is heard to say: 'It can't be broken—it's a solid state ansible-class communicator!' [NG]

**Graham Joyce** wrote: 'I've been diagnosed with lymphoma cancer and have begun a course of chemotherapy, which does knock you about a bit. So if I've not answered messages, enquiries and all the rest, please understand why. Anyway I'm upbeat: I'm surrounded by family and good friends so I'm not in a bad place and hope, like everyone in this situation, to win through. We'll see!' (Facebook, 12 May) [JS]

**Jay Lake** posted on his blog that his cancer has been diagnosed as terminal. Depending on the effectiveness of further chemotherapy, 'I will most likely die within nine to twenty-four months from now [...] I will never again be out of treatment or free of cancer.' (8 May)

**David R. Morgan**, UK teacher and poet, received much free but unwelcome publicity when it emerged that huge swathes of his poetry had been lifted from others. Fellow-poet Ira Lightman said: 'When an American poet spotted his own poem under David R Morgan's name on a website that blogs new work, he contacted its editor, and its editor contacted me. Within around one hour, I'd found a dozen more. Everything online by David R Morgan that I could find since Jan 2011 I could trace 90% of to another person's poem.' (*Guardian*, 22 May) Morgan declares himself 'truly sorry', so that's all right then. The *Guardian* seemed unaware of reports that he has also targeted many sf/fantasy authors, copying passages from stories and recasting them slightly in poem form. Several *Strange Horizons* contributors are affected: this online magazine's editors have contacted known victims (and would like to hear from any others who have suffered), are checking the legal position and expect to make a public announcement before long. [NH]

**J.K. Rowling's** hand-annotated and illustrated first edition of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* sold for £150,000. (BBC) [MPJ]

**Matt Smith** is to leave *Doctor Who* at the end of the year. (BBC)

### Con

1 Jun - 7 Oct • **Space: Fact and Fiction** (exhibition), Peterborough Museum. Free 'except on special event days'. With some *Doctor Who* 50th anniversary links. Details at <http://tinyurl.com/kdsfb36>.

15 Jun • **Futura**, Light House, Wolverhampton. 11am-late. £25 reg. Contact [alexdavisevents@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:alexdavisevents@hotmail.co.uk); <http://tinyurl.com/ctakzsa>.

26 Jun • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Argyle, Leather Lane, London. 5/6pm for 7pm. With Catherynne M. Valente. Free; all welcome.

29 Jun - 1 Jul • **Swords, Sorcery, Sandals and Space** (SF Foundation conference), Foresight Centre, U of Liverpool. £150 inc meals, Sat banquet; £100 unwaged/student; day £50 (£40), no banquet. Book by 6pm on 17 June: <http://gridowl.com/conf/2/register/>.

13 Jul • **Edge-Lit 2**, QUAD Centre, Derby. 11am-midnight. Tickets £25. See [www.derbyquad.co.uk/film/edge-lit-2](http://www.derbyquad.co.uk/film/edge-lit-2).

29 Aug - 2 Sep • **LoneStarCon 3** (71st Worldcon), San Antonio, Texas. \$220 reg; YA/military \$110; child \$75; family \$520; \$60 supp. Day rates announced: \$50 Thur; \$75 Fri, Sat, Sun; \$30 Mon (YA/military \$30/\$40/\$20; child \$15/\$25/\$10). See [www.LoneStarCon3.org](http://www.LoneStarCon3.org).

18-20 Oct • **Lakes International Comic Art Festival**, Kendal, Cumbria. 42 guests to date. Free exhibitions; day events £7; evening (7pm and after) £9; Comics Clock Tower venue £3.50/day; weekend and day passes offer savings. See [www.comicartfestival.com](http://www.comicartfestival.com).

### Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See Us.** An author introspects in a radio play: 'I write fantasy, so it's only usually teenage Japanese boys who recognize me.' (Ann Cleeves, *White Nights*, dramatized on Radio 4 Extra) [BT]

**Awards.** BAFTAs for TV: audience award, *Game of Thrones*. [MPJ] • *Compton Crook* (first genre novel): Myke Cole, *Shadow Ops: Control Point*. • FAAns (fanzine activity). Letterhack: Robert Lichtman. Fan writer: Andy Hooper. Single issue: *Trap Door* 29. Personalzine: *A Meara for Observers*. Genzine: *Chunga*. Cover: Dan Steffan, *Banana Wings* 50. #1 Fan Face: Andy Hooper. Website: [efanzines.com](http://efanzines.com). Fan Artist: Dan Steffan. • *Nebulas*: NOVEL Kim Stanley Robinson, *2312*. NOVELLA Nancy Kress, *After the Fall, Before the Fall, During the Fall*. Novelette Andy Duncan, 'Close Encounters' (*The Pottawatomie Giant & Other Stories*). SHORT Alette de Bodard, 'Immersion' (*Clarkesworld* 6/12). DRAMATIC *Beasts of the Southern Wild*. ANDRE NORTON (YA) E.C. Myers, *Fair Coin*. GRAND MASTER Gene Wolfe. SOLSTICE Carl Sagan, Ginjer Buchanan. • *Peabody* (US), for media achievement: *Doctor Who*. [DKMK] • *US National Magazine Award*: Stephen King and *Harper's Magazine* for King's 'Batman and Robin Have an Altercation' (9/12 *Harper's*).

