



## Ansible® 408 July 2021

From **David Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU, UK. Website [news.ansible.uk](http://news.ansible.uk). ISSN 0265-9816 (print); 1740-942X (e). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Ulrika O'Brien**. Available for SAE, mummy-cloth, Hades' bobbin or the golden smithies of the Emperor.

### The Dewdrop Programme

**Richard Dawkins** clamours for attention: 'Kafka's Metamorphosis is called a major work of literature. Why? If it's SF it's bad SF. If, like Animal Farm, it's an allegory, an allegory of what? Scholarly answers range from pretentious Freudian to far-fetched feminist. I don't get it. Where are the Emperor's clothes?' (Twitter @RichardDawkins, 5 June)

**Jon Courtenay Grimwood** on the joy of self-isolation: 'It's weird as all hell. We spent our lives saying if only we could be locked away in a cave then inspiration and deadlines would be no problem and then it happens and it's a disaster.' (quoted in *The Author*, Summer 2021)

**Kenneth K. Lee**, a US Ninth Circuit Court judge, enshrined his view of the Disney *Star Wars* films in the legal ruling on a class action suit against ConAgra Foods Inc for the presumably misleading '100% Natural' label on bottles of Wesson Oil – a cooking oil which ConAgra no longer owns. Lee found the analogy irresistible: 'That is like George Lucas promising no more mediocre and schlocky Star Wars sequels shortly after selling the franchise to Disney. Such a promise would be illusory. [5] And footnote 5 runs: 'As evident by Disney's production of *The Last Jedi* and *The Rise of Skywalker*. (Movieview.com, 2 June) [OMJC]

**John Norman** (John Frederick Lange Jr) celebrated his 90th birthday on 3 June, soon after the 25 May publication of his 36th 'Gor' novel.

**H.G. Wells** may be rotating in his grave at the news that his 1914 novel *The World Set Free* – long in the public domain – has an exciting new \$5 ebook edition apparently constructed via Google Translate. The opening sentences 'The history of mankind is the history of the attainment of external power. Man is the tool-using, fire-making animal.' have here become 'The history of mankind is the records of the attainment of outside energy. Man is the tool-the use of, fireplace-making animal.' It doesn't get any better as the story continues.... (Facebook, 17 June) [MO]

### Cong

Until 29 Jan • **War of the Worlds** 'immersive experience', London; tickets (sold in pairs) from £40 at [thewaroftheworldsimmersive.com](http://thewaroftheworldsimmersive.com).

ONLINE. 1 Jul • **Virtual First Thursday**, 6-10pm, instead of the London pub meeting. See [tinyurl.com/uow6hqn](http://tinyurl.com/uow6hqn). *Could there be a physical meeting on 5 August?* Updates to follow at [news.ansible.uk/london.html](http://news.ansible.uk/london.html).

ONLINE. 2-4 Jul • **Lavecon** (sf/fantasy/gaming), Sedgebrook Hall Hotel, Northants. Tickets will be refunded or (on request) carried over to the next event, 1-3 July 2022. See [www.hwsevents.co.uk/shop-1](http://www.hwsevents.co.uk/shop-1).

ONLINE. 3-4 July • **Tolkien Society Summer Seminar**. See [www.tolkienociety.org/events/tolkien-society-summer-seminar/](http://www.tolkienociety.org/events/tolkien-society-summer-seminar/).

15-18 July • **Eurocon 2021**, Fiuggi, Italy. €50 reg. Still planned as an in-person event requiring COVID-19 vaccination or pre-testing (Facebook, 24 April). Registration form and latest news at [eurocon2021.it](http://eurocon2021.it). Also €50 at the door, but the venue may by then be fully booked.

25 Jul • **Paperback & Pulp Book Fair**, International Students House, 229 Great Portland St, London. 10:30am-4:30pm. £2 admission.

CANCELLED. 6-9 Aug • **Continuum** (RPG), John Foster Hall, Manor Road, Leicester University, Oadby. 'Insufficient enthusiasm' for a virtual 2021 event; the next will be in 2022. See [continuumconvention.co.uk](http://continuumconvention.co.uk).

CANCELLED. 20-22 Aug • **Reunicon** (celebrating ConFiction 1990), The Hague. To be replaced by a get-together party at Glasgow in 2024 if that bid wins, or at some other convention. See [confiction1990.com](http://confiction1990.com).

