



Ansible® 435 October 2023

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, dead bards, lonely tapeworms or love-lorn truffles.

The Stuffed Owl

Michael Chabon has joined the authors suing Meta, Bloomberg and others for using a database ('Books3') of 'more than 191,000' – some say 187,000 – pirated books to train their generative AI systems. (*Atlantic*, 25 September) • There's a Books3 author name search at full-stack-search-prod.vercel.app/ – though Neil Clarke warns '... you may still be in there even if your name doesn't turn up any results. / Pirates are not known for their data entry skills. Aside from typos, they may only list some of the [anthology] contributors or editor(s).' (Facebook, 26 September) Thus there are no hits for 'David Langford', but searching for 'Mike Ashley' or 'David G. Hartwell' shows several of their anthologies containing my stories. • See also US Authors Guild comments at authorsguild.org/news/you-just-found-out-your-book-was-used-to-train-ai-now-what/.

Grady Hendrix, learned author of *Paperbacks from Hell*, revealed on the Barnes & Noble website that 'Horror didn't exist as a literary genre before 1967 when *Rosemary's Baby* hit the bestseller lists and became a hit movie.' (Barnesandnoble.com, 19 September) [TM]

Alan Moore has a good word for Thog the Liberator in his BBC Maestro storytelling course. 'As a prospective writer, I would urge you to not only read good books. Read terrible books as well, because they can be more inspiring than the good books [...]. If you are inspired by a good book, there's always the danger of plagiarism, of doing something that is too much like that good book. Whereas, a genuinely helpful reaction to a piece of work that you're reading is, "Jesus Christ, I could write this sh*t!" That is immensely liberating ...' (Upworthy.com, 9 September)

Bill Willingham declared that after years of frustrating disputes with DC Comics over his *Fables* sequence – about fairytale/folklore characters living in the real world – he was allowing the *Fables* IP to enter the public domain, so others can make free use of the setting. DC was quick to announce that, contrariwise, they own all rights to absolutely everything and, what's more, have many highly paid lawyers. (*Lavie Tidhar*: 'Let me be the first comics writer to release a whole bunch of public domain characters back into the public domain.' – Xtwitter, 23 September)

Concha

Until 1 Nov • **London Month of the Dead** events, various venues. Speakers include Kim Newman. See londonmonthofthedead.com.

6-8 Oct • **Grimmfest** (film), Odeon Great Northern, Manchester. Full pass for all screenings and events £79.50 plus fees at grimmfest.com.

7-8 Oct • **Nevermore** (Gothic), online. £15 weekend or £10/day. See www.thefolklorepodcast.com/store/c9/Forthcoming_events.html.

7-8 Oct • **Octocon**, Gibson Hotel, Dublin. €60 reg; concessions €40; YA or supp €20. Registration open at octocon.com.

18-22 Oct • **Worldcon 2023**, Chengdu, China. \$70 reg (first Worldcon \$50) plus \$50 WSFS voting rights. See en.chengduworldcon.com.

19-22 Oct • **Celluloid Screams** (horror films), Showroom Cinema, Sheffield. Full pass £105 or day rates at www.celluloidscreams.com.

20-22 Oct • **Festival of Fantastic Films**, Pendulum Hotel, Manchester. £110 reg. For day rates see 'Book Tickets' at fantastic-films.uk.

20-23 Oct • **Irish Discworld Convention**, Cork International Hotel, Cork. €75 reg; €55 concessions; under-17s €20. See idwcon.org.

21 Oct • **BristolCon**, Hilton DoubleTree Hotel, Bristol. £40 reg; £25 under-18s, concessions, disabled; under-14s free; £15 supp. *The Dealers' Room is full – no more bookings accepted.* More at www.bristolcon.org.

21-22 Oct • **Film & Comic Con Cardiff**, International Arena, Cardiff. Weekend £16; £32 for early entry. See filmandcomicconcardiff.com.

21-22 Oct • **Final Fantasy Festival**, ExCel, London. Weekend tickets £159.99. See fanfest2.finalfantasyxiv.com/2023-24/eu/.

21 Oct • **October Country** (Ray Bradbury), QUAD, Derby. Noon-8pm. £30 reg. Details at www.derbyquad.co.uk/events/octobercountry.

