



## ANSIBLE 201 APRIL 2004

From **Dave Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU. ISSN 0265-9816 (print) 1740-942X (online). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Atom**. Available for SAE, or The Formula for the Transmutation of Borax Without the Use of Cockatrice-Egg.

**April Fool.** Time again for a round of droll 'news' items to alarm the easily deluded ... if only I can think of any. Er: Langford Boycotts Eastercon! (Sorry; I can't make it.) Jan/Feb *Interzone* Appears! (Well, I heard #193 was ready for the printer.) Harlan Ellison Changes Name In Deed Poll Shock! (Sort of. See below.) Famous US Fan Emigrates To Wales! (Geri Sullivan is considering a house in Wales, Massachusetts....) *Ansible* Folds! (That's how we get it into the envelopes.) Enough of this.

### The Sources of the Nile

**Margaret Atwood** charmed an Australian audience at the Adelaide Festival on 5 March, incidentally ensuring that yet another electronic *Ansible* will be bounced by various puritan e-mail filters. 'Would you like a question period now,' she asked halfway through her session, 'or would you like the Blue-Penis scene out of *Oryx and Crake*?' Nobody voted for questions, and the great lady remarked: 'This is the horrible truth. We'd all rather have blue penises.' [YR]

**Iain M. Banks** (for it is he) won the Best International Novel category of Italy's *Italia sf* awards, with *Inversions*.

**Harlan Ellison**® is, it seems, the new style of The Artist Formerly Known As Harlan Ellison. Look on my works, ye mighty ... [JE]

**Hugo Gernsback** is honoured by 70-cent postage stamps issued in his native Luxembourg on 16 March, showing our hero's head with the sideways caption 'HUGO GERNSBACK/ECRIVAIN.INVENTEUR 1884-1967'. [AS]

**Charles L. Grant**, noted horror author, has been diagnosed with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and for the foreseeable future will need bottled oxygen to stay alive. No health insurance, alas. Donations to a 'Fresh Air Fund' are solicited by his wife Kathryn Ptacek. Dollar checks should be made out to her at PO Box 97, Newton, NJ 07860-0097, USA; Paypal transfers to katptacek[at]yahoo.com.

**George R.R. Martin** received the 2004 Skylark Award from NESFA.

**Matt Ruff** is the latest Tiptree Award winner, for his 2003 novel *Set This House in Order: A Romance of Souls*. Presentation at WisCon, May.

**Karen Traviss** is shocked, shocked, shocked by the 17 March announcement of Swiss Army knives with USB memory-stick 'blades', as predicted in her *sf* novel *City of Pearl*. Just like Arthur C. Clarke with geosynchronous satellites, she failed to secure the patent. I wonder whether any *sf* satirist foretold the other amazing innovation revealed in the same news item: Swiss Army knives for air travellers, with no blades. (Despite the date, Dave Langford Is Not Making This Up.)

**John Woo** explains the tremendous critical success of his Dick-based film *Paycheck*: "'I wanted to emphasise the romance of the story rather than the science fiction,'" Woo says. "Science fiction requires special effects. I don't have a mind for that. I think human behaviour is a special effect.'" (*The Age*, Australia, 15 March) [MLR]

### Conchobar

3 Apr • **Dracula Society AGM** and mass vampire book signing, Victoria Pub, 10A Strathearn Place, London W2. 6pm-10pm. £2 admission.

3 Apr • **TTA Con 5** (*The Third Alternative* magazine), The Anchor pub, 'by the river', Cambridge. 12 noon to late. All welcome.

9-12 Apr • **Concourse** (Eastercon), Blackpool Winter Gardens. Advance booking now closed. £60 reg at the door; unwaged £25. Day rates: Fri £10, Sat £20, Sun £20, Mon £10. Children half price.

12 Apr • **Reading at Borders**, Oxford St, London. 6:30pm. With Pat Cadigan, Jeff Ford, Lucius Shepard, and Jeff Vandermeer.

