



Ansible 293 December 2011

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 demonstration that $1 + 1 = 1.5708$.

The Ship Who Mourned

Stephen Baxter learned that his former fan site baxterium.org.uk is now devoted to the sf dream of cosmetic dentistry: 'Good God!'

Harlan Ellison's lawsuit against the *In Time* movie people (see A291) has been voluntarily dropped, according to the *Hollywood Reporter* (30 November), after Ellison actually saw the film himself: 'It's conceivable that he wasn't very impressed.' Each side will pay its own legal costs. The earlier online report that this case had been settled in Ellison's favour, with a screen credit for him added to the film, was false: a Yahoo News contributor failed to check the claim found in an undocumented Wikipedia entry. (*Airlock Alpha*, 10/15 November) [AIP]

Peter James, the thriller author, has a new book: *Perfect People*, about a geneticist offering a designer baby service selecting for traits like empathy, or the ability to survive on just a few hours' sleep a night. On *Radio 5 Live*, the host asked him if this was sf. His Atwoodian reply: 'No, it's about the science of the near future.' (30 November) [MPJ]

John Meaney remembers: 'Anne McCaffrey was the finest, most accomplished and brightest human being I ever met, or could meet in any universe. She had the biggest heart of all, touching and helping so many people. / My first memory of Anne: in the elegant bar-with-indoor-swimming-pool of the Novacon hotel in '78, a charismatic, silver-haired vision in a deep-turquoise gown strode into sight; and I asked the nearest person: "Is that Anne McCaffrey?" / After hearing yes, I said: "I have to meet her." / By two o'clock in the morning, it was just the two of us in the bar, and I was captivated by her warmth and intellect; and my life was altered forever. Her final gift to me came floating across the decades, when I was guest of honour at Novacon ten days before her death. Our mutual friend Rog Peyton related something Anne told him that weekend in 1978: a message I will carry always. / To visit Dragonhold (both the second and third incarnations) was to experience a near-mystical air of peacefulness permeating a busy hold filled with people, horses, cats and love. / And books, of course. / My debt to Anne is surpassed only by my love and admiration. She touched so many hearts because she employed emotion in her stories; and she accomplished that because she felt for other people: sympathy and empathy beyond imagining. / Her story "The Ship Who Sang" was a eulogy to her father. She could never read it without crying. / Neither, now, can I. / Bless you and thank you, Anne.' (26 November)

Jason Quinn, working on a graphic-novel adaptation of H.G. Wells's 'The Chronic Argonauts', explains why: 'It's like looking at Da Vinci's doodles. Without "Argonauts" there would have been no *Time Machine*. Without *Time Machine* we'd have no *Doctor Who*, no *Time Tunnel*, none of the great sci-fi comics of the '50s. Even Dr. Doom would be stuffed without his time machine.' (*Wired*, November) [MMW]

J.K. Rowling gave evidence at the Leveson phone-hacking enquiry on 24 November, and Sky producer James Old provided a helpful note: 'Needless to say the public seating area of the room is full. A sane and sensible looking lot. No crazed Potter fans in here.' [MMcN]

Terri Windling and family have expensive 'health and legal issues'. You can help: see the benefit auction at magick4terri.livejournal.com.

Contrectant

9 Dec • **British Fantasy Society Open Night** and (for members only) Extraordinary General Meeting at the Mug House, London Bridge, London, SE1 2PF. The open meeting starts 7:30pm; the EGM 6:30pm.

10 Dec • **Canny Comic Con**, Newcastle City Library, 10am-5:30pm-ish. Free. GoH Bryan Talbot, Mary M Talbot, Paul Davidson.

15 Dec • **London Xmas Meeting** (additional to First Thursdays), cellar bar, Melton Mowbray, 18 Holborn, EC1N 2LE. All evening.