21-22 Oct • **Surrey Steampunk Convivial**, Stoneleigh, Epsom. See bumpandthumper.wixsite.com/steampunkconvivial.

26-31 Oct • **Edinburgh Horror Festival**, Banshee Labyrinth and other city venues. Event tickets from edinburghhorrorfestival.co.uk.

27 Oct - 25 Feb 2024 • **Fantasy: Realms of Imagination**

(exhibition), British Library, London. £16; under-12s free; other discounts vary with weekdays, school terms, etc. See www.bl.uk/events/fantasy.

27-28 Oct • **Frightfest** (film), Cineworld, Leicester Square, London. Tickets on sale from 1 October at frightfest.co.uk/tickets.html.

29 Oct • **Hallocon**, Leasowe Castle Hotel, Wirral. 11am-5pm. £9; under-16s £7; under-10s £5. See www.ljeventsentertainment.com.

3-4 Nov • **16th Starfleet/Klingon Banquet**, Peterborough Marriott Hotel. £68 reg; more at www.starbase24.co.uk/Banquet.html.

3-5 Nov • **Armadacon 2023**, Future Inns, Plymouth. £40 reg; £35 concessions; single day £25/£20. More at www.armadacon.org.

26 Nov • **Tolkien Society Seminar** on Tolkien and religion, free online. See www.tolkienesociety.org/events.

9 Jun 2024 • **Seek-Locate-Celebrate** (*Blake's 7*; formerly Forever Avon), Steventon Village Hall, Steventon, Oxford, OX13 5RR. 10am-4pm. See www.facebook.com/TeamBlakeForeverAvon.

8-12 Aug 2024 • **Glasgow 2024** (Worldcon) Glasgow SEC. £190 reg; concessions £140; YA (under 26) £120; under-16s £80; under-11s £50; under-6s £5; other rates at glasgow2024.org. *A price rise of 'on average' 10% will take effect on 1 October – £210 reg expected.*

31 Aug 2024 • **Whooverville 15** (*Doctor Who*), QUAD Centre, Derby. Tickets £55; concessions £38; under-12s £10; registration open at www.derbyquad.co.uk/events/whooverville15/.

Infinitely Improbable

The Weakest Link. Invited to complete a Labour of Hercules when given an anagram of one of its words, the team brilliantly came up with 'steal the glider of Hippolyta'. (BBC, *Pointless*, September) [POM] • **Bradley Walsh**: 'The planet Jupiter is made up mainly of helium and what other element?' *Contestant*: 'Stones.' (ITV, *The Chase*, 14 September) [RJ]

Timebinding: Ever Since Colossus. 'And you have been able to scroll through Word (or WordPerfect or WordStar or plain text) documents for as long as computers have existed, even if few would call such an experience reading.' (*The Atlantic*, 14 September) [GD]

Awards. *Bard Fiction Prize: Brother Alive* by Zain Khalid. [L] • **Booker Prize**: shortlist includes the genre title *Prophet Song* by Paul Lynch. [F770]

• **British Fantasy**: HOLDSTOCK (fantasy novel) *The Spear Cuts Through Water* by Simon Jimenez. DERLETH (horror novel) *Just Like Home* by Sarah Gailey. NOVELLA *The Queen of the High Fields* by Rhiannon A. Grist. SHORT 'Morta' by James Bennett (*The Book of Queer Saints*). COLLECTION *Under the Moon* by E.M. Faulds. MAGAZINE *Interzone*. AUDIO *The Stranger Times*. INDEPENDENT PRESS Luna Press Publishing. ARTIST Vince Haig. ANTHOLOGY *Someone in Time*, ed. Jonathan Strahan. NON-FICTION *An Earnest Blackness* by Eugen Bacon. BOUNDS (newcomer) Hiron Ennes for *Leech*. • **Dwarf Stars** (SFPA very short poem): tie. 'Believe the Graves' (*Deadlands* 16) by Rasha Abdulhadi; 'In Perpetuity' (7/22 *Analog*) by Bruce Boston. • **Elgin** (SFPA poetry): BOOK *The Last Robot* by Jane Yolen. CHAPBOOK *Some Disassembly Required* by David C. Kopaska-Merkel. • **Eugie Foster Memorial** (short): 'Quandary Aminu vs The Butterfly Man' (Tor.com) by Rich Larson. [F770] • **Reuben** (US National Cartoonists Society), online comics category, long form: Phil Foglio of fannish and *Girl Genius* fame. [F770]

