



Ansible 296 March 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 fayalin/delinade cocktail recipes.

Dark Tides

Clive Barker spent some time in hospital in January 'thanks to a nearly fatal case of Toxic Shock brought on by a visit to my dentist. Apparently this is not uncommon. In my case the dental work unloaded such a spillage of poisonous bacteria into my blood that my whole system crashed, putting me into a coma. I spent several days in Intensive Care, with a machine breathing for me.' He emerged twenty pounds lighter. (www.dreadcentral.com, 7 February) [GW]

William Gibson retains the power to surprise journalists: 'For a science-fiction novelist, William Gibson is oddly reluctant to be called a prophet.' (*The Week*, 10 February). [MMW]

Frank Muir (1920-1998) mentioned a possible literary influence in his autobiography: 'I was told recently that the novelist J.G. Ballard much enjoyed the *My Word!* stories, and after hearing a story of mine in which, for purposes of the plot, I extolled the virtues of living in beautiful Shepperton, Surrey (Thorpe [where Muir lived] is about 5 miles away)—I described Shepperton as "the Malibu of the Thames Valley"—he was moved by this warm recommendation and drove over in his car, liked what he saw and bought a house there, in which he still lives. Could this be true? I do hope so.' (*A Kentish Lad*, 1997) [IM]

Nick Park is merely 'flattered' by the succession of UK newspaper cartoons—especially in the *Times*—which transfer the likeness of his hapless inventor Wallace (of Wallace & Gromit fame) to the allegedly hapless Labour leader Ed Miliband. But staff at Aardman Animations worry that poor Wallace's image may be damaged by these repeated comparisons: 'You have to protect the brand.' Meanwhile, 'A spokesman for Mr Miliband declined to comment.' (*Independent*, 5 February) [MPJ]

Conceill

Until 30 Mar • **LEM1** exhibition/installation by Herman Chong at Rossi & Rossi, 16 Clifford St, London, W1S 3RG: '... to transform our gallery space into a functioning second-hand Science-Fiction and Fantasy bookshop.' 020 7734 6487; e-mail info at rossirossi.com.

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 or at door. See www.pcon.ie.

10-11 Mar • **QED** (science/skeptics), Piccadilly Hotel, Portland St, Manchester, M1 4PH. £89 (students £68) via www.qedcon.org.

27 Mar • **Jan Pienkowski** speaks, The Grove Building, Middlesex University, NW4 4BT. 7pm. Details: farah_dot_sf_at_gmail_dot_com.

28 Mar • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Melton Mowbray (*new venue*), 18 Holborn, London, EC1N 2LE. 6pm for 7pm. BSFA Awards discussion.

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.

13-15 Apr • **The Hub 8** (*Torchwood*), Park Inn, Northampton. Tickets from £78 to £195. See massiveevents.co.uk/hub8.

22 Apr • **Diana Wynne Jones Celebration** (informal, non-religious), St George's, Brandon Hill, Bristol. 2pm for 2:30. Family members and close friends will share their memories of Diana. All are welcome.

1-7 May • **Sci-Fi London** film festival at Apollo Piccadilly Circus, BFI Southbank, other London venues. See www.sci-fi-london.com.

2 May • **Clarke Award** at Sci-Fi London. By invitation.

24-27 Aug • **Discworld Convention**, Hilton Metropole, Birmingham. Now £63 reg, £42 concessions. *Sold out; waiting list closed.*

26-28 Oct • **Festival of Fantastic Films**, Manchester Conference Centre, Sackville St. £70 reg. Contact 95 Meadowgate Rd, Salford,

Manchester, M6 8EN; Gil at manchesterfantasticfilms.co.uk.

11-18 Nov • **Thought Bubble** (comics), Leeds, including 17-18 November comics convention. See www.thoughtbubblefestival.com.

23-25 Nov • **WexWorlds** (sf/fantasy festival), Wexford, Ireland. Assorted local events. More details awaited at www.wexworlds.net.