3-5 Feb 2012 • **Duple Time** (filk), Ramada Grantham Hotel. Now £40 reg; £27 unwaged; under 18 £1/year; under 6 free. Cheques: UK Filk Con, c/o Flat 1, 61 Marks Rd, Salisbury, SP1 3AY.

18 Feb 2012 • **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.

22-24 June 2012 • **SF Foundation Criticism Masterclass**, London Middlesex University, Hendon. £190 reg. Applications with CV and writing sample to farah.sf at gmail.com by 28 ebruary.

10-12 Aug 2012 • **Congenial** (Unicon/RPG), Murray Edwards College (formerly New Hall), Cambridge. GoH Phil and Kaja Foglio. £30 reg to Congenial, 19 Uphall Road, Cambridge, CB1 3HX. Book before 10 January for room discounts: see congenial.org.uk.

27-30 Sept 2012 • **Fantasycon 2012**, Royal Albion Hotel, Brighton. £50 reg (BFS members £45) until 31 December. Payment via PayPal at fantasycon2012.org/join.php, or to 10 Haycroft Gardens, Mastin Moor, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S43 3FE.

20 Oct 2012 • **BristolCon**, Ramada Hotel, Bristol. Multiple guests of honour. £15 to 31 May; £20 to 19 October; £25 at the door. Cheques to 34 Dongola Road, Bishopston, Bristol, BS7 9HP.

9-11 Nov 2012 • **Armadacon 24**, Plymouth. Details are awaited at www.armadacon.org, currently 'under construction'.

9-11 Nov 2012 • **Novacon 42**, Park Inn, Nottingham. GoH Jaine Fenn. £40 reg. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

31 Oct - 3 Nov 2013 • **World Fantasy Convention**, Hilton Brighton Metropole. Now £100 reg; £50 supp; no at-the-door or day memberships. Cheques to 130 Park View, Wembley, Middlesex, HA9 6JU; PayPal payments at www.wfc2013.org.

Rumblings. As usual: no London BSFA meeting in December.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. Question to *Esquire* sex columnist Stacey Grenrock Woods: 'I've been watching a lot of *Game of Thrones* lately. Does it give a historically accurate depiction of sex acts?' Answer: 'The *Game of Thrones* franchise has its hooves firmly dug into the genre known as "fantasy", which, according to my *Norton Anthology*, relies on supernatural phenomena as a primary element of plot, theme, or setting, and permits the creator to put in as many tits as he wants.' [MMW] • *Dept of the Blindingly Obvious*: 'The funny thing is that *Cat's Cradle*, in the central structure of its plot, is essentially a genre novel: no more or less than an Agatha Christie mystery, a Georgette Heyer romance, or a Louis L'Amour western.' (Joseph Bottum reviewing Kurt Vonnegut's *Novels and Stories, 1963-1973*, *Weekly Standard*, 21 November) [MMW]

Awards. *Children's BAFTAs*: best film was *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2*, which also won the 'Kid's Vote' audience award. [MPJ] • *Evening Standard Theatre Awards*: best actor, Benedict Cumberbatch and Jonny Lee Miller jointly for their alternating roles as creator and creature in the National Theatre *Frankenstein*. [MPJ] • *First Fandom Hall of Fame*: Jay Kay Klein; (posthumous) Oliver Saari. • *Gaylactic Spectrum* (gay etc sf/fantasy): Kathe Koja, *Under the Poppy*. [L] • *Honorary Oscars* went to James Earl Jones (voice of Darth Vader) and make-up expert Dick Smith (*The Exorcist* etc). (BBC) [AW] • *Nova Awards* for UK/Irish fan achievement: *FANZINE Head*, ed. Doug Bell & Christina Lake. FAN WRITER: Claire Brialey. FAN ARTIST: Dave Hicks. [SG] • *Rotsler Award* for long-time achievement in fanzine art: D. West of the 'sour wit and satirical eye'. • *Scottish BAFTAs* (tv): Terry Pratchett personally accepted the Best Single Documentary award for his 2011 'Terry Pratchett: Choosing To Die'. (*Scotsman*, 14 November) [SB]