Fashion Department: Comfort Wear. 'Author Ned Beaman rarely dresses in anything other than Rick Owens, whose interests in "Cronenbergian" body mutations and Brutalism mirror his own.' (*Financial Times*, 'The Art of Fashion' supplement, 22 August) [PE]

R.I.P. **Allan Asherman** (1947-2023), author of *The Star Trek Compendium* (1981) and other nonfiction books about the series, died on 22 September aged 76. • **Helena Binns** (1941-2023), Australian fan and artist active in the Melbourne SF Club since 1958, official photographer for the 1975 Australian Worldcon, and widow of Merv Binns (1934-2020), died on 18 September aged 82. [BB/BG] • **Jean Boht** (1932-2023), UK *Jackanory* narrator and actress in *The Cloning of Joanna May* (1992) and *Jim's Gift* (1996), died on 12 September aged 91. [SHS] • **Jimmy Buffett** (1946-2023), US musician and actor seen in *Congo* (1995) and *Jurassic World* (2015), whose soundtrack credits include *Arachnophobia* (1990), *Contact* (1997) and *Angry Birds 2* (2019), died on 1 September aged 76. [LP] • **John Cairney** (1930-2023), UK actor and *Jackanory*

narrator seen in *Target Luna* (1960), *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963), *Spaceflight IC-1* (1965) and *Nightmare Man* (1999), died on 6 September aged 93. ● **Dick Curtis** (1928-2023), US actor in *The Day It Came to Earth* (1977), *Motel Hell* (1980) and *What Waits Below* (1984), died on 16 September aged 95. [SJ] ● **Marcia de Rouse**, US actress in *True Blood* (2009-2014) and *The Disappointments Room* (2016), died on 2 September aged 70. [AIP] ● **Sandra Dorsey** (1939-2023), US actress in *Gordy* (1994) and *Frankenstein* (2004), died on 26 September aged 83. [SHS] ● **Martin Ellis**, 2nd unit/assistant director whose credits include *Curse of Chucky* (2013), *The Flash* (2016-2017) and *The Power* (2023), died on 22 August. [AIP] ● **Bernie Evans**, UK fanzine, APA and con-running fan who chaired Novacon in 1987 and 1990 and received the 1995 Doc Weir award, died on 27 September. Another old fan friend gone. ● **Sir Michael Gambon** (1940-2023), multiple BAFTA-winning Irish actor who played Dumbledore in six Harry Potter films, died on 28 September aged 82. Other genre credits include *The Wind in the Willows* (1985), *Sky Captain and The World of Tomorrow* (2004), *Fantastic Mr Fox* (2009) and *The Book of Eli* (2010). ● **Rose Gregorio** (1925-2023), US actress in *Eyes of Laura Mars* (1978), died on 17 August aged 97. [LP] ● **Vyacheslav Grishchkin** (1962-2023), Russian actor in the children's sf film *Asiris nuna* (2006) died on 15 September aged 61. [AM] ● **Edward Hume** (1936-2023), US screenwriter best known for *The Day After* (1983), died on 13 September aged 87. [AIP] ● **Gayle Hunnicutt** (1943-2023), US actress in *The Legend of Hell House* (1973), *The Martian Chronicles* (1980) and *Hard to Be a God* (1989), died on 31 August aged 80. [AIP] ● **Nathan Louis Jackson** (1978-2023), US playwright and screenwriter who co-produced and wrote episodes of *Luke Cage* (2016-1018), died on 22 August aged 44. [AIP] ● **Pete Kozachik** (1951-2023), US cinematographer and visual effects artist whose films include *Innerspace* (1987), *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993), *Starship Troopers* (1997), *SW: Attack of the Clones* (2002), *Corpse Bride* (2005) and *Coraline* (2009), died on 12 September aged 72. [AIP] ● **Lisa Lyon** (1953-2023), US bodybuilder and actress in *Vamp* (1986), died on 8 September aged 70. [AIP] ● **Aleksandr Khvan** (1957-2023), Russian director and actor in the fantasy film *Serdtshe permy* (*Land of Legends*, 2022), died on 17 September aged 65. [AM] ● **David McCallum** (1933-2023), UK actor whose many genre credits include *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* (1964-1968), *The Invisible Man* (1975-1976), *Sapphire and Steel* (1979-1982) and several animated Batman series (voicing Alfred), died on 25 September aged 90. ● **Michael McGrath** (1957-2023), US actor in *Spamalot* (2005 Broadway musical), *The Secret of Kells* (2009) and *Wolfwalkers* (2022), died on 14 September aged 65. [CH] ● **Bill Malley** (1934-2023), US art director/production designer whose films include *The Exorcist* (1973) and *The Fury* (1978), died on 1 September aged 88. [SHS] ● **Eddie Marks** (1947-2023), US costume designer for *Buckaroo Banzai* (1984), *Cocoon* (1985), *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989) and others, died on 11 September aged 86. [SHS] ● **Gherman Mazurin** (1932-2023), Russian artist who illustrated children's fantasies including a many times reprinted edition of Lazar Lagin's classic *Old Khottabych* (1938), died on 19 September. [AM] ● **Brent Monahan** (1948-2023), US supernatural horror author whose first novel was *Deathbite* (1979; filmed as *Spasms*, 1983) with Michael Maryk, died on 31 August aged 75. [GVG] ● **Beth Porter** (1942-2023), US-born UK actress with voice roles in *Dick Deadeye* (1975) and *The Lion, the Witch & the Wardrobe* (1979), died on 1 August aged 81. [AIP] ● **Buichi Terasawa** (1955-2023), Japanese manga and anime creator whose credits include *Space Adventure Cobra* (1982 plus spinoffs) and *Karasu tengu Kabuto* (1992), died on 8 September aged 68. [LP] ● **Ira M. Thornhill** (1953-2023), US fan and publisher who co-founded Corroboree Press, publishing R.A. Lafferty and others from 1982 to 1986, died on 25 July aged 69. [L] ● **Michael D. Toman** (1949-2023), US librarian and author who published a number of sf stories from 1974 to 1991, was found dead at home on 2 September; he was 73. [TM]