1-3 Feb 2013 • **Quarter Tone** (filk), Ramada Grantham Hotel. £35 reg; £22 unwaged; under-18s £1/year; under-6 free. Cheques: UK Filk Con, c/o 15 St. Catherine's Cross, Bletchingley, Surrey, RH1 4PX.

8-10 Feb 2013 • **SF Ball** (media), Carrington House Hotel, Bournemouth. Tickets from £104; £38/day Sat/Sun. See sfbevents.com/sfball.

Rumblings • 2012 Hugo Nominations close on 11 March.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. A *Guardian* piece on the dark secrets of ebooks makes the pecking order clear: 'Kindle-owning bibliophiles are furtive beasts. Their shelves still boast classics and Booker winners. But inside that plastic case, other things lurk. Sci-fi and self-help. Even paranormal romance, where vampires seduce virgins and elves bonk trolls.' (Antonia Senior, 5 February) In short, 'The ebook world is driven by so-called genre fiction, categories such as horror or romance. It's not future classics that push digital sales, but more downmarket fare. No cliché is left unturned, no adjective underplayed.' [CP] No sneer unsneered.

Magazine Scene. *Arc*, a 'digital magazine about the future' from the *New Scientist* stable, launched on 20 February in various e-formats plus a 'collectible print edition' at an eye-watering \$29.95 (152pp, trade pb size). *Omni*-like mix of stories and articles. No unsolicited submissions, but there's a fiction competition: see arcfinity.tumblr.com.

Awards. *Kitschies*: NOVEL Patrick Ness & Siobhan Dowd, *A Monster Calls*. DEBUT Kameron Hurley, *God's War*. COVER ART Peter Mendelsund, for Glen Duncan's *The Last Werewolf*. SPECIAL (discretionary): graphic novel publisher SelfMadeHero. • *Skylark*: Sharon Lee & Steve Miller.

Publishers & Sinners. Following Amazon's latest bullying—delisting over 4000 ebooks distributed by the Independent Publishing Group, because IPG wouldn't accept an unfavourable Amazon rewrite of contractual terms—SFWA is redirecting its Amazon links elsewhere.

R.I.P. *Ian Abercrombie* (1934-2012), UK character actor seen in various genre films (*Army of Darkness*, *The Lost World: Jurassic Park*) and tv series (*Twin Peaks*, *Birds of Prey*, *Wizards of Waverly Place*) as well as voicing for animations (*Shrek*, *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*, *Rango*), died on 26 January; he was 77. [MPJ] • *Anders Åkerlind* (?1960-2011), highly active Swedish fan from the late 1970s to mid-1980s, died on 11 February 2011; his legacy is SFF (Swedish Fanzine Association), an open APA which he founded. [J-HH] • *Jan Berenstain* (1923-2012), creator with her husband Stan (d.2005) of the long-running Berenstain Bears talking-animal sequence for young children, died on 24 February aged 88. [PDF] • *Mark Bourne* (1961-2012), US author of several short stories since 1993 and a number of planetarium presentations (two *Trek*-themed) died on 25 February; he was 50. [SFS] • *Richard Carpenter* (1933-2012), UK screenwriter and author whose tv series creations included *Catweazle* (1970-1971) and *The Ghosts of Motley Hall* (1976-1978)—both of which he novelized—died on 26 February. [DH] • *Lou Cameron* (1924-2010), US comics artist and author of over 300 novels—mostly Westerns—whose sf ventures included *The Spy with the Blue Kazoo* (1967 as by Dagmar) and *Cybernia* (1972), is confirmed as having died on 25 November 2010 aged 86. [SL] This had previously been denied by a family member when reported in March 2011. • *John Christopher* (Sam Youd, 1922-2012), noted UK author of both adult and YA sf, died on 3 February after long illness; he was 89. Active in fandom in the 1930s, he began publishing with a 1941 *Weird Tales* poem and a 1949 *Astounding* story; the best-known of his strong adult disaster novels is *The Death of Grass* (1956, aka *No Blade of Grass*, under which title it was filmed); others include *The World in Winter* and *A Wrinkle in the Skin*. For younger readers, the part-televised Tripods sequence (1967-1968) and the Prince in Waiting trilogy (1970-1972) are especially memorable. • *Bob Franklin*, UK fan