16 Apr • **Underground Comix** panel at the ICA, The Mall, London, SW1Y 5AH. 7pm. With Bryan Talbot, Hunt Emerson, and Gilbert Shelton. £8 admission, £7 concessions, £6 ICA members.

28 Apr • **BSFA Open Meeting**, White Hart pub, 119-121 Bishopsgate (nr Liverpool St Station), London. 6pm on. With Steph Swainston.

1-3 May • **plokta.con 3.0**, Chequers Hotel, Newbury. GoH Charles Stross. £25 reg; 'may go up in 2004', but apparently not yet. Cheques to Plokta c/o Mike Scott, 39 Fitzroy Court, Croydon, CR0 2AX.

8-9 May • **Odyssey 2004**, 'Official Arthur C. Clarke Convention', Tacchi-Morris Arts Centre, School Rd, Taunton, TA2 8PD. Many guests,

mostly media; Arthur C. Clarke video link planned. £38.00 reg (+£3.50 for concert, Sat). Bookings through T-M Arts Centre, 01823 414141.

9 May • **Fantasy Fair**, The Cresset Exhibition Centre, Bretton, Peterborough. 10:30am-4pm. Contact: 01477 534626.

16-17 Oct • **Octocon 2004** (Irish national con), Chief O'Neill's Hotel, Smithfield Village, Dublin 7. Now €30/£20 reg. Contact Basement Flat, 26 Longford Terrace, Monkstown, Co. Dublin, Ireland.

5-7 Nov • **Novacon 34**, Quality Hotel, Walsall. GoH Ian Watson. £33 reg until end of Eastercon, then £36 to 26 Oct; £40 at door. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ; 0114 281 1572.

12-14 Nov • **Armadacon 16**, Copthorne Hotel, Plymouth. GoH Lionel Fanthorpe, Bernard Pearson, more TBA. £30 reg, £27 concessions. Contact Mrs M. Pritchard, 4 Gleneagle Ave, Plymouth, PL3 5HL.

13-14 Nov • **P-Con 2**, Ashling Hotel, Parkgate St, Dublin 8. £15/€30 reg until after Eastercon, then £20/€30 (TBC). £10/€10 supp. Contact: Yellow Brick Rd, 8 Bachelors Walk, Dublin 1, Ireland.

4-8 Aug 05 • **Interaction** (63rd Worldcon), SECC, Glasgow. £95/\$155/€145/\$CAN225 reg, rising on 1 June 2004 for some currencies, owing to exchange rate issues: e.g. \$170, \$CAN245. (£ and € rates unchanged.) Contact 379 Myrtle Rd, Sheffield, S2 3HQ. In North America: PO Box 58009, Louisville, Kentucky, KY 40268-0009, USA.

**Japan in 2007**, the Worldcon bid, offers unspecified 'treasure' for prizes in its haiku competition. Entries in *English* to Peggy Rae Sapienza, PO Box 314, Annapolis Junction, MD 20701, USA—by 28 Aug 04.

### Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See Us.** Mark Harris wraps up his positive review of Guy Gavriel Kay's *The Last Light of the Sun* with a traditional acid drop: 'Most fantasy writing is aimed at airheads with little, if any, knowledge of the past.' (*Toronto Globe & Mail*, 6 March) [EW] • Christopher Farah's review of *The Confessions of Max Tivoli* (Salon.com, 8 March 8) is classic: 'Andrew Sean Greer's second novel has a high-concept premise that seems perfect for one of those \$3 mass-market sci-fi/fantasy paperbacks. A man lives his entire life aging in reverse [...] Of course, in a cheap sci-fi book, the main character's name would have to be something that sounds like a new brand of antidepressant medication—and the story would be trite, gimmicky and shallow. Instead, *The Confessions of Max Tivoli* is a serious work of literature ...' [MT/PWo/SB]

**W.H. Smith Awards.** The 2004 'People's Choice' for best fiction, voted by 148,000 readers, was *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*—leading to further 'invisibling' of the author's 2001 Hugo (see also A199): 'J.K. Rowling gets the headlines for finally winning an "adult" prize,' said *Publishers Lunch* (17 March). Meanwhile, Terry Pratchett triumphed in the 'Teen Choice' category with *The Wee Free Men*.