As Others Avoid Us. 'Just heard Sebastian Faulks on *Start the Week* explaining why his dead-centre science fiction novel which uses a well worn SF trope is not, in fact, science fiction. Hilarious!' (MD Lachlan, Facebook, 18 September). Or as a kindly reviewer put it: 'Now, for his 16th novel, he's thrown a curveball, and turned to the future, and to science fiction. / Well, not quite sci-fi, which still conjures up images of spaceships and Captain Kirk asking of Scotty whether he can "beam me up". Instead, *The Seventh Son* is more speculative fiction, concerning a likely tomorrow so close you can almost reach out and touch it.' (Nick Duerden, inews.co.uk, 7 September – with reservations about 'a sex scene so unexpected, and so very wrong, that it will curl the toes of all but the most insensate of readers.'). [KM]

Inflation. A Lyon & Turnbull auction offered an early US edition of Jules Verne (est. price £300-£500) with a somewhat exaggerated sense of its scope: *Seventy Thousand Leagues Under the Seas*. [BV]

Our Man on Luna. 'A Russian spacecraft Russia [sic] has crashed into the Moon after it ran into "unspecified trouble", Russia's space agency has said. [...] Are you at the scene? Did you see what happened? If so, email webnews@trinitymirror.com.' (*Daily Mirror* online, August) [PE]

'Cultural Appropriation.' Scots MP Chris Law is very annoyed by 'Created in London' posters featuring the animated *Dennis & Gnasher*, based on the *Beano* 'Dennis the Menace' strip launched in 1951 by D.C. Thomson of Dundee. (Downthetubes.net, 27 September) Owing to the identically titled US strip, the UK Dennis is sadly no longer a Menace.

Random Fandom. *Cora Buhlert*: 'It's a fact that 30% of all habitable planets in the Universe look like British Columbia, 30% look like Vasquez Rocks and 30% like a quarry in Wales.' (Xitter, 25 September) ● **WSFS Hugo Awards Marketing Committee:** buried in the September/October report is this sign of the times. 'Due to changes at the company formerly known as Twitter, we are discontinuing updating the @TheHugoAwards Twitter and will redirect people to the BlueSky account.'