in the 1960s whose one published sf story was 'Cinnabar Balloon Tautology' (March 1970 *New Worlds*), died on 22 February. Chris Priest remembers him as '... an old friend of mine from the 1960s. He was close to me and Graham Hall, and was on the fringes of the *New Worlds* group.' ● **Todd Frazier** (1954-2012), US fan who for many years helped produce Ed Meskys's *Niekas* (1962-1998; 1967 Hugo winner), died on 8 February aged 57. [EM] ● **Peter Halliday** (1924-2012), UK actor whose best-known star role was as Dr John Fleming in the BBC sf serials *A for Andromeda* (1961) and *The Andromeda Breakthrough* (1962), died in February; he was 87. [MPJ] ● **Bill Hinzman** (1936-2012), US cinematographer and actor who was the 'number one zombie' in *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), died on 5 February aged 75. Further zombie roles included the title part in *FleshEater* (1988, aka *Zombie Nosh*), which he directed. [MPJ] ● **Zalman King** (1942-2012), US director and screenwriter whose early genre credits as actor include *Blue Sunshine* (1978) and *Galaxy of Terror* (1981), died ON 3 February; he was 69. [SG] ● **Elyse Knox** (1917-2012), US actress best known for her starring role in *The Mummy's Tomb* (1942), died on 16 February aged 94. [SFS] ● **Sir Simon Marsden** (1948-2012), UK photographer specializing in ruins, graveyards and general eeriness, died on 22 January aged 63. His books include the Poe selection *Visions of Poe* (1988), the supernatural fiction anthology *The Twilight Hour* (2003) and *Vampires: The Twilight World* (2011). (*Telegraph*, 7 February) ● **Christoffer Schander** (1960-2012), leading 1980s Swedish fan who organized conventions and published the highly regarded genzine *Procul Este Profani*, died on 20 February; he was 51. [J-HH] ● **Mike White**, UK comics artist best known for *Roy of the Rovers*, died on 28 or 29 January. Genre work included the dystopian *Kids Rule OK for Action* (scripted by Jack Adrian) and various 2000 AD 'Future Shocks' and 'Time Twisters' features (many, along them the Abelard Snazz tales, scripted by Alan Moore). [GW]

Department of Strange Bedfellows. 'Harry Potter and Viagra have more in common than you may imagine. They came to market within a year of each other in the late 1990s; they enjoyed enormous success; and what was a boon for the companies that sold them could turn into a bane as their popularity fades and rivals emerge.' (Andrew Hill, *Financial Times*, 7 February) [MMW]

