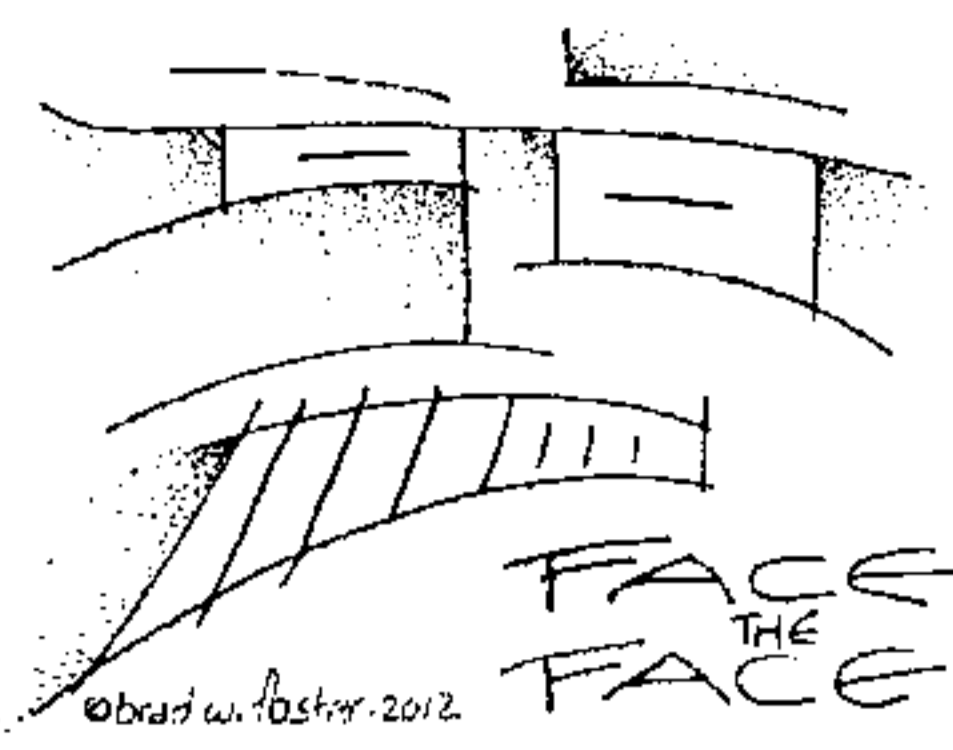


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ANSIBLE 295 FEBRUARY 2012

From David Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU, UK. Web news.ansible.co.uk. ISSN 0265-9816 (print); 1740-942X (e). Logo: Dan Steffan. Cartoon: Brad W. Foster. Available for SAE or the latest model of Outlandish Watch.

Eyeball in the Sky. More excitement I could have lived without: worries about a growing shadow in my right eye led to urgent retinal surgery on 20 January. This was successful, but things will be blurry for a while yet and *Ansible* may have (even) more typos than usual.

So Bright the Vision

Laurie Anderson, US performance artist, tries to predict the future: 'I think we probably won't be making things of the nature that we have now. I think we'll just be trying to appreciate things more. Maybe we'll develop better ears. I mean, our hearing's crappy. We'll have huge ears and we'll be able to tune in to Mars, or we'll have a hundred lenses which we can use to look onto the surface of Mars with our so-called "bore eyes," or look through our hands. We'll be able to be present more effectively.' (*The Believer*, January) [MMW] Take that, H.G. Wells!