Science Masterclass. 'Prehistoric Digs. Discover a hidden 3D dinosaur skeleton! Excavate and discover scale replica bones of your favorite dino embedded in soft, sedimentary rock. Then assemble the scattered bones to reveal your very own 10" museum quality reproduction of a 70 million year old 3D dinosaur skeleton. Specify T-Rex, Triceratops, Stegosaurus, or Mammoth.' (Museum Tour catalogue, 2011-2012) [PL] • *Weather Control Dept*. 'In some sections of the planet it was literally raining bathtubs.' [The cunning solution:] 'He began burning the water in the atmosphere, turning it into vapour which he then shot into space where it wouldn't harm any primitive spaceships that these people might some day send up.' (John M. Faucette, *Crown of Infinity*, 1968) [BA] • *General Relativity Dept*. 'The earth's rotation slows and days

lengthen, first by six minutes, then 12, then 24. As the phenomenon—known as “the slowing”—takes hold, days stretch to 48 hours, and gravity weakens, with birds ceasing to fly and astronauts stranded far from earth.’ (*Guardian* summary of Karen Thompson Walker’s ‘eerily prescient novel’ *The Age of Miracles*, forthcoming in mid-2012) [AL]

R.I.P. Mick Anglo (1916-2011), UK comics writer and novelist who created the British superhero Marvelman (much later renamed Miracleman) in 1954 and wrote over 730 issues of this and related comics, died on 31 October aged 95. [PDF] ● **Chris Croughton** aka *Keris*, popular UK fan, filker and sound-desk technician at various conventions, died in a road accident on 10 November; he was 55. He had been inducted into the Filk Hall of Fame in 2007. [RC] ● **Les Daniels** (1943-2011), US author of the ‘Don Sebastian de Villanueva’ historical vampire novels beginning with *The Black Castle* (1978), died in early November. He also edited horror anthologies and published nonfiction studies of horror and, extensively, comics. [PDF] ● **Richard Gordon** (1925-2011), London-born producer of many sf/horror B-movies including *Fiend Without a Face* (1958), *Corridors of Blood* (1958), *First Man into Space* (1959), *Devil Doll* (1964) and finally *Inseminoid* (1981), died on 1 November; he was 85. [AMB] ● **Anne McCaffrey** (1926-2011), Irish-resident US author who as the much-loved author of *Dragonflight* (1968) and many related books needs no introduction, died from a sudden stroke on 21 November. She was 85. Another hugely popular work that led to several sequels was *The Ship Who Sang* (1969). Her honours include the Hugo (she was the first woman to win one for fiction) and the Nebula (she and Kate Wilhelm were the first female winners) for *Dragonflight*’s component stories ‘Weyr Search’ and ‘Dragonrider’; the SFWA Grand Master Award in 2005; and entry to the Science Fiction Hall of Fame in 2006. See John Meaney’s eulogy above. ● **Michelle Muijsert** (1962-2011), New Zealand-born fan, fanzine publisher (*The Space Wastrel*) and convention runner who was highly active in the 1980s and 1990s, died unexpectedly in Melbourne on 8 November. She was 49. [ML] ● **John Neville** (1925-2011), UK stage and later film actor whose best-known genre roles were the title part in *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (1988) and the ‘Well-Manicured Man’ in *The X-Files*, died on 19 November; he was 86. [MPJ] ● **Susan Palermo-Piscitello**, popular and multi-talented US fan who had been Vice President of Operations for Sandy Frank Productions (which imported Japanese sf films and tv) and more recently worked in independent horror videos, died on 23 November; she was 59. [JHB] ● **Anne Ridler** (circa 1930-2011), Shanghai-born UK actress who appeared in several genre tv series from the 1960s to the 1980s—*Doctor Who* ‘The Wheel in Space’, *Moonbase 3*, *Tom’s Midnight Garden*, *The Tomorrow People* and *Terrahawks*—reportedly died in early August. [DP] ● **Ken Russell** (1927-2011), UK film director whose work ranged from the bizarrely to the brilliantly eccentric, died on 27 November; he was 84. Films of genre interest include *Billion Dollar Brain* (1967, remotely based on the novel by Len Deighton), *Tommy* (1975), *Altered States* (1980; Paddy Chayefsky), *Faust* (1985), *Gothic* (1986; about Mary Shelley and *Frankenstein*), *The Lair of the White Worm* (1988; Bram Stoker) and *The Fall of the Louse of Usher* (2002; remixing Poe). ● **Alvin Schwartz** (1916-2011), US comics writer who from 1942 to 1958 scripted the adventures of many DC superheroes—notably Batman, Superman (where he took credit for inventing the Bizarro concept), Wonder Woman, The Flash and Green Lantern—died on 28 October aged 95. [PDF] ● **Karl Slover** (1918-2011), Austria-Hungary-born US actor who played four Munchkin roles in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) and was one of the last surviving cast members, died on 15 November; he was 93. [MPJ]