Nebula Shortlist. NOVEL Jo Walton, *Among Others*; China Miéville, *Embassytown*; Jack McDevitt, *Firebird*; Kameron Hurley, *God's War*; Genevieve Valentine, *Mechanique*; N.K. Jemisin, *The Kingdom of Gods*. ● NOVELLA Mary Robinette Kowal, 'Kiss Me Twice' (*Asimov's* 6/11); Catherynne M. Valente, 'Silently and Very Fast' (*Clarkesworld* 10/11); Carolyn Ives Gilman, 'The Ice Owl' (*F&SF* 11/11); Kij Johnson, 'The Man Who Bridged the Mist' (*Asimov's* 10/11); Ken Liu, 'The Man Who Ended History: A Documentary' (*Panverse Three*); Adam-Troy Castro, 'With Unclean Hands' (*Analog* 11/11). ● NOVELETTE Rachel Swirsky, 'Fields of Gold' (*Eclipse* 4); Brad R. Torgersen, 'Ray of Light' (*Analog* 12/11); Ferrett Steinmetz, 'Sauerkraut Station' (*Giganotosaurus* 11/11); Charlie Jane Anders, 'Six Months, Three Days' (*Tor.com*, 6/11); Katherine Sparrow, 'The Migratory Pattern of Dancers' (*Giganotosaurus* 7/11); Jake Kerr, 'The Old Equations' (*Lightspeed* 7/11); Geoff Ryman, 'What We Found' (*F&SF* 9/11). SHORT STORY Adam-Troy Castro, 'Her Husband's Hands' (*Lightspeed* 10/11); Tom Crosshill, 'Mama, We are Zhenya, Your Son' (*Lightspeed* 4/11); Nancy Fulda, 'Movement' (*Asimov's* 3/11); Aliette de Bodard, 'Shipbirth' (*Asimov's* 2/11); David W. Goldman, 'The Axiom of Choice' (*New Haven Review*, Winter 2011); E. Lily Yu, 'The Cartographer Wasps and the Anarchist Bees' (*Clarkesworld Magazine* 4/11); Ken Liu, 'The Paper Menagerie' (*F&SF* 3/11). ● DRAMATIC *Attack the Block*; *Captain America: The First Avenger*; *Doctor Who*: 'The Doctor's Wife'; *Hugo*; *Midnight in Paris*; *Source Code*; *The Adjustment Bureau*. ● ANDRE NORTON (YA) Nnedi Okorafor, *Akata Witch*; Franny Billingsley, *Chime*; Laini Taylor, *Daughter of Smoke and Bone*; A.S. King, *Everybody Sees the Ants*; Greg van Eekhout, *The Boy at the End of the World*; Delia Sherman, *The Freedom Maze*; Rae Carson, *The Girl of Fire and Thorns*; R.J. Anderson, *Ultraviolet*.

As Others Classify Us. *Parade* magazine's 'Parade Picks' for 20 January include Daniel O'Malley's novel *The Rook*: 'The heroine, an operative at a U.K. agency that fights supernatural threats, must determine which snarky coworker is trying to off her. Utterly uncategorizable, yet fantastically fun.' Which publisher will be first to invent a category name for such work? Fantasy Urban, they might call it. [PL]

Random Fandom. *British Fantasy Society Awards*: reform details announced. BFS members having failed to vote right in 2011, winners will now be decided by a 5-person jury, based on member nominations. 'The jury shall also have powers to add nominations where it identifies an egregious omission.' ● *John-Henri Holmberg* reports that the late

Arne Sjögren (see A295) left SEK300,000 (~£29,000) to Cosmos—his old Gothenburg sf fan club—to reward promoters of the club and/or Swedish sf in general. ● *Doreen Rogers* (née Parker) spent December in hospital after breaking her arm and then—while in hospital—her hip, but returned home 'with a lot of extra care' in January. [SH] ● *Andrew Wells* saw an eBay listing for that essential designer product, a 'Girls Animal Ansible T-Shirt—Purple Heather'. Sadly, it's been sold...

The Dead Past. 30 Years Ago, John Sladek attempted naked self-promotion: 'The second volume of *Roderick* is now called *Roderick at Random*; I'm hoping to sell a few copies to any Smollett scholars who happen to be buying books in a hurry.' (*Ansible* 24, March 1982) ● *Voice of Prophecy*, 1970: '... I must conclude that the staff of *New Worlds* is a very pessimistic lot. By their thinking, if the human race makes it to the 1980s, we'll be reduced to "totally subservient, humanized robots," obsessed with our materialism and subject to madness upon seeing the vastness of the universe. The lucky ones will be transformed into sex freaks with Dr. Ballard drooling over our deformed bodies.' (Tony Isabella, *Fantastic Fanzine* 12, 1970) [TM] ● 40 Years Ago, *Checkpoint* was not afraid to report the Tolkien Society AGM in full statistical detail: 'The Society has about 90 members out of 200 known Tolkien fans in Britain.' (*Checkpoint* 16, March 1972)