**R.I.P. Bradford M. Day** (1916-2004), major US *sf* bibliographer 'whose ... work is one of the foundations on which modern *sf* scholarship has been built' (*SFE*), died on 25 February. [NB] • **Philip Gilbert** (1931-2004), Canadian actor seen in *The Frozen Dead*, *Superman III* and a 1961 *Avengers* episode, died on 6 January aged 72. He was the voice of the computer TIM in *The Tomorrow People* (1973-9). [CM] • **Mel Hunter**, 1929-2004, US *sf* artist responsible for many magazine cover paintings since 1953, died from bone cancer on 20 February. The last of his *F&SF* 'robot' series covers appeared in May 2003. [GVG] • **Keith L. Justice** (1949-2004), US *sf* fan and bibliographer, died—with his wife—in a car accident on 27 February. His bibliography-in-progress of Robert Silverberg is to be completed by Phil Stephensen-Payne, who welcomes assistance. • **René Laloux** (1929-2004), French film director best known in *sf* for *Fantastic Planet* (*La Planète sauvage*, 1973), died on 14 March; he was 75. [L] • **Katherine Lawrence**, US TV *sf* scriptwriter who also wrote short stories and was active in SFWA, was found dead on 27 March and is thought to have committed suicide on the 25th. [SHS/JS] • **Robert Merle** (1908-2004), French author of *The Day of the Dolphin* (*Un animal doué de raison*, 1968) and the Campbell Award-winning *Malevil* (1972), both filmed, died near Paris on 27 March. He was 95. France awarded him the Prix Goncourt in 1949. [J-ML] •

Mercedes McCambridge (1916-2004), US actress who was the voice of the demon-possessed girl in the 1973 film of *The Exorcist*, died on 14 March; she was 87. [AIP] ● *Sir Peter Ustinov* (1921-2004), playwright, actor, director and novelist, died on 28 March aged 88. [SG] He wrote, directed and produced the 1947 film of F.Anstey's comic fantasy *Vice Versa*; his several other genre credits include a part in *Logan's Run* (1976). ● *Jon White* (1946-2004), US fan and book dealer whose 1962 fanzine *Inside* continued as Leland Sapiro's *Riverside Quarterly*, died on 12 March aged 57. Avedon Carol writes: 'It was a shock, as it always is, even though he had been sickly for as long as I've known him and in truth it's a surprise that he lasted this long. There's not much online about him but he published *Riverside Quarterly* and he was a really sweet guy and I'm sorry I'm never going to see him again.' ● *Paul Winfield* (1941-2004), US actor whose genre films included *Star Trek: The Wrath of Khan*, *Damnation Alley*, *The Terminator*, and *Mars Attacks!*, died from a heart attack on 7 March; he was 62. [SFS]

**What the Papers Say.** According to Gerald Jonas in the *New York Times Book Review* (7 March), 'Ben Bova is the last of the great pulp writers.' John Boston, who spotted this, cryptically adds: 'I'm reminded of Gibbon's comment about the Holy Roman Empire.'

**Publishers and Sinners.** Another revenant is about to stalk among us: *Amazing Stories*, founded by Hugo Gernsback in 1926, will have a July relaunch from Paizo Publishing ([www.paizo.com](http://www.paizo.com)). Editor Dave Gross, who also edits *Star Wars Insider*, promises to transcend boring old sf with a 'cross-media gamut of sci-fi, fantasy, super heroes, and supernatural horror.' ● Famous literary agent and publisher Richard Curtis has come up with a splendid wheeze to cover expenses. His 'E-Reads' authors have learned to their joy that the print-on-demand distributor's (admittedly modest) annual fee for keeping each POD title available is being deducted from authors' royalties.