As Others See Us II. On sf magazine letter columns and other ‘departments’ containing input from readers: ‘Pseudo-scientific and other specialized fiction sheets devote a bit more space to departments because so many of their readers are cranks who take a grim pleasure in finding flaws and showing off their juvenile knowledge.’ (Harold Brainerd Hersey, *Pulpwood Editor: The Fabulous World of the Thriller Magazines Revealed by a Veteran Editor and Publisher*, 1937) [BHi]

Court Circular. The lawyers of the Tolkien estate and The Saul Zaentz Company (t/a Middle-Earth Enterprises) have told the small Birmingham café The Hungry Hobbit to drop the trademarked word ‘Hobbit’—though the place had just been named as ‘official café’ of the authorized Tolkien tourist attraction across the road at Sarehole Mill. Would ‘Hungry Halfling’ be OK? (*Birmingham Mail*, 19 November) [SN]

Outraged Letters. *Simon R. Green* places his pulse on the cultural finger: ‘Back in the early sixties, when Dalekmania was at its height, the *Blue Peter* tv show demonstrated its favourite toys for Christmas. (Plugging? Perish the thought.) And one of them was the Daleks Cutamatic.

A sheet of plastic with Dalek shapes on, and a heated electric wire you could use to cut round the shapes. I was eight, but even I could see the drawback; namely, cut-off little fingers dropping to the floor. I’m pretty sure the thing was withdrawn. But it’s just turned up on eBay! For six hundred pounds! ● **SMS** on science fiction foreshadowings: ‘Remember the *Soylent Green* sequence of armoured police clearing tent-inhabiting protesters off the streets by treating them as “Refuse”? Were the events at Wall Street on 15 November 2011 a darkly humorous homage to Harry Harrison, or just The News?’

Magazine Scene. *Realms of Fantasy* has gone down for the third time at issue 102—sold by Sovereign Media to Warren Lapine in 2009, by Lapine to Damnation Books in November 2010, and now cancelled by Damnation since it’s losing money still. (*SFScope*, 2 November). ● **New Worlds:** the promised November relaunch seems to have got no farther than a registration sign-up form at www.newworlds.co.uk.

As Others See Us III. *Never Too Late To Learn Dept.* ‘If you don’t know who the “Hugo” is named after, incidentally, SF is not for you.’ (John Sutherland on Vernor Vinge in *Lives of the Novelists*, 2011) [JB]

● **Spot the Omission Dept.** The December *Good Housekeeping* announces a ‘Best Novel from a New Author’ competition, run in collaboration with Orion Books, with a £25,000 prize (runners-up get laptops) for the best entry in ‘any grown up genre—whether it’s historical romance, whodunit, comedy or international spy thriller.’ [CM]