Russell T. Davies generalizes wildly: 'Magic and science fiction are never combined.' (*Guardian*, 28 January) [TP]

Carrie Fisher carries on. *New Yorker*: 'You occasionally sign autographs at *Star Wars* conventions. Are you contractually obligated to wear the cinnamon buns?' *Fisher*: 'There's a level of whoring that even I won't do. But those autograph shows are celebrity prostitution because they give you cash. We work all our lives but never actually see the money we make. But this is like being a drug lord. Don't talk too much about this, because the tax people will come.' (6 January) [MMW]

Richard Garriot aka Lord British, videogame developer and 2008 space tourist (at a reported cost of \$30m), shot an eight-minute movie called *Apogee of Fear* on the International Space Station—the first sf film made in space—which for unclear reasons NASA wouldn't allow him to release. [DKMK] Following many January news reports of the ban, a NASA spokesman indicated a rethink: 'NASA is working with Richard Garriott to facilitate the video's release. [...] We hope to resolve the remaining issues expeditiously ...' (*Wired*, 19 January) One imagines a high-level NASA committee holding out for some less ominous title, such as *Apogee of Strong Arguments for Increased Agency Funding*.

Connie Willis has been named as the 2011 recipient of the SFWA Damon Knight Grand Master award for life achievement. [L]

Confitent

2-5 Feb • **SFX Weekender 3**, Prestatyn Sands, Holiday Park, North Wales. Charged by accommodation, from £250 for 2 (£545 for 5) 'basic' up to £400 for 2 'VIP'. Online booking (with £6 booking fee) at www.sfxweekender.com. Contact & children's bookings: 08700 110034.

3-5 Feb • **Duple Time** (filk), Ramada Grantham Hotel. £40 reg; £27 unwaged; under-18s £1/year; under-6 free. Cheques: UK Filk Con, c/o Flat 1, 61 Marks Rd, Salisbury, SP1 3AY.

9 Feb • **Open Day** for MA in Creative Writing (SF & Fantasy), Middlesex U, Hendon campus. Enquiries 020 8411 5555 (option 1).

18 Feb • **Picocon 29**, Imperial College Union, London. 10am-7/8pm. £10 reg at door; £8 concessions; £5 ICSF members; past GoHs free. Contact ICSF, Beit Quad, Prince Consort Road, London, SW7 2BB.

22 Feb • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Melton Mowbray (*new venue*), 18 Holborn, London, EC1N 2LE. 6pm for 7pm. With Liz Williams.

24-26 Feb • **Satellite 3**, Grand Central Hotel, Glasgow. GoH Charles Stross. *Now £50 reg*; same at the door; advance booking closes mid-month. Contact Satellite 3, PO Box 3738, Glasgow, G41 4YD.

25-26 Feb • **Microcon 32**, University of Exeter, Streatham Campus. 10am Sat, Devonshire House JCR; Sun in Cornwall House, Various speakers. £12 reg at door, students £10, EUSFS members £8.

2 Mar • **British Fantasy Society Open Night**, The Mug House, London Bridge, London, SE1 2PF. 5/6pm for 7:30pm. All welcome.

3-4 Mar • **P-Con IX**, Irish Writers' Centre, Parnell Square, Dublin 1. €20 reg: payment via PayPal only. See www.pcon.ie.

28 Mar - 27 May • **'It's Life Jimmy, but Not As We Know It'**: SF in Scotland (exhibition), National Library of Scotland, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh, EH1 1EW. Free. 10am-8pm; to 5pm Sat; 2-5pm Sun.

29 Mar - 1 Apr • **Dead by Dawn** (horror film festival), Filmhouse,

Edinburgh. £70. Box office 0131 228 2688; www.deadbydawn.co.uk.

6-9 Apr • **Olympus 2012** (Eastercon), Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow, London. £65 reg, £55 unwaged. £20 supp/under-17s, £5 under-12s, £1 under-5s. Contact 4 Evesham Green, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP19 9RX, or enquiries at olympus2012.org.

