



Ansible 212 March 2005

From **Dave Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU. <http://ansible.co.uk>. Fax 0705 080 1534. ISSN 0265-9816 (print) 1740-942X (online). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Bill Rotsler**. Available for SAE or a sponge-cat with no eyes at all.

Geekery. Many familiar names appear on the 18-strong shortlist of the first Man Booker International Prize of £60,000 for life achievement in fiction. Here they're listed in order of sf/fantasy interest, as measured by entry length in the Clute/Nicholls and Clute/Grant *Encyclopedias*....

1609 words: Stanislaw Lem (Poland). 885: Gabriel Garcia Marquez (Colombia). 512: Doris Lessing (UK). 315: Muriel Spark (UK). 312: John Updike (US) (the only finalist who's in both books—191 *EoSf*, 121 *EoF*). 302: Milan Kundera (Czech Republic). 301: Cynthia Ozick (US). 295: Gunter Grass (Germany). 270: Margaret Atwood (Canada). 215: Ian McEwan (UK). 95: Saul Bellow (Canada). 79: Philip Roth (US) 6: Ismail Kadare (Albania). • The rest score zero. Roth's total would now be boosted a bit by *The Plot Against America*, and Atwood's by *Oryx and Crake* despite its disqualifying lack of talking squid in outer space. *The Plain People of Fandom*: But what exactly is the cosmic significance of this ranking? *Myself*: I think I need to get out of the house more.

The Musroid World

Margaret Atwood continues to enthuse about her remote-controlled autograph machine, most recently in *The Globe and Mail*. [MEd] Thanks to her initiative, I'm sure, hordes of resistlessly invasive autograph-robots will one day put an end to Terry Pratchett's recurring nightmare that somewhere, somehow, there remains an unsigned copy out there.

Iain Banks achieved the ultimate accolade of having his name dropped in a BBC Radio 4 *Round Britain Quiz* question. Those participating were careful to indicate the gulf between Iain Banks ('black comedy') and Iain M. Banks ('sci-fi'). Or, to put it another way: 'Iain Banks [...] who writes novels and also sci-fi.' (28 February) [SA] • An unlikely fragment of Banksiana from the *Birmingham Post*'s 'Birthdays' column on 16 Feb: '1954: Iain Banks, 51, author, winner of the Booker Prize in 1998.' [DH] But perhaps he also writes as Ian M. McEwan.

H.R. Giger was declared a Grandmaster in the latest Spectrum sf/fantasy art awards. [L]

Simon R. Green once again angles for *Ansible* publicity in his latest space opera *Deathstalker Coda* (2005), whose hero deals summarily with the bit-part villain of Chapter Three despite the latter's surrender: 'He looked at deLangford, and let his anger lash out. DeLangford's head exploded, showering the surroundings with blood and brains and skull fragments. The body sank slowly to its knees, blood fountaining from the neck ...' Was it something I said?

Kazuo Ishiguro offers an unusually tactful example of the famous distancing-oneself-from-sf technique: '[H]is latest book, *Never Let Me Go*, has already been tagged as sci-fi because of his use of clones. "But there are things I am more interested in than the clone thing," he says. "How are they trying to find their place in the world and make sense of their lives? To what extent can they transcend their lives? As time starts to run out, what are the things that really matter? Most of the things that concern them concern us all, but with them it is concertinaed into this relatively short period of time." And so on. (*The Guardian*, 19 Feb) [CP]

Anne McCaffrey will be honoured as the latest SFWA Grand Master at the 2005 Nebula Awards weekend (28 April to 1 May).

Andre Norton, who was 93 on 17 February, was hospitalized with 'flu and pneumonia but has since returned home for hospice care. On the 21st, her carer Sue Stewart explained that Norton preferred to await the end in familiar surroundings: 'She is losing the battle with her illness and is tired of fighting.' • Meanwhile on 20 February, SFWA announced its new Andre Norton Award for young-adult sf and fantasy, to be run on the same lines as the Nebulas.

Terry Pratchett's *A Hat Full of Sky* has been selected by the American Library Association as both an ALA Notable Book and an ALA Best Book for Young Adults. [CS]

Concolorate

11-13 Mar • **DeciKon** (AFKT *Trek*), Fircroft Hotel, Bournemouth. £30 reg. Contact 12 Greenfield Rd, London, N15 5EP. 0208 801 8867.

23 Mar • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Star pub, West Halkin Mews,

London, SW1. 6pm onward; fans in bar from 5pm. With Liz Williams.