HYBRID? 20 Aug • **TitanCon**, Hilton Hotel, Belfast. Perhaps a free limited-numbers 'moot' with readings broadcast online; see [titancon.com](http://titancon.com).

HYBRID. 2-5 Sep • **Oxonmoot** (Tolkien Society). £95 reg; £45 online; members £10 less: [www.tolkienociety.org/events/oxonmoot-2021](http://www.tolkienociety.org/events/oxonmoot-2021).

HYBRID. 30 Oct • **BristolCon**, Hilton DoubleTree Hotel, Bristol. £25 reg; concessions £15 (£30/£20 from 1 October; £35/£25 at the door); under-14s free. See [www.bristolcon.org](http://www.bristolcon.org).

12-14 Nov • **Novacon 50** had to move from the Mercure Sherwood Hotel, Nottingham, still commandeered as a 'Nightingale' courthouse; the new venue is the Palace Hotel, Buxton, with slightly cheaper room rates. £50 reg; under-17s £12; under-13s free. See [novacon.org.uk](http://novacon.org.uk).

15-19 Dec • **DisCon III** (Worldcon), Washington DC, USA. Now

\$225 reg; YA \$115; virtual \$75; supp \$50; other rates at [discon3.org](http://discon3.org). Hugo voting is open, closing 19 November, and the downloadable Hugo Voter Packet was released in June: see [members.discon3.org](http://members.discon3.org).

**Rumblings**. The 2021 Hugo administration team, just like their predecessors in January, resigned en masse on 22 June. In the context of honouring all Hugo winners, they cryptically wrote: 'It is clear that we have taken the process as far as we can, and that our input is no longer needed by the convention leadership.' It emerged that DisCon III had privately told Hugo finalists – without promised consultation and discussion of this issue – that no more than four people for each item on the ballot would be allowed at the reception and ceremony. (The semiprozine finalist *Strange Horizons*, wanting all staff and contributors recognized on the ballot, has close to 90 names listed but was never asked how many were likely to appear at the Hugos.) A DisCon apology and retraction followed on 23 June: 'There will be no four person limit.' Just as in January. The only thing we learn from history is ... • The next excitement was the rapid resignation of convention chair Bill Lawhorn on 25 June.

### Infinitely Improbable

**As Others Are Inspired by Us**. 'Rep. Louie Gohmert (R-TX) asks whether the Forest Service or the BLM [*Bureau of Land Management*] can alter the orbit of the moon or the Earth in order to fight climate change during a House Natural Resources hearing.' (Forbes, Twitter, 8 June) • Boris Johnson, remembering classics taught at Eton, dreams of the UK as '... some country ready to take off its Clark Kent spectacles and leap into the phone booth and emerge with its cloak flowing as the supercharged champion of the right of the populations of the earth to buy and sell freely among each other.' (*London Review of Books*, 6 July) [MMW]

**Awards**. *British Book Awards (Nibbies)*: Orion and its sf/fantasy imprint Gollancz won the publisher and imprint categories. • **Lambda (LGBTQ)**: SF/F/HORROR NOVEL *Everyone on the Moon is Essential Personnel* by Julian K. Jarboe. ANTHOLOGY *Love after the End: An Anthology of Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer Speculative Fiction* ed. Joshua Whitehead. GAY ROMANCE *The Ghost and Charlie Muir* by Felice Stevens. [F770] • **Locus Award** novel categories: SF *Network Effect* by Martha Wells. FANTASY *The City We Became* by N.K. Jemisin. HORROR *Mexican Gothic* by Silvia Moreno-Garcia. YAA *Wizard's Guide to Defensive Baking* by T. Kingfisher. More at [locusmag.com](http://locusmag.com). • **Nebulas (SFWA)**: NOVEL *Network Effect* by Martha Wells. NOVELLA *Ring Shout* by P. Djèlí Clark. NOVELETTE 'Two Truths and a Lie' by Sarah Pinsker (Tor.com). SHORT 'Open House on Haunted Hill' by John Wiswell (*Diabolical Plots*). ANDRE NORTON (YA) *A Wizard's Guide to Defensive Baking* by T. Kingfisher. GAME WRITING *Hades* by Greg Kasavin. RAY BRADBURY (dramatic): *The Good Place* – 'Whenever You're Ready'. • **SFRA Award for Lifetime Contributions to SF Scholarship** (formerly Pilgrim Award): Veronica Hollinger. [L] • **UK Queen's Birthday Honours** for genre authors and illustrators: Lauren Child and Philippa Gregory CBE, David Almond OBE, Irenosen Okojie MBE.