**ICFA Awards.** At the International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts in March, K.J.Bishop (*The Etched City*) won the William L. Crawford Award for best new fantasy novelist; Spanish translator/editor Marcial Souto received the Distinguished Scholarship Award. [L]

**Random Fandom.** *John Bangsund* (reports Yvonne Rousseau) 'is living proof that a golfball can pass through a keyhole: that is, on Wednesday 26 February, he had gallstones reputed to be golfball-size successfully removed by keyhole surgery, and was allowed to return home again on Sunday 29 February.' ● *Tim Broadribb* is 'in hospital in Bristol recovering from large doses of morphine attendant on peritonitis and diverticulitis,' writes Chris Bell, adding that Tim was surprised and displeased to find himself listed in Concourse PR4 as jointly running 'Tech', which he is definitely not. ● *Peter Crump* won the £1000 first prize in the Wrexham Science Festival/BBC2W competition for short sf films, 5 minutes or less. His winning entry *Harvest* may yet be televised. ● *Steve Green* feels I should be warned: 'The next *Ansible* is due out on April 1st, so you're no doubt watching out for the usual bogus submissions: "Tony Berry drops real ale for Carlsberg at Novacon", "Andy Hooper wins humour prize", that kind of thing.'

**As Ourselves See Us.** Gwyneth Jones reviews *Newton's Wake* by Ken MacLeod: 'Space opera writers and readers like high-concept ideas, and have limited regard for human details.' (*Guardian*, 27 March) [SS]

**Spiel Cheque Spatial!** *Dept of Anxious Architecture*: 'The woman chattered away in a slightly nervous manor ...' *Dept of Intermittent Agriculture*: 'Though the soil was reasonable, the Ulon wasn't really suitable for serial crops.' (*Pandora's Star*, Peter F.Hamilton, 2004) [MQ] Peter appreciates Thog's earlier attentions: 'Ah bugger, thought I'd slipped under the radar. But you'll be happy to hear there's a hotel called Langford Towers in book 2; sort of like Fawltly but too grotty to attract any guests.' Later he relented: 'In my politically correct quest for non-offending anyone I have now given the Langford Towers a huge and expensive makeover, the useless staff were all fired, management consultants brought in, and two VIP characters have now booked in for a relaxing holiday. Of course, the hotel might get vaporized by aliens before the end of the book, but hey, those are the breaks.'

**FAN Awards.** FANZINE *Trap Door*. FANWRITER Gordon Eklund. ARTIST Steve Stiles. HUMORIST Andy Hooper. NEW FAN Pete Young. SPECIAL AWARDS Tracy Benton ([Corflu.org](http://Corflu.org)) and Bill Burns ([Efanazines.com](http://Efanazines.com)). [JW]

**Small Press.** *Dept of Asking For It*. Thog greatly admires the bold submission guidelines of *The Corpse Magazine*, Aloha, Oregon: 'Needs: Stories that disturb, eviscerate and horrify.' [PB]

**Outraged Letters.** *Cory Doctorow* on *A200*: 'I wasn't defending the practice of duplicating books. I was attacking the idea that carriers—ISPs—should be liable for what their users do, that they should be responsible for determining on their own whether a newsgroup was

"too infringing" to carry, that their legal departments should be used as a stand-in for the judgements handed down by a court. ● I was arguing that my carrier's role should be to deliver the bits I ask for, and that authors and other aggrieved parties should seek their remedies from infringers, not from the people who provide the transmission apparatus. In particular, I was arguing to uphold the principle that just because infringing material is known to appear in a newsgroup, that a carrier should have no burden to eliminate that group from its feed—just as a library should have no burden to remove its photocopiers even though some of the uses to which they are put are undoubtedly infringing. ● I was arguing to uphold the Betamax principle: that a technology capable of a substantial noninfringing use is lawful. This is a legal principle that has stood all of us in good stead for twenty years since the Supremes handed it down, and will hold up for twenty more if I have anything to do with it. ● Remember, popular speech never needs defending.' ● I confessed, shamefacedly, that while cutting *A200* to fit the page I'd lost my own acknowledgement that the current Ellison/AOL lawsuit seemed a bit like suing the post office for carrying offensive mail. Cory: 'Heh—chalk up another axis on which bits are superior to atoms: no need to copyfit with electronic text!' He has me there.