**Thog's Science Masterclass.** An obituary for the co-inventor of the scanning tunnelling microscope reveals that those old valves and CRTs were cleverer than we knew: 'The invention is dependent on a quantum-mechanical phenomenon known as tunnelling, so called because the electrons pass through a supposedly impenetrable barrier, such as a vacuum.' (Martin Childs, *Independent*, 1 June) • *Units Dept.* 'The required latitude ran on parallel forty-seven degrees, forty-five feet, he maintained.' (Christopher Landon, *Unseen Enemy*, 1957) [AB]

**R.I.P.** *Dan Adkins* (1937-2013), US comics artist and penciller/inker who among other roles was art director at Marvel (where he drew 132 covers and worked on *Dr Strange*) and illustrated sf publications including *Amazing*, *Amra*, *Fantastic*, *Galaxy*, *If*, *Infinity* and *Xero*, died on 8 May; he was 76. [RB] • *Bryan Forbes* (1926-2013), UK film director best known for *The Stepford Wives* (1975), died on 8 May aged 86. [MPJ] As an actor he appeared in the sf *Satellite in the Sky* (1956). • *Jesús Franco* (1930-2013), Spanish director of countless trashy exploitation films such as *Drácula contra Frankenstein* (1972) and *Vampyros Lesbos* (1971), died on 2 April aged 82. His capsule view of cinema: 'Blood! Tits! Fantastic!' [MPJ] • *Mike Gray* (1935-2013), US writer and filmmaker who wrote the original script for *The China Syndrome* (1979)—which won him a Writers Guild of America award—died on 30 April aged 77. [PDF] He was also the producer for episodes of *Starman* (1986-1987) and *Star Trek: TNG* (1988-1989). • *Andrew M. Greeley* (1928-2013), US Catholic priest, sociologist and author of many books, several of them sf and science-fantasy—titles include *God Game* (1986) and *Angel Fire* (1988)—died on 29 May; he was 85. [MMW] • *Ray Harryhausen* (1920-2013), US film producer, director and special-effects wizard who created many unforgettable fantasy scenes with stop-motion animation, died on 7 May; he was 92. Notable film credits ranged from *Mighty Joe Young* (1949) and *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* (1958) to *Clash of the Titans* (1981). He was a highly popular GoH at the 1987 UK Worldcon (where I was thrilled to have lunch with him). Simon R. Green adds some memories in the Letters section below. • *Deborah J. Miller*, UK author and principal founder of the David Gemmell Awards for fantasy, died from cancer on 6 May. Her novels include *Swarmthief's Dance* (2005) and, as by Miller Lau, the Last Clansman trilogy opening with *Talisker* (2001). Stan Nicholls writes: 'Deborah faced her illness with courage and good humour. Her fiction and the Gemmell Awards will stand as permanent memorials to an exceptional person, an indomitable spirit and a good friend.' • *Howard Rosenblum* (1948-2013), UK fan involved with the Tolkien Society since 1969 and publisher of the 1968-1977 fanzine *SONF (Son of New Futurian)*, died on 26 May; he was 65 and had recently been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. [CB/AW] • *Robert (Rob) Turner* (1944-2013), UK expert on the occult and translator of classic occult texts, died on 15 April aged 69.

He made a large contribution to that non-fact volume *The Necronomicon* (1978) edited by George Hay (Colin Wilson and I were the other main authors) and its sequel *The R'lyeh Text*. It was fun working with him.