We Are Everywhere. Realizing that it’s about time we catalogued the Big Dumb Objects strewn through interstellar space by enigmatic Forerunners, the Australian National University is advertising for two Research Fellows in Galactic Archaeology. (jobs.anu.edu.au) [SU]

The Dead Past. *60 Years Ago:* “He thought that the Army was useless, and that an international police force should be established. But he emphasised that he would be prepared to fight an invasion from Mars or some other planet.” (Glasgow Conscientious Objector’s Tribunal Report—“Morning Ad”.) (*Science Fantasy News* 10, Christmas 1951) ● *30 Years Ago,* news of what (renamed) would be a major international remainder: ‘L. Ron Hubbard’s thrilling sf novel *Man, the Endangered Species* is being inspected by George Hay: apparently this snappily-titled tome runs to 20,000 pages...’ (*Ansible* 22, December 1981)

Fanfundery. *TransAtlantic Fan Fund.* Last reminder: the 2012 TAFF voting deadline is 9 December. See taff.org.uk for the ballot form. Likewise for GUFF at taff.org.uk/guff.html; deadline 22 January.

Theology Corner. Father Gabriele Amorth, former chief exorcist at the Vatican, pinpointed two manifestations of hell in a single sentence while introducing *The Rite*—another movie about exorcism—at a film festival in Umbria: ‘Practising yoga is Satanic, it leads to evil just like reading Harry Potter.’ (*Telegraph*, 25 November) [MPJ]

Random Fandom. *Chris Garcia & James Bacon* put sluggish *Ansible* to shame by publishing the 300th issue of *The Drink Tank* in November. Having 300 contributors would have been too obvious: there are 320.

Publishers & Sinners. The Night Shade Books term of ‘probation’ as a qualifying market for SFWA (see A277) was ended by SFWA on 30 November. ● Michael Rowley is now Editorial Director at Ebury Press.

Editorial. My New Year resolution will be to write an editorial.

C.o.A. *Leigh Kennedy*, 212 Old London Road, Hastings, TN35 3LX. *Mike Sherwood*, 26 Steppingley Road, Flitwick, MK45 1AJ.

Thog’s Masterclass. *Dept of the Low-Minded.* ‘She twisted her body on top of his and Tengo could feel her pubic hair against his thighs. Thick, rich hair. It was like her pubic hair was part of her thinking process.’ (Haruki Murakami, *1Q84*, trans Philip Gabriel, 2011) [PY] ● *Introspection Dept.* ‘She watched, fascinated, as the resolution of her eyes improved quickly during the last three hundred metres of her descent.’ (Arthur C. Clarke & Gentry Lee, *Rama II*, 1989) [BHa] ● *Dept of Fractal Geometry.* ‘Lily glanced into courtyards as they passed and saw the children coming out of tiny doors in their school uniforms ...’ (M.T. Anderson, *Jasper Dash and the Flame-Pits of Delaware*, 2009) [MMcA] ● *Woodshed of Gross Anatomy Dept.* ‘[I] shuddered as the de-natured alcohol corroded its way through my GI tract, not stopping until it reached the basement, where my tailbone and testicles resided like an old croquet set.’ (Joseph Gangemi, *Inamorata*, 2004) [PB]

Ansible 293 © David Langford, 2011. Thanks to Brian Ameringen, John Bark, Paul Barnett, Stephen Baxter, James H. Burns, Andrew M. Butler, Rafe Culpin, Paul Di Filippo, Steve Green, Bob Ham, Bill Higgins, Martyn P. Jackson, Locus, Mark Loney, Andy Love, Pamela Love, Monica McAbee, Martin McNeill, Caroline Mullan, Stan Nicholls, Andrew I. Porter, David Pringle, Stewart Unwin, Andrew Wells, Martin Morse Wooster, Pete Young, and our Hero Distributors: Dave Corby (BSFG), SCIS/Prophecy, Alan Stewart (Australia). Seasonal good wishes to all readers, and may 2012 be less awful than 2011. 1 December 2011