**Entomology Corner**. The discoverers of many previously unknown species of *Coptoborus* ambrosia beetles in Central and South America have named several for their favourite female sf characters: *C. katniss*, *C. ripley*, *C. scully*, *C. starbuck*, *C. uhura*.... (Phys.org, 16 June) [MF]

**Clarke Award** finalists: *The Infinite* by Patience Agbabi, *The Vanished Birds* by Simon Jimenez, *Vagabonds* by Hao Jingfang, *Edge of Heaven* by R.B. Kelly, *The Animals in That Country* by Laura Jean McKay, *Chilling Effect* by Valerie Valdes. This is the first all-debut-novel Clarke shortlist.

**As Others See Us**. 'There is, in fact, a LOT of bad science fiction and some of it is obviously inspiring some of the world's most powerful entrepreneurs. / Elon Musk, for example, frequently quotes the 1960s potboiler *Dune*, a book that, frankly (as it were), hasn't weathered all that well. Jeff Bezos similarly so loves *The Expanse*, a grade B TV space opera, that he kept it alive by moving it to Amazon Prime.' (Geoffrey James, 'Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, and Bad Science Fiction', Inc.com, 30 June)

**R.I.P.** *Peter Adams*, UK writer and executive producer with genre credits for *S.N.U.B!* (2010) and *Aux* (2018) died on 11 June aged 75. [SJ] • *Lisa Banes* (1955-2021), US actress in *Last Exit to Earth* (1996), *Dragonfly* (2002) and *A Cure for Wellness* (2016), died on 14 June aged