- **Jack Vance** (1916-2013), US author who was deservedly one of the revered Great Old Ones of sf, died on 26 May at the ripe age of 96. His long career began with 'The World-Thinker' (*Thrilling Wonder Stories* 1945); *The Dying Earth* (1950) presented a haunting and hugely influential far-future milieu where the distinction between science and magic is long forgotten; *Big Planet* (1952) is a paradigm of what the *SF Encyclopedia* calls Planetary Romance; fascination with anthropological and sociological aspects of sf gave a special illumination to space-operatic revenge drama in the 1964-1981 Demon Princes quintet, and to coming-of-age rebellion in *The Blue World* (1966), *Emphyrio* (1969) and *The Anome* (1973). Vance's ironic prose and lovingly colourful choice of words remained highly effective in such later, longer series as the Lyonesse (fantasy) and Cadwal (sf) trilogies that appeared from 1983 to 1992; *Night Lamp* (1996) is a late sf work of considerable power. Shorter fiction won him two Hugos and a Nebula; a third Hugo went to his 2009 autobiography *This is Me, Jack Vance!* For life achievement Vance received the World Fantasy Award in 1984, the SFWA Grand Master Award in 1997, and SF Hall of Fame induction in 2001. Few sf authors have had a British Library volume devoted to them: *Jack Vance: Critical Appreciations and a Bibliography* ed. A.E. Cunningham (to which I was proud to contribute). Jack Vance had a good long run, but we still wish it had been longer.
- **Daoma Winston** (1922-2013), prolific US author of Gothic romances and horror thrillers—often with supernatural elements, as in *The Vampire Curse* (1971)—died on 1 April; she was 90. [PDF]
- **Aubrey Woods** (1928-2013), UK actor whose genre credits include *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (1971), *The Abominable Dr. Phibes* (1971), *Doctor Who* 'Day of the Daleks' (1972) and *Blake's 7* (1979), died on 7 May; he was 85. [SR]
- **Jerry Wright**, founder and publisher of the long-running ezine *Bewildering Stories* (since 2002), reportedly died in May; he was in his mid-60s. [PDF]

**Cultural Cringe Redux.** When is *Star Trek* not *Star Trek*? When it's *Star Trek Into Darkness*: "The sequel is not simply called *Star Trek 2*, in part because, despite its vast cultural reach, the *Star Trek* brand has negative connotations: kitschy sets, hokey dialogue, William Shatner. "What J J Abrams has done with the franchise," says Alex Billington, founder of the film blog *FirstShowing.net*, "is to make it more cool on a mainstream level, so that you don't have to be nerdy to love *Star Trek*. He wants everyone to be as excited about it as the nerdy fans are." [...] Paramount's president of international distribution Anthony Marcoly told *The Hollywood Reporter*: "We've tried to get away from the Trekkiness of it all." (*Independent*, 6 May) [MPJ]

- Equally uncool is the prospect of strong AI. From an article on neurologist Henry Markram: 'In hype-driven contexts (such as his 2009 TED talk), Markram has hinted at the possibility that a sim embodied in a robot might become conscious. Hardwired with Markham's model and given sufficient experience of the world, the machine could actually start thinking (a la Skynet and HAL 9000). While that has gained him a following among sci-fi enthusiasts, he separates such speculations from the hard task of doing real science.' (Jonathon Keats, *Wired*, June) [MMW]

**Outraged Letters.** *Ramsey Campbell* on James Herbert (see A310): 'I was told that he said he thought he had a cold when he went to bed that night. In the morning he didn't wake up.' ● *Simon R. Green* remembers his ninth-birthday cinema treat: 'We went to see *First Men in the Moon!* And I loved it. I absolutely loved it. It was everything I wanted in a film, even if I didn't know it. And while I also enjoyed what sf television there was at the time, everything from *Fireball XL5* to *Doctor Who*, there was something about this film, with its spectacle, and colour, and Big Thoughts, that made it special. Nigel Kneale worked on the script, Ray Harryhausen worked on the Dynamation, and it all just looked so good.... / I can still watch the film now. All right, the opening scenes in the countryside drag, but once we're on the Moon, the film just picks you up by the scruff of the neck and doesn't let go. Sense of wonder. Big time. / I saw more Harryhausen films later, on television. I really liked *Jason and the Argonauts*, and the *Sinbad* films.... But *First Men in the Moon* was what woke me up and told me what I wanted. What I needed. And made me want to write things that would have that kind of effect on other people. / I never got to meet the man. Like so many of my heroes; I never got to tell him how much his work meant to me. But he really did change my life.' ● *Jim Steel*: 'Cancer seems to have declared war on the speculative fiction genre. It's turning out to be a rotten year.' Yes indeed.