The Dead Past. *40 Years Ago*, a Japanese con publication printed many 'messages of support' from UK/US authors. J.G. Ballard rose to the occasion: 'That great feat of arms, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941, must now be repeated in the realm of the imagination – let the SF writers of Japan set out across the skies of the human psyche, each carrying a piece of that explosive future which will torpedo the battleships of complacency and inertia!' (*Ansible* 35, October 1983) ● *50 Years Ago*, Robert Bloch remarked: 'We have just five major divisions in science fiction: Neo-fans – big name fans – hacks – pros – and J.G. Ballard.' (Worldcon GoH speech, 1973) ● *70 Years Ago*, George O. Smith told an almost plausible Origin Story: 'L. Ron Hubbard happened to hook an electric eel. Inside the eel he found an IBM typewriter with a sheet of paper in it, and typed on that sheet of paper were the first four sentences of *Dianetics*.' (*Psychotic* 4, October 1953, ed. Richard E. Geis)

Magazine Scene. *Cossmass Infinities* is no longer buying stories and will cease at the end of 2023 when the existing stock has been published. 'The website will remain.' (www.cossmass.com, 6 September) [L] ● *Interzone* 295, dated September 2023, did indeed reach me in September.

Fanzundery. *TAFF Books:* our latest from Rob Hansen is *Generation Femizine*, on women in early UK fandom and the 1950s fanzine *Femizine* that became their rallying point. But there was a lurking hoaxer in the 'all-woman' team.... Free ebook plus simultaneous trade paperback with all proceeds to TAFF. Read more at taff.org.uk/ebooks.php?x=GenFez. ● *GUFF:* The 2020 winner Alison Scott's long-delayed tour of Australia and New Zealand has begun! Excitement runs high: 'This is the third day of my trip and I haven't done anything yet.' (Facebook, 28 September)

Ripoff Alert. The US dealer Fifth Generation Books is selling Rob Hansen's TAFF-benefit paperback *Bixelstrasse: The SF Fan Community of 1940s Los Angeles* on the Walmart website for \$43.50 (allegedly discounted from the wholly made-up figure of \$50.50), presumably filling orders by buying copies at \$22.50 from the official Ansible Editions/Lulu sales page (linked from ae.ansible.uk/?t=bixel). They reproduce the AE blurb in full, including the assurance IN CAPITAL LETTERS that all proceeds will go to TAFF, but somehow one has one's doubts. [RH]

Thog's Masterclass. *Eyeballs in the Sky.* 'Her wide eyes paraded around every curve of his jaw and the edges of his cheekbones.' (Dwain Worrell, *Androne*, 2023) [FM] ● *Cover-Up Dept.* 'The sky was a careless silvery gray, like an expensive whore's mink coat covering bizarre garb or nakedness.' (Fritz Leiber, 'Midnight by the Morphy Watch', 1974) [BA] ● *Dept of Kryptonian Anatomy.* "How soon can you get him here?" "How soon do a wrangled beast's testicles go up into its cervix?" (David Kob, *Krypton* season 1 episode 8, 'Savage Night', May 2018) [BA] ● *Hazards of Very Small Asteroids.* 'Gravity was so slight that the slightest movement would cause a man, practically weightless, to bounce about and break his bones.' (Captain W.E. Johns, *Return to Mars*, 1955) ● *Dept of Planetology.* 'Toby sniffed. "There's carbon dioxide here," he murmured.' (*Ibid*) ● *Speedy Spaceflight with Solar Cells.* '... the [journey] time would be short. Their ships, he said casually, were operated by a power drawn from light, which was the fastest thing known.' (*Ibid*) ● *Blunt Instrument.* 'The parting in his short grey hair was almost unnaturally straight and his narrow toothbrush moustache looked as though he trimmed it using a slide-rule.' (J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, 2000) [BA] ● *Coal-Fired Dept.* 'Her taut skin glowed with the light rising from the furnace of her ovaries ...' (Viet Thanh Nguyen, *The Committed*, 2021)

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