18-20 May • **Waltz on the Wye** (steampunk), Chepstow. £40 including ball, £25 without, £10 day. 3% booking fee at wyewaltz.org.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. TV presenter Fern Britton, having opined that 'I think *Doctor Who* is the most dreary thing,' added: 'I tried to watch *Star Wars* three times but I've never got past the first 12 minutes as I've always fallen asleep. / I hate sci-fi as it's not real and all these people who are fans think it's real and it's some sort of religion to them.' (BBC2 Room 101, 20 January; previewed in *The Sun*, 17 January) [JS]

Award Shortlists. BSFA: NOVEL Kim Lakin-Smith, *Cyber Circus*; China Miéville, *Embassytown*; Christopher Priest, *The Islanders*; Adam Roberts, *By Light Alone*; Lavie Tidhar, *Osama*. SHORT Nina Allan, 'The Silver Wind' (*Interzone* 233); Paul Cornell, 'The Copenhagen Interpretation' (*Asimov's* 7/11); Kameron Hurley, 'Afterbirth' (author's website); China Miéville, 'Covehithe' (*Guardian*); Al Robertson, 'Of Dawn' (*IZ235*). NONFICTION Mike Ashley, *Out of This World: Science Fiction but Not as We Know it*; John Clute, Peter Nicholls & David Langford, eds., *The SF Encyclopedia, Third Edition* (website); Abigail Nussbaum, review of *Arslan* by M.J. Engh (Asking the Wrong Questions blog); Ian Sales, ed., *SF Mistressworks* (website); Jared Shurin & Anne Perry, ed., *Pornokitsch* (website); Graham Sleight, Tony Keen & Simon Bradshaw, eds., *The Unsilent Library: Essays on the Russell T. Davies Era of the New Doctor Who*. ART Dominic Harman, cover of Ian Whates, *The Noise Revealed*; Jim Kay, cover/illustrations of Patrick Ness, *A Monster Calls*; Pedro Marques, cover of Lavie Tidhar, *Osama*; Anne Sudworth, cover of Liz Williams, *A Glass of Shadow*. • Philip K. Dick: Jean Johnson, *A Soldier's Duty*; Maureen F. McHugh, *After the Apocalypse*; Mira Grant, *Deadline*; Robert Jackson Bennett, *The Company Man*; Matthew Hughes, *The Other*; Drew Magary, *The Postmortal*; Simon Morden, *The Samuil Petrovich Trilogy*. [GVG] • Kitschies (novel category): Jesse Bullington, *The Enterprise of Death*; China Miéville, *Embassytown*; Patrick Ness & Siobhan Dowd, *A Monster Calls*; Jane Rogers, *The Testament of Jessie Lamb*; Lavie Tidhar, *Osama*.

The Weakest Link. *Host*: 'Which writer's birthday is commemorated on Pooh Day?' *Contestant*: 'Shakespeare.' (ITV, *The Chase*) [PI]

R.I.P. Robert E. Briney (1933-2011), one of the founding partners of the important sf small press Advent: Publishers, died in November. He was valued for commentary on multiple genres including mysteries and sf. [EK] • John Celardo (1918-2012), US comics veteran who drew and later wrote the *Tarzan* newspaper strip 1954-1967, died on 6 January aged 93. [PDF] • James Farentino (1938-2012), US actor who co-starred in *The Final Countdown* (1980), died on 24 January aged 73. [PDF] • Carlo Fruttero (1926-2012), Italian sf author—mostly in collaboration with Franco Lucentini, with whom he also edited the sf magazine *Urania* 1964-1985—died on 15 January. [SHS] • Mark Hall (1936-2011), who with Brian Cosgrove founded the animation studio Cosgrove Hall, died on 17 November; he was 75. Popular CH productions included *Danger Mouse* (1981-1992), *The Wind in the Willows* (1983; Bafta winner), *Count Duckula* (1988-1993), Roald Dahl's *The BFG* (1989) and three Terry Pratchett novel adaptations. [MPJ] • Reginald Hill (1936-2012), popular UK author of the Dalziel and Pascoe detective series—of which *One Small Step* (1990) is sf set on the Moon—died on 12 January aged 75. As Dick Morland he wrote the sf dystopias *Heart Clock* (1973) and *Albion! Albion!* (1974). [JC] • Bob Holness (1928-2012), South African-born radio/tv presenter and quiz host who in 1956 became the second actor to play James Bond (in a radio version of *Moonraker*), died on 6 January aged 83. [GD] • Howard Hopkins (1961-2012), US author of graphic novels and the 'Chloe Files' urban fantasy/horror series, died from a heart attack on 12 January; he