25-28 Mar • **Paragon2** (Eastercon), Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley, Leics. £45 reg, £20 supp, £22.50 junior (12-16), £5 child (5-11), infants free. *At-door rates apply from 21 March*: £75 full, £35 jr, others as before. Day: Fri or Mon £15, £7.50 jr; Sat or Sun £35, £20 jr. Contact 4 Burnside Ave, Sheffield, S8 9FR. Phone 0114 281 0674.

16 Apr • **Looking Upwards** (BSFA/SF Foundation), Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London, WC1. 10:30am-5pm. GoH: BSFA Ian McDonald, SFF Karen Traviss. Admission free. Includes both AGMs.

3-5 Jun • **Construction V**, Interaction 'Worldcon-building weekend'. Location TBC but likely to be south-east England. Admission free.

4-8 Aug • **Interaction** (63rd Worldcon), SECC, Glasgow. £110/\$195/Euro165 reg. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ. In North America: PO Box 58009, Louisville, Kentucky, KY 40268-0009, USA. *Note that Interaction's final Hugo nominations deadline is 11 March.*

5-7 Aug 05 • **Bindweed**, billed in *A184* as a 'Get Out Of Worldcon Free relaxacon, somewhere in York', has withered. The core group will apparently be having a private party rather than a convention.

11-12 Mar 06 • **P-Con III**, Ashling Hotel, Dublin. (NB slight correction to previously announced dates.) GoH Susanna Clarke. Euro25 reg. Contact Yellow Brick Rd, 8 Bachelors Walk, Dublin 1, Ireland.

Rumblings • **British Fantasy Society**: the 4 March London open night had pub problems and was postponed to April—date/venue TBA.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. Andrew Motion, Poet Laureate, made a traditional Nice Distinction when defining 'Landscapes of the Mind' on BBC Radio 4's *A Map of British Poetry* (6 Mar): 'I don't mean science fiction poems. I mean poems which establish a manifestly invented world in order to advance recognisable truths about human nature.' Not like science fiction *at all*, then. [HS] • Michael Jackson, of all people, has grasped the essential point that sf is fiction: he compares press coverage of his legal entanglements to 'watching science fiction. It's not true.' [NG]

Nebula Final Ballot. Here are the novel and screenplay shortlists: NOVEL David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas*; Cory Doctorow, *Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom*; Gene Wolfe, *The Knight*; Jack McDevitt, *Omega*; Lois McMaster Bujold, *Paladin of Souls*; Sean Stewart, *Perfect Circle*. (This is very like the six-title preliminary ballot, but with *Cloud Atlas* instead of S.M. Stirling's *Conquistador*. Presumably Stirling placed sixth and thus dropped off the final list; *Cloud Atlas* was added by the Nebula jury.) • SCREENPLAY *The Butterfly Effect*; *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*; *The Incredibles*; *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*. [SFWA]

Group Gropes. London's 1st-Thursday fan meetings remain on the move. No one actually booked the Silver Cross for 3 March, and the low turnout of 30-40 fans was lost in the crowd. Paul Treadaway felt that the consensus for 7 April was to try Walkers of Holborn (Norwich St, near Chancery Lane tube station), which has a large cellar bar and an interested landlord. Others (Bernie Peek) may stick with the Silver Cross, if only as a base camp for further pub-seeking explorations.

R.I.P. F.M. 'Buz' Busby (1921-2005), US author and long-time sf fan, died on 17 February after a lengthy illness; he was 83. Buz and his wife Elinor, who survives him, were co-editors of *Cry [of the Nameless]* when it won the Best Fanzine Hugo in 1960. In an sf career running from his 1957 *Future SF* magazine debut to the late 1990s, his best known novels were *Cage a Man* (1974) and *Rissa Kerguelen* (1976). Later he felt 'sidelined' by the decline of sf midlist publishing: as he wrote to *Ansible* in 2002, 'I got off about five more books before it caught up with me, but ya can't fight regress.' He will be missed. • **Jack L. Chalker** (1944-2005), well-known US sf writer, editor (Mirage Press) and fan, died on the morning of 11 February; he was only 60. His 6 December collapse was reported in *Runcible* 153. Jack's early, idiosyncratic sf novels *A Jungle of Stars* (1976), *Midnight at the Well of Souls* (1977) and *Dancers in the Afterglow* (1978) set a pattern of compulsive, large-scale adventures usually involving bizarre character metamorphoses and (since *Midnight*) building into multi-volume series, some of them best-