More Award Shortlists. *Libertarian Futurist Hall of Fame*: Lois McMaster Bujold, *Falling Free* (1988); Harlan Ellison, "Repent, Harlequin!" Said the Ticktockman' (1965); E.M. Forster, *The Machine Stops* (1909); Rudyard Kipling, 'As Easy as A.B.C.' (1912). ● *Bram Stoker* (horror, selected categories): NOVEL Christopher Conlon, *A Matrix Of Angels*; Greg Lamberson, *Cosmic Forces*; Ronald Malfi, *Floating Staircase*; Joe McKinney, *Flesh Eaters*; Gene O'Neill, *Not Fade Away*; Lee Thomas, *The German*. SCREENPLAY *The Adjustment Bureau*; *American Horror Story*: 'Afterbirth'; *Priest*; *True Blood*: 'Spellbound'; *The Walking Dead*: 'Pretty Much Dead Already'; *The Walking Dead*: 'Save the Last One'. ● Further categories online at www.horror.org/blog/?p=2331. ● *Clarke Award*: the full 2012 submissions list (not a shortlist nor even a longlist) can be read at <http://tinyurl.com/6m3vhlu>, giving omitted authors the opportunity to ring their publishers and cry 'Bastards!'

As Others Subdivide Us. 'I regard romantic comedies as a sub-genre of sci-fi, in which the world operates according to different rules than my regular human world. For me, there is no difference between Ripley from "Alien" and any Katherine Heigl character. They are equally implausible. They're all participating in a similar level of fakey razzle-dazzle, and I enjoy every second of it. / It makes sense, then, that in the romantic comedy world there are many specimens of women who—like Vulcans or Mothra—do not exist in real life.' (Mindy Kaling, 'Flick Chicks: A Guide to Women in the Movies', *New Yorker*, 3 October) [PL]

Editorial. Many thanks for various cards and good wishes following last issue's announcement of my affliction with the Evil Eye (detached retina; successful operation). I'm seeing better now, but still feel tired.

We Are Everywhere. Roger Protz on the sf horror of excess yeast fermentation at the Eldredge Pope brewery: 'The head was enormous, threatening to over-run the container like some terrible extra-terrestrial beast from a John Wyndham novel.' (*A Life on the Hop*, 2009) [MMW]

Media Awards. Four of the audience-voted *Watsonstage.com* awards went to the Roald Dahl adaptation *Matilda the Musical*; Danny Boyle won best director for *Frankenstein*. (BBC, 20 February) [MPJ]

Thog's Masterclass. *Socratic Dept.* 'The question hung there like an invisible cloud of flatulence.' (Neal Stephenson, *Reamde*, 2011) [PM] ● *Dept of Nautical Detail.* 'Stan and Olivia ate noodles together and then proceeded by taxi to Sembawang Wharves, where Olivia boarded an American destroyer in a long raincoat with the hood up while carrying a large umbrella.' (*Ibid*) *Dept of Sudden Insight.* '... and saw that the entire train of thought concerning menstrual blood had been a dangerous exercise in self-absorption.' (*Ibid*) ● *Watchslug Dept.* 'The iron door at the top stood unbolted and ajar, and across its threshold John lay unconscious, scavenger-slugs already sniffing enquiringly at his face and hands.' (Barbara Hambly, *Dragonsbane*, 1986) [SM] ● *Master of Concealment Dept.* 'Gill Templer could not find Rebus. He had disappeared as though he had been a shadow merely and not a man at all. ... He might have been hiding under her feet, under her desk, in her clothes, and she would never have found him.' (Ian Rankin, *Knots & Crosses*, 1987) [SB]

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