was 50. [PS] • *Phyllis MacLennan* (1920-2012), author of several short sf stories 1963-1980 and the novel *Turned Loose on Irdra* (1970), died on 8 January aged 91. [SHS] • *Lister Matheson* (1948-2012), Scots-born academic at Michigan State University who was a former director of the Clarion East sf workshop, died on 19 January aged 63. [SFS] • *Martin Sherwood* (1942-2011), UK author of the sf novels *Survival* (1975) and *Maxwell's Demon* (1976), died on 10 May 2011 aged 69. [DPB] • *Arne Sjögren* (1940-2012), Swedish fan, critic and short-story author with several sales in the 1960s, died on 7 January; he was 71. [J-HH] • *Dick Tufeld* (1926-2012), US voice actor who voiced the *Lost in Space* robot ('Danger, Will Robinson! Danger!'), died on 22 January at age 85. He was also heard in *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* and *The Time Tunnel*. [BB] • *Alice E. 'Badger' Washburn*, US fan, convention-goer and filker active in the Boston area, died from acute respiratory distress syndrome on 26 December. [PT] • *Nicol Williamson* (1936-2012), distinguished Scots stage and screen actor whose best-known genre role was Merlin in the 1981 *Excalibur*, died on 16 December aged 75. Other relevant film credits include *Return to Oz* (1985), *The Exorcist III* (1990), *The Wind in the Willows* (1996) and *Spawn* (1997). [PDF]

Stranger than Fact. In a poll of 1000 people carried out by the *Encyclopedia Britannica* to investigate scientific misconceptions, 16% believed the discoverer of radioactivity was Dr Emmett Brown of the *Back To The Future* films. (*Telegraph*, 6 January) [MPJ] This confirms the vital scientific principle that including stupid answers in a multiple-choice quiz ensures jolly amusing results from guesswork.

As Others See Us II. Yes another resistible opportunity: 'MTV is looking to create a "Jersey Shore" for geeks. The network has put out a casting call for something called "Fandom Rising", which doesn't make any bones that it's a show tailored to the nerd set. "If you are a guy or girl and get all the references in 'The Big Bang Theory,' can quote the Original Trilogy, can spot a Cylon among us, wish you could've attended Hogwarts, Starfleet Academy, or Xavier's School for the Gifted, join the horde, and revere masters of science fiction and fantasy we want you!" (*New York Post*, 23 December) [PL] • Guess who wants to tap the mighty talent pool of *Ansible* readers? 'Big Brother ... is BACK FOR 2012! / I am contacting you from Endemoluk, we are currently in the process of casting Big Brother 2012 and I wanted to get in contact with you. Big Brother returns to our screens on Channel 5 in summer 2012 and we're looking for vibrant and interesting characters to enter the house. / Big Brother is widening the search and, as ever, is keen to represent all aspects of society. I wanted to pass on my contact details for any of your members that might be interested in applying?' Contact, if you dare, frazeryorke[at]endemoluk.com. • An sf themed brothel is planned in Nevada (where this is legal), catering for 'sci-fi nerds who dream of having sex with exotic alien women.' Work continues on 'the project's finer details, like whether the girls themselves will be painted green.' (*The Week*, 4 January) [SL]

Media Awards. The best movie of 2011 was the sf *Melancholia*, according to the European Film Awards and US National Society of Film Critics. *Producers Guild*: best animation, *The Adventures Of Tintin*; Vanguard award, Stan Lee. *Golden Globes*: animated feature, *Tintin* again; best director, Martin Scorsese for *Hugo*; best supporting TV actor, Peter Dinklage as Tyrion Lannister in *A Game of Thrones*. *American Soc of Cinematographers Outstanding Achievement*: Harrison Ford. [MPJ] • *Oscars*: Martin Scorsese's sf *Hugo* had the most nominations (11) of the nine films contending for Best Picture in the Academy Awards.