65. [PDF] ● *Olga Barnet* (1951-2021), Russian actress in Tarkovsky's *Solaris* (1972), died on 25 June aged 69. [SJ] ● *Claudia Barrett* (1929-2021), US actress in the infamous *Robot Monster* (1953), died on 30 April aged 91. [LPer] ● *Ned Beatty* (1937-2021), US actor in *Exorcist II: The Heretic* (1977), *Superman* (1978), *The Incredible Shrinking Woman* (1981), *Captain America* (1990) and others, died on 13 June aged 83. [O] ● *Dennis Berry* (1944-2021), US director/producer whose credits include *Angel on My Shoulder* (1980), two *Highlander* tv series (1993-1999) and *Stargate SG-1* (1997), died on 12 June aged 76. [SJ] ● *Frank Bonner* (1942-2021), US actor in *Equinox* (1970) and director of *Harry and the Hendersons* (11 episodes 1991-1993), died on 17 June aged 79. [LPer] ● *Alexander Bouchard*, Detroit-area fan whose fanzines were *Lightning Round* and *Scopus*, died in a car accident on 29 June. [LPer] ● *Kathy Burns*, US actress and film crew member seen in *Shock Theater* (1959), *King Kong* (2005) and *The Lovely Bones* (2009), died on 12 May. [SJ] ● *Douglas S. Cramer* (1931-2021), US tv producer whose genre credits include *The Cat Creature* (1973), *Snowbeast* (1977) and *Wonder Woman* (1975-1979), died on 7 June aged 89. [PDF] ● *Stuart Damon* (1937-2021), US actor in *The Champions* (1968-1969) and *Space: 1999* (1975-1977), died on 29 June aged 84. [SG] ● *Edward de Bono*, Malta-born polymath best known for his promotion of 'lateral thinking', who introduced George Hay's *The Edward De Bono Science Fiction Collection* (1976) and contributed to Peter Nicholls's *Science Fiction at Large* (1976), died on 9 June aged 88. [MMW] ● *John Erman* (1935-2021), US director with credits for *My Favorite Martian* (1965-1966), *The Flying Nun* (1968) and *The Ghost & Mrs. Muir* (1968-1970), died on 26 June aged 85. [AIP] ● *John Gabriel* (1931-2021), US actor in *The Incredible Hulk Returns* (1988) and various genre tv series, died on 13 June aged 90. [F770] ● *Larry Gelman* (1930-2021), US actor in *Alice in Wonderland: An X-Rated Musical Fantasy* (1976), *Dreamscape* (1984) and various genre tv series, died on 7 June aged 90. [PDF] ● *Patricia Reilly Giff* (1935-2021), US children's author whose many books include the historical ghost story *Gingersnap* (2013), died on 22 June aged 86. [PDF] ● *Milton Moses Ginsberg* (1935-2021), US film-maker who wrote, directed and edited *The Werewolf of Washington* (1973), died on 23 May aged 85. [AIP] ● *Arlene Golonka* (1936-2021), US actress in various genre tv series, *The New Yogi Berra Show* (voice, 1988) and *Dr. Alien* (1989), died on 31 May aged 85. [LPer] ● *Bob Haberfield* (1938-2021), Australian-born artist whose distinctive psychedelic covers appeared on many UK Mayflower and Granada paperbacks – especially by Michael Moorcock – from 1968 to 1980, reportedly died recently. [JC] ● *Andrew Hackard*, games designer at Steve Jackson Games who worked on the RPG-parody card game *Munchkin* and co-wrote *GURPS Deadlands: Weird West* (2001), died on 17 June. [MR] ● *Damaris Hayman* (1929-2021), UK actress in *Doctor Who* 'The Daemons' (1971), *The Pink Panther Strikes Again* (1976), *The Haunting of Julia* (1977) and *White Witch of Devil's End* (2017), died on 3 June aged 91. [PDF] ● *Robert Hogan* (1933-2021), US supporting actor in many genre tv series 1964-1986 and *Species II* (1998), died on 27 May aged 87. [LPer] ● *Leo P. Kindt* (1943-2021), Dutch fan who co-founded the first Dutch sf organization, died in March. [PVO] ● *Jackie Lane* (1941-2021), UK actress in *Doctor Who* 1966; 19 episodes as early companion Dodo Chaplet) and theatrical agent whose clients included Tom Baker, died on 23 June aged 79. [MR] ● *David Lightfoot*, Australian producer of *Bodyjackers* (2001) and *Cyber Wars* (2004), died on 13 June aged 61. [AIP] ● *Joanne Linville* (1928-2021), US actress in *The Invaders* (1967-1968), *Star Trek* (1968, as a Romulan commander) and others, died on 20 June aged 93. [PDF] ● *Patrick McGreal*, comics writer who wrote over 600 stories for Disney's European affiliate Egmont, died on 31 May aged 68. [PDF] ● *Vladimir Malov* (1947-2021), Russian author of popular science books for children and four volumes of children's sf since 1964, died on 22 May aged 74. [AM] ● *John Paragon* (1954-2021), US actor in *The Frog Prince* (1986), *Pee-wee's Playhouse* (1986-1990 as Jambi the Genie), *Elvira: Mistress of the Dark* (1988) and *Honey, I Blew Up the Kid* (1992), died in April aged 66. [AIP] ● *Joe Praml* (1935-2021), US actor in *Deep Space* (1988), *Demonwarp* (1988) and others, died on 18 June aged 85. [SJ] ● *Robert M. Quackenbush* (1929-2021), US author and illustrator whose many popular children's books included talking-animal fantasy series, died on 17 May aged 91. [PDF] ● *Ben Roberts* (1950-2021), UK actor in *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* (2016), died on 7 June aged 70. [AIP] ● *Richard Robinson*, US publisher who joined Scholastic in 1962 and was CEO from 1975 – publishing many YA authors including J.K. Rowling and Suzanne Collins – died on 5 June aged 84. [PDF] ● *Wally Schneiderman* (1922-2021), UK make-up artist whose genre films included *One Million Years B.C.* (1966), *Scars of Dracula* (1970), *Rollerball* (1975), *Beauty and the Beast* (1976) and *Labyrinth* (1986), died on 8 April aged 98. [AIP] ● *Steve Sherman* (1949-

2021), US puppeteer for *Men in Black* (1997, plus sequel) and *Mighty Joe Young* (1998), died on 24 June aged 72. [PDF] ● *Natalya Smirnova*, Russian actress in *Mermaid* (2007; original title *Rusalka*), died on 30 June aged 60. ● *Linda S. Touby*, US artist who collected the work of her husband Basil Gogos (1939-2017) as *The Monster Art of Basil Gogos* (2020), died on 9 June aged 78. [SJ] ● *Buddy Van Horn* (1928-2021), US stuntman whose genre credits include *The Beastmaster* (1982) and *Space Cowboys* (2000), died on 11 May aged 92. [AIP] ● Late report: *Evgeny Voiskunsky* (1922-2020), Russian sf author active from 1961 to 1980, his first novel being *The Crew of the Mekong* (1961; trans 1974) with his cousin Isai Lukodianov, died on 3 July 2020 aged 98. [PY] ● *Clarence Williams III* (1939-2021), US actor in *Twin Peaks* (1990), *Tales from the Hood* (1995) and *American Nightmares* (2018), died on 4 June aged 81. [LPer] ● *John Sacret Young*, (1946-2021), US producer, director and writer whose credits include *Testament* (1983), *VR.5* (1995-1997) and *Level 9* (2000-2001), died on 3 June aged 75. [KF]