sellers. John Clute in the *Encyclopedia of SF* identified him, despite cavils about overproduction, as 'a novelist of considerable flair, with an ear acutely attuned to the secret dreams of freedom mortals tend to dream'. Much sympathy to his widow Eva Whitley and their family. ● **Sandra Dee** (1942-2005), US actress who appeared in *The Dunwich Horror* (1970), died on 20 February aged 62. ● **Philip DeGuere** (1944-2005), US writer, producer and director who worked on the 1978 TV movie *Dr Strange, The Twilight Zone* (1980s revival; he wrote 3 episodes) and *Max Headroom* (1987), died on 24 January. He was 60. ● **Sonya Dorman** (1924-2005), US author and poet best known for short sf of the 1960s and 1970s, died on 14 February; she was 80. She won a Rhysling sf poetry award for her 'Corruption of Metals' (1977). ● **Peter Foy** (1925-2005), UK theatrical flight specialist whose 'Flying by Foy' company provided wire-flying effects for stage (*Peter Pan, Dracula the Musical, The Lion King*), screen (*Fantastic Voyage, The Wiz*) and TV (*The Flying Nun*), died on 17 February aged 79. [AIP] ● **Geoffrey Palmer** (1912-2005), British antiquarian book dealer, publisher, and author of children's ghost stories in collaboration with his long-time partner Noel Lloyd, died on 22 January aged 92. Their fantasy collections appeared from 1963 (*Ghosts Go Haunting*) to 1982 (*Haunting Stories of Ghosts and Ghouls*). [JE] ● **Ken Lake**, copious contributor to British fanzines since the early 1980s, died on 24 January from liver cancer. More than 220 of his reviews, articles and letters appeared in BSFA publications. Brian Jordan writes: 'I'll miss his regular phone calls ... and The Organization APA is weakened by his going.' ● **Dan O'Herlihy** (1919-2005), Irish-born, Oscar-nominated actor whose long career included parts in *Fail-Safe* (1964), *Halloween III* (1982), *The Last Starfighter* (1984), and two *RoboCop* films, died on 17 February aged 85. [PDF] ● **John Vernon** (1932-2005), Canadian-born actor whose most famous sf role was the voice of Big Brother in the 1956 film *1984*, died on 3 February aged 72. He also voiced such characters as Sub-Mariner and Iron Man in TV superhero animations. ● **Simone Simon** (1910-2005), French actress who gained cult fame in *Cat People* (1942) and *The Curse of the Cat People* (1944), died on 22 February. She was 94. [GVG]

FAAn Awards for 2004 fanzine activity: FANZINE *Chunga* ed. A. Hooper, R. Byers & c. juarez. FANWRITER Claire Brialey. LETTERHACK Lloyd Penney. FAN ARTIST Steve Stiles. BEST FANZINE DESIGN *Chunga*. [J&J]

We Are Everywhere. Thierry Breton, the former chief manager of France Telecom and Orange who in February was appointed Finance and Economy Minister of France, is also an SF author whose novels *Softwar* (1984), *Vatican III* (1985), and *Netwar* (1987) have been translated into 25 languages. [BS]

Outraged Letters. Which author's second-hand editions are most valued? *Ian Covell* did a little research on 17 February: 'The top 29 highest priced items on ABEbooks are by Stephen King. #30 is Ellison's *Stalking The Nightmare* with an introduction by Stephen King ... then it's King again until #111, *Legends*, with a story by Stephen King ... then it's King again until, well ... I am not even going to mention the first "different" title, at #173—an antique book about Saint STEPHEN, first KING of Hungary. You get the feeling someone misread the title.' ● *Farah Mendlesohn* finds another sf author's name taken in vain: 'In D.S. Halacy Jr's juvenile novel, *Rocket Rescue* (1968), the hero's best friend is called Harry Harrison, short and red headed. Sadly Harry dies on his first rescue mission.' No Stainless Steel Rat he. *The Guardian* had similar fun with its January discovery that Boris Johnson is not only an eccentric Tory MP and editor of *The Spectator* but also the assassin-hero of our very own Norman Spinrad's 1967 sf novel *Agent of Chaos*....

Fanfunder. *DUFF*: the 2005 Down Under Fan Fund candidates are Chris Barkley and Joe Siclari; the winner travels to the Aussie Natcon (Tasmania, June). Voting deadline is 15 April. Ballots downloadable from duff2005.blogspot.com. ● *TAFF*: don't forget the 3 April deadline! Candidates are Chaz Boston Baden, Curt Phillips and Suzanne 'Suzle' Tompkins. Meanwhile, all fandom was plunged into bogglement when a 'prototype' of James Bacon's *TAFF* report *WorldConNomicon* appeared at Corflu 2005. The full and proper 'correctly-typed' version should be available at Paragon2. Mail-order details to follow next month.