Outraged Letters. *Earl Kemp* objects to A294: '... too damned many obits. Stop the killing!' • *Dave Lally* on the death of Don Sharp (A294): 'He did two of his films using my home town in Ireland as a location: *The Face of Fu Manchu* (actually 1964) and *Jules Verne's Rocket to the Moon*. As is I hope well known, this young SF buck played the dead boy—astride the bike, as an extra—when Fu Manchu (Christopher Lee) bombs (the fictional Essex coastal village of) Fleetwick with his deadly-below-freezing-point gas. I remember his Assnt Dir/Prodr would produce wads of money in cash (usually English money as well—very welcome in Ireland at the time) to get instant locations (eg the half-eaten breakfast left in a living room in Fleetwick).' • *Colin Smythe* on the death of Darrell K. Sweet (A294): 'Darrell also painted cover illustrations for nine of the Signet/Roc editions of Terry's works—*The Dark Side of the Sun*, *Sourcery*, *Wyrd Sisters*, *Pyramids*, *Guards! Guards!*, *Eric*, *Moving Pictures*, *Reaper Man* and *Witches Abroad*.'

O Tempora, O Mores. Keith Watson on the sad decline of UK nudism: 'My guess is you're more likely to see modern youth hanging out at sci-fi conventions than you are in the buff down the local naturist club.' (*Metro*, 13 January) [MT] Depends which you go to, I suppose.

Refuseniks. A list—excluding the living—of those who declined UK honours 1951-1999 was released to the BBC after a Freedom of Information Act request. Names of genre interest include Roald Dahl (OBE 1986), C.S. Forester (CBE 1953), Robert Graves (CBE 1957, CH 1984), Alfred Hitchcock (CBE 1962), Aldous Huxley (knighthood 1959), C.S. Lewis (CBE 1952) and J.B. Priestley (life peerage 1965, CH 1969). [JC] Not listed, being post-1999: J.G. Ballard, who refused a CBE in 2003.

Random Fandom. *FAAn Awards* for 2011 fanzine activity: voting is open, with an 8 March deadline. Ballot form at corflu.org. • *Bruce Gillespie & Jan Stinson* are folding *Steam Engine Time* owing to Jan's poor health. Read the final issue #13 at efanazines.com/SFC/#set. • *Pulpfest*, the pulp magazine convention, renamed its Munsey Award for service to the pulp cause as the Rusty Hevelin Service Award (or Rusty).

More Awards. *Bram Stoker* (horror) life achievement: Rick Hautala, Joe R. Lansdale. • *Crawford* (fantasy): Genevieve Valentine, *Mechanique: A Tale of the Circus Tresaulti* (2011). [L]

The Dead Past. *50 Years Ago*, John Brunner peered with keen eyes into futurity: 'Suppose I married a Chinese girl, say ...' (*PITFCS* ed. Theodore R. Cogswell, February 1962) • *70 Years Ago*, UK fans were polled about a national sf organization: 'Name to be (i) British Fantasy Fan Federation..... (ii) Futurian Society of Great Britain..... (iii) British Fantasy Society..... (iv) Any other title.....' (*Futurian War Digest* 17, February 1942) Winner: British Fantasy Society (not the present one).