**As Others Are Surprised To See Us.** 'According to National Public Radio pop-culture contributor Glen Weldon, "Every Free Comic Book Day, people walk into shops prepared for dank nerd-pits smelling of must and Funyuns, only to find smart, friendly people like themselves.'" ('Comic Riffs' blogger Michael Cavna, *washingtonpost.com*, 3 May; 'Funyuns are onion-ring shaped snacks.') [MMW]

**Mythopoeic Award Shortlist.** ADULT Alan Garner, *Weirdstone* trilogy (*The Weirdstone of Brisingamen*, *The Moon of Gomrath*, *Boneland*; I wonder how other nominees feel about having to compete with 1960s classics as well as the new book); Caitlin R. Kiernan, *The Drowning Girl*; R.A. MacAvoy, *Death and Resurrection*; Tim Powers, *Hide Me Among the Graves*; Ursula Vernon, *Digger* vols 1-6. ● CHILDREN'S Jorge Aguirre and Rafael Rosado, *Giants Beware!*; Sarah Beth Durst, *Vessel*; Merrie Haskell, *The Princess Curse*; Christopher Healy, *The Hero's Guide to Saving Your Kingdom*; Sherwood Smith, *The Spy Princess*. ● SCHOLARSHIP: INKLINGS Robert Boenig, *C.S. Lewis and the Middle Ages*; John Bremer, *C.S. Lewis, Poetry, and the Great War 1914-1918*; Jason Fisher, ed., *Tolkien and the Study of His Sources: Critical Essays*; Verlyn Flieger, *Green Suns and Faërie: Essays on J.R.R. Tolkien*; Corey Olsen, *Exploring J.R.R. Tolkien's The Hobbit*. ● SCHOLARSHIP: OTHER Nancy Marie Brown, *Song of the Vikings: Snorri and the Making of Norse Myths*; Jo Eldridge Carney, *Fairy Tale Queens: Representations of Early Modern Queenship*; Bonnie Gaarden, *The Christian Goddess: Archetype and Theology in the Fantasies of George MacDonald*; Michael Saler, *As If: Modern Enchantment and the Literary Prehistory of Virtual Reality*; David Sandner, *Critical Discourses of the Fantastic, 1712-1831*. ● See the May links at *news.ansible.co.uk* for other not-so-short shortlists: Campbell Memorial (12 titles), Sturgeon (12), *Locus Awards* (20 in the four novel categories alone).

**As Others Judge Us.** Natalie Haynes, in the traditional article on the terrible privations of Booker Prize judges, doesn't mind the *right sort* of sf: 'There's very little future fiction, which I hope is still the term used to describe things set in the future but without aliens/spaceships.' (*Independent*, 22 May) [JS] Talking squid in outer space need not apply.

**Random Fandom.** *Forrest J Ackerman* is communicating from beyond the grave, according to a silly-season story in *The Huffington Post* (17 May). [AIP] Rather than the expected dreadful puns and neologisms, he allegedly caused a *mysterious and inexplicable blot* on a sheet of paper. Scary stuff. ● *Michelle Rosenblum* would like to hear from fans wanting to attend Howard Rosenblum's funeral, at 1.40pm on 10 June at Worthing Crematorium, Sussex. Contact *eowyn* at *uwclub dot net*.

**The Dead Past.** *90 Years Ago*, the *New York World* asked pundits about the world 100 years hence. Film director D.W. Griffith predicted no TV: 'I do not foresee the possibility of instantaneous transmission of living action to the screen within 100 years. There must be a medium upon which the dramatic coherence can be worked out, and the perfected result set firmly, before the screen will be permitted to occupy the public's attention. In the instantaneous transmission, there would be entirely too much waste of the public's time, and that is the most important thing—time.' (*Columbia Journalism Review*, May) [MMW]

**C.o.A.** *Vicki Rosenzweig*, 10495 NE 4th Street, Apt. N-411, Bellevue, WA 98004, USA.

**Racist Cricket!** Among the arguments in the new US academic pot-boiler *Doctor Who and Race* is this clincher from Amit Gupta: '[Peter Davison] portrayed the amateur English cricketer of the late 19th Century when the game was characterised by both racial and class distinctions. / Cricket also had a role in maintaining the status of British imperialism through the exercise of soft power as it was successfully inculcated by the colonial elites. Davison's cricketing Doctor once again saw the BBC using *Who* to promote a racial and class nostalgia that had already outlived its validity.' (*Mail Online*, 28 May) [MPJ]

**Fanfundery.** *DUFF 2013*: a final reminder that the current voting deadline is 10 June. Ballot form at *taff.org.uk/ballots/duff2013.pdf*.

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Neat Tricks*. 'Rick was sitting disconsolately, his hands thrust into his pockets, his jaw propped on one fist.' (Jack McDevitt, *Moonfall*, 1998) [JA] ● *Eyeballs in the Sky*. 'She still didn't see the hot eyes melting and running all over her.' (Whit Harrison [Harry Whittington], *Any Woman He Wanted*, 1961) [PB] ● *More Haste Less Speed Dept*. 'It was a whirlwind courtship that ended in marriage at St. Malachy's three years later.' (Frank Kane, *The Living End*, 1957) [AB]

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