Timeslip. Another demonstration that we live in a truly sf world, from play.com's description of the DVD *The Land That Time Forgot*: 'Edgar Rice Burroughs collaborated with Michael Moorcock to write the script for *The Land Before Time*, adapted from his own novel.' [JC]

Random Fandom. *John Bangsund* 'suffered a brain haemorrhage on Saturday 19 February. He is resting in hospital and it is too early to say what the prognosis will be.' [EC] Some improvement has since been reported, but John is on poor shape and may need long-term residential care. Get Well cards c/o Sally Yeoland, 151 Cramer St, Preston, Vic

3072, Australia. ● *Morgan Gallagher & David L. Brown* became the proud parents of Hugh Gallagher on 27 Jan. [CMJ] ● *Joe Gordon*, fired from Waterstone's Edinburgh bookshop for satirical weblog remarks (see A211), rode the resulting wave of publicity to a new job at the Edinburgh branch of Forbidden Planet—where he's relishing the supreme irony of being put in charge of the official FP International weblog. Remembering the FP chain's reputation for downplaying out-moded forms of sf like books, Charlie Stross adds: 'And hopefully this means Forbidden Planet will, gasp, start selling sc**nc* f*ct**n again real soon now.' ● *Dave Locke* had his angioplasty on 14 Feb and returned home next day: the outlook seems good. [BBo] ● *Paul Oldroyd*, head of programming for Interaction until his illness, had heart surgery on 24 Feb: 'He was conscious for the whole thing so he could give feedback to the doctors. It took 4 hours and he described it as hours of boredom punctuated by moments of pain but he came through it fine.' [MEa] ● *Jim Young*, former US Foreign Service diplomat, has found a new career: 'for the first time, I'm actually going to be paid for acting, and in a picture with Tom Cruise in it, no less. Yes, I'm going to be an extra in *War of the Worlds*. I tend to doubt that anyone will see me on the silver screen in this, but it's a start. Then again, I will probably be the only person running from the CGI Martians who wrote a doctoral dissertation dealing with H.G. Wells...'

More Naughtiness. The cheat merchants at Digitaltermpapers.com don't merely encourage students to plagiarize but do it themselves. Ahmed A. Khan found an essay he'd written for *Strange Horizons* being sold without permission or attribution at this site (and, mysteriously with the same filename, offered for nothing at www.freessays.tv). It took ten days of pressure and publicity before Digitaltermpapers.com removed the article, which they did in surly silence without offering any account of sales. Or, of course, any payment. Writers who post scholarly essays online should keep an eye on this outfit.

C.o.A. *Keith Oborn*, Manor Barn, Cufaude Lane, Bramley, Hants, RG26 5DN. *Paul Wrigley & Debbie Cross*, 1203 SE Kibling, Troutdale, OR 97060, USA.

The Dead Past. 25 Years Ago: a high point in the history of the BSFA Awards came when 'Sex Pirates of the Blood Asteroid' by David Langford was a short-story finalist. (*Ansible* 7, Mar 1980. It didn't win.)

Celluloid Awards. BAFTA winners of genre interest were *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (original screenplay, editing) and *The Day After Tomorrow* (visual effects). The Orange Film of the Year award, voted by the general public, went to *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. ● *The Writers Guild of America Award* for best original screenplay of 2004 also went to *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. ● *Oscars 2005*: the most significant and most expected genre win was *The Incredibles* as animated feature film. Meanwhile, yet another award for original screenplay went to *Eternal Thingy of the Spotless Wossname*.

Thog's Masterclass. *Extreme Heliography Dept.* 'Signal Mirror: This item may be used to transmit messages in Morse or a similar code over distances of up to 5 miles in full sunlight, up to 2 miles during overcast weather, and up to 1 mile at night.' (*Stargate SG-1 Role-Playing Game*, 2003) [AK] ● *Dept of Ancient-Mariner Astronomy.* '... she could see nothing but the old moon with a lost star drifting between its horns.' (Patricia A. McKillip, *Heir of Sea and Fire*, 1980) [TMcD] ● *Relativity Dept.* 'The Rim Star ... went too fast. If starlight had glittered on her travelling at the speed she'd attained ... she would have been invisible. No one light-wave was fast enough to strike her and be reflected ...' (Murray Leinster, *The Other Side of Nowhere*, 1955) [BA] ● *Straight On 'Til Morning Dept.* 'You simply head your space ship toward your sun for about three million miles, take a sharp turn left and go about five or six million miles and there we will be. Please do come visit us when you build your space ship.' (Sara Cavanaugh, *A Woman in Space*, 1981) [SG] ● *Dept of Mainstream Cephalopods (or, Look At The Beak On That Bimbo!)*. "Adams won't like this," she said, and turned with a smile which was for him alone to let him take her, and helped his heart find hers by fastening her mouth on his as though she were an octopus that had lost its arms to the propellers of a tug, and had only its mouth now with which, in a world of the hunted, to hang on to wrecked spars.' (Henry Green, *Concluding*, 1978) [YH]

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