Fanfundery. *GUFF* results for the northbound race to Olympus 2012: Kylie Ding wins with 47 votes to Grant Watson's 46 (no preference 5). • *TAFF* voting figures were released in January. First round: Jacq Monahan 35 votes (27 NA + 8 Euro), Warren Buff 30 (28+2; eliminated by 20% rule), Kim Kofmel 27 (12+15), no preference 8 (6+2). After redistribution of WB voters' second choices, JM won the second round with 45 to KK's 42. Full details at taff.org.uk.

We Are Everywhere. More *Star Trek* in odd contexts. Anthony Quinn reviews the biopic *J. Edgar* [Hoover]: 'Let down by the make-up department, which turns his liver-spotted dotage into a Borg from *Star Trek*, [Armie] Hammer still conveys a strong pathos in the final stretch.' (*Independent*, 20 January) [MPJ] • Tim Abrahams of Sky Sports on Abu Dhabi's cricket ground, venue of the Pakistan v England Test: 'It looks as if the starship *Enterprise* has landed in the middle of the desert. England need to boldly go where they've never played Test cricket before.' (23 January) [MPJ] • Debate about *The Iliad* 'has led to bitter exchanges in the pages of scholarly journals, filled with abstruse proofs that, to the uninitiated, might seem like the dialogue to a "Star Trek" episode ("Movable nu was already being used in this early period for the sake of preventing hiatus caused by the loss of digamma").' (*New Yorker*, 7 November) [MMW] • At the Jaipur Literature Festival, A.C. Grayling made the traditional error: 'One of the best known examples of this divide between emotions and reason was Dr Spock of *Star Trek*. He thought he was a poor logician because he was always in love with someone or the other. It's another matter that he was suspected to be in love with Captain Kirk ...' (*Hindustan Times*, 27 January) [JW]

C.o.A. *Rose Fox, Josh Jasper and Xtina Schelin*, 460 Prospect Place, Brooklyn, N.Y., USA. 'No incendiary devices, please.'

Thog's Masterclass. *Eyeballs in the Sky*. '... abandoned buildings where the homeless hide and hungry eyes that will take your cigarettes and your wallet.' (Joseph S. Pulver, Sr., 'To Live and Die in Arkham' in *The Book of Cthulhu* ed. Ross E. Lockhart, 2011) [NR] • *Dept of Visible Poverty*. 'Neela looked at him, her face destitute.' (Dani & Eytan Kollin, *The Unincorporated Man*, 2009) [CH] • *Mirth of No Human Shape Dept*. 'Gibbous laughter flicked at the edges of his consciousness.' (Barbara Hambly, *The Witches of Wenshar*, 1987) [KAM] • *Dept of Central Casting*. 'General Vigo, a tall, snowy-haired albino from Urinal, fourth satellite moon of Saturn' ... 'Morganus Thaeffer, the Chief Control Commissioner of Troublesome Planets and Asteroids' ... 'Regina Zelda, loveliest and most delicately nurtured of all the inhabitants of the Four Worlds' ... 'Zelda, her soft comely breasts rising and falling rapidly beneath their torn flimsy coverings, stood beside him, her eyes alight with tenderness.' ... 'Carlyon, like all Martians, a brown-skinned giant of six hectares high' (all 'Bengo Mistral', *Pirates of Cerebus*, 1953) [PH via BiB]

Ansible 295 © David Langford, 2012. Thanks to Barbara Barrett, Dirk P. Broer, Bill Burns, John Clute, Ian Covell, Gordon Davie, Paul Di Filippo, Phil Harbottle, Chip Hitchcock, John-Henri Holmberg, Earl Kemp, Sam Long, Pamela Love, Klaus A. Mogensen, Private Eye, Trevor Prinn, Nonie Rider, SF Site, Steven H Silver, Phillip Spencer, James Summerson, Markus Thierstein, Persis Thorndike, Gordon Van Gelder, Martin Morse Wooster, James Worrall, and our Hero Distributors: Dave Corby (BSFG), SCIS/Prophecy, Alan Stewart (Australia). And thanks for all good wishes about the eye. 1 February 2012