**Fanfudery.** *TAFF*: the 2004 westbound race is under way, with James Bacon and Anders Holmström contending for the trip to Noreascon 4. Voting deadline is 5 June. Ballots available from *Ansible* etc.

**James White Award.** Finalists for the latest award, presented annually for a short story by a new writer, have been released: Tim P.Keating, 'One Sick Vampire'; Brenden Whelan, 'Growing Pains'; Deirdre Ruane, 'Lost Things Saved in Boxes'; Matthew G Nelson, 'The Big Dave Special'; John Garrison, 'The Tale of Pol Krage'. Winner to be announced at the 2004 Eastercon in Blackpool (see events list).

**More Outraged Letters.** *Harry Harrison* on *A198*: 'Oh dear. Taras Wolansky seems to be bereft of any sense of humor. I was trying to liven up a rather turgid interview when I said that *Make Room! Make Room!* was all lies. It is of course a fine, factual, realistic novel. Well—the fen laughed even if Taras didn't.' ● *David Kennedy* wonders about those Rowling translations: 'Speaking as the person who, for reasons that seemed like a good idea at the time, has translated two Discworld short stories into Scots (not Scottish Gaelic, you understand, but the language of Robbie Burns and Rab C.Nesbitt), I am now wondering if there might be a market for *Hendrie Patter an the Wiceman's Stane*. Or at least if I could convince a publisher that there is.' ● *Mark A.Mandel*, dismisses related speculations in the gutter press (*Ansible*): 'The Klingon Language Institute ([www.kli.org](http://www.kli.org)) has released Klingon versions—or the Klingon originals, as the case may be—of *Hamlet*, *Gilgamesh*, and most recently *Much Ado About Nothing*. I have been asked to participate in the next translation project, of which I will say only that it is not a Harry Potter book.' For this relief, much thanks.

**C.o.A.** *Andrew M.Butler*, Dept of Media, Canterbury Christ Church University College, Canterbury, CT1 1QU.

**Group Gropes.** *London First Thursdays*. The March meeting was indeed in The Florence Nightingale (on roundabout at South Bank end of Westminster Bridge), where rumours of a new landlord proved false. Meanwhile, having allegedly stocked up on real ale for 4 March, The Barley Mow management was annoyed by the lack of fans to drink it, and may not welcome a return. Meetings continue in the FN for the present, with the nearby Jubilee in reserve if fandom is ousted again.

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Transubstantiation Dept*. 'This Caramon pooled, ordering the grain pounded into flour or maize' (Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman, *War of the Twins*, 1986) [TW] ● *Likeness Dept*. 'They weren't human; they were a new species. Humanlike, but not like them.' *Blues Dept*. 'The bassist was a tall, pretty older woman whose rugged looks matched her jeans.' (both Paul Black, *The Tels*, 2003) [PB] ● *Physiognomy Dept*. 'He does a little shifting of the eyes under this shit-eating grin ...' (Steve Martini, *Undue Influence*, 1994) [PB] ● *Strange Allergens Dept*. 'Primavera put a finger to my lips, her nose wrinkling in an allergy of indecision.' (Richard Calder, *Dead Girls*, 1993) [BA] ● *Thin Red Line Dept*. '... battalions of blood marching into formation on the parade ground of his face.' (Malcolm Knox, *A Private Man*, 2004.) [KH]

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