**As Others See Us II.** Bill Gates confronts the twenty-first century: 'So what does the next generation of toilets look like? At first glance, not that different. They don't exactly look like something out of a sci-fi novel.' (Gates Foundation Annual Letter, February 2019) [MMW]

**Court Circular.** US scenic artist and designer Judy Juracek is suing the Japanese game developer Capcom for alleged copyright-violating use of 80 or more of her photographs (published 1996 as the book/CD-ROM *Surfaces*) in games, including *Resident Evil* franchise titles. Damages of \$12 million plus legal fees are asked. (*The Register*, 8 June)

**The Shape of Things to Come.** 'Like watching the descent of a giant lift, or seeing New York's World Trade Center collapse through a sidewalk on the downstroke of an invisible piston.' (Jon Courtenay Grimwood, *Lucifer's Dragon*, 1998) [BA]

**The Dead Past.** 40 Years Ago, Robert Conquest revealed that 'he learned all his skills at understanding the Russian mind from his vast knowledge of alien psychology gleaned from 40s issues of *Astounding*'; and Karl Hansen offered a (pre-Thog) True Romance Masterclass in his 1981 novel *War Games*: 'Even through two layers of combat armour, I felt her nipples brush against my back ...' (*Ansible* 19, July 1981) ● 50 Years Ago, Anne McCaffrey told a UK convention: 'Dragons are really a rather nice animal; they've just had bad press.' (*Focal Point* 3:1, July 1971)

**Silo-Fi.** Amitav Ghosh is pleased that Richard Powers's *The Overstory* (2018) escaped the taint of silage: 'It wasn't hived off into the usual silos of climate change or speculative fiction, but was treated as a mainstream novel. I do think that was a very major thing.' (*Guardian*, 26 June) [JF]

**Fanfundery.** Yet another free TAFF ebook: *The Road to Fame* by D.R. Smith, written 1941-1946 and first collected in 1953, a mash-up fiction in which Prof. Challenger's *Lost World* team goes questing with Tarzan, John Carter of Mars, Kim Kinnison and other sf notables in search of ... literary immortality. Details at [taff.org.uk/ebooks.php?x=RoadFame](http://taff.org.uk/ebooks.php?x=RoadFame).

**Magazine Scene.** The cancellation of my 'Ansible Link' news digest along with other *Interzone* nonfiction was reversed in May: all the usual departments are in the double issue #290/291, published late June. ● *New Worlds* returns as an anthology from PS Publishing in August 2021.

**C.o.A.** *Pete Young*, 10 Springvale Close, Kirkby, Liverpool, L32 5ST. **Paging Lazarus Long.** Going the rounds on Facebook: a job ad with 'Basic Qualifications / 710 years of Graphic Design experience ...'

**Random Fandom.** *British SF Association*: The BSFA has moved to a new database and now sends both invoices and newsletters electronically. If you are a member and are not receiving email communications, please contact Treasurer[at]bsfa.co.uk to add or correct your email.

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Elven Dexterity*. 'He brushed it aside with a flick of his ears.' (Katherine Addison, *The Witness for the Dead*, 2021) ● *What Dead Men Tell*. 'I long to kill you by mine own hand, but I have granted you the favor of being beheaded by a public executioner. You cannot then say that you have been murdered ...' (Clark Ashton Smith, *The Sword of Zagan*, written circa 1909; 2004) [BA] ● *Eyeballs Round the Corner*. 'Her eyes followed him out of sight ...' (Isaac Asimov, 'Liar!', May 1941 *Astounding*) [ECL] ● *Multiple Personality Disorder: Know the Symptoms*. 'When explicit thinking patterns were in charge, light waves of particular lengths were thought to stimulate Jenny's optical nerve, changing hue of her eye color.' (Judy Byington, *Twenty-Two Faces*, 2012) ● *Tone of Voice Dept*. 'Sounding throaty like a dog before it barfed, he said ...' (*Ibid*) ● *Dept of Euphemism*. "'Kiss my lickity-split,'" the dooper shouted.' (*Ibid*)

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