

# ANSIBLE



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**Torcon 3.** My first visit to Toronto, and my first NA Worldcon since 1980—so it was a totally new experience to, er, pick up a Hugo there: 'I'm sorry Martin Hoare can't be with us tonight...' Many thanks to all.

**Hugos.** My ego was crushed by the introduction of the George R.R. Martin Hugo Award Metric. As a GoH, George led up to his presentation of the best-novel Hugo by defining this in leering, lip-smacking tones, as The Big One. Almost he seemed to be talking about something else altogether. 'All Hugos are created equal and free—but Joe Haldeman has the big one. Connie Willis also has a big one. Ursula Le Guin has two big ones. Fortunately, Gardner Dozois has twelve little ones. Howard Waldrop has ... none at all.' The inexorable logic of this Hugo hierarchy has collapsed my own record into one little one. Plus 22 utterly infinitesimal ones. ● After suitable agonizing delays while toastmaster Spider Robinson played his guitar, sang a little song called 'Fifty Ways to Lose a Hugo', and made various rude political comments about the USA, we heard the results, culminating with: THE BIG ONE Robert Sawyer, *Hominids*. 'I'd like to thank J.K. Rowling for being late delivering her MS ...' (This result led to what I will nervously call some controversy in subsequent on-line discussion.) NOVELLA Neil Gaiman, *Coraline*. NOVELETTE Michael Swanwick, 'Slow Life'. (Novelette and Novella were presented in reverse order owing to Spider Robinson's exciting ploy of mixing up the cue cards.) SHORT Geoffrey A. Landis, 'Falling onto Mars'. DRAMATIC, LONG *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*—Peter Jackson sent an enthusiastic thank-you video, confessing to being a long-term fan who cut his teeth on *Famous Monsters of Film-land*. RELATED BOOK Judith Merrill and Emily Pohl-Weary, *Better To Have Loved: The Life of Judith Merrill*. PRO EDITOR Gardner Dozois. Who exulted: 'The golden age of science fiction is right now!' PRO ARTIST Bob Eggleton. DRAMATIC, SHORT *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, 'Conversations with Dead People'. SEMIPROZINE: *Locus*. FANZINE *Mimosa* ... whose final issue was distributed at Torcon. FAN WRITER Dave Langford. Has the man no shame? FAN ARTIST Sue Mason—her first win. Congratulations!

**Also at Torcon:** John W. Campbell Award for best new writer: Wen Spencer. Further presentations at the Hugo extravaganza: the First Fandom Hall of Fame Award, to Philip Francis Nolan (posthumously) and Philip José Farmer; the Moskowitz Archive Award, to Rusty Hevelin; and the Big Heart Award, to John Hertz. ● The LA (Anaheim) bid for the 2006 Worldcon defeated Kansas City by 74 votes. KC held its victory party anyway, with the outline of the bid's corpse prominently chalked—well, taped—on the floor. ● Sidewise Awards for alternate history: Long Form was a tie, Martin J. Gidron's *The Severed Wing* and Harry Turtledove's *Ruled Britannia*. Short Form: William Sanders, 'Empire'. ● Cruellest item in the traditional spoof newsletter's Lost and Found column: 'David Brin lost the Best Novel Hugo. Could whoever has it, please return it to him?' (His *Kiln People* placed second.) ● The final Torcon 'warm body' attendance count that I heard was 3,725. ● Gaylactic Spectrum Award winners included Laurie Marks for *Fire Logic* (novel) and Sarah Monette for 'Three Letters from the Queen of Elfland' (short). ● The business meeting voted for a 2-year rather than a 3-year lead time for future Worldcon bidding from 2006; this depends on ratification in Boston next year. ● Prometheus Award for 'libertarian' sf: Terry Pratchett, *Night Watch*. ● Much bizarreness broke out at the closing ceremony, with Torcon chair Peter Jarvis gassed and superseded by Noreason 4's Deb Geisler in a little *Prisoner* spoof: 'You are number 61 ... I am the new number 62.' Also at this final event, George R.R. Martin's ill-concealed, Viagraesque longings were gratified at last! In the form of a glittering, inflatable Hugo rocket—liberated from the Noreason party and fully 7 feet long—George received The Even Bigger One.

## Attacked by a Gigantic Beaver!

**Brian Aldiss** provides a book report: 'The Astronomer Royal, Martin Rees, reveals that he reads SF with respect. See his new book, *Our Final Century*. It's something like a work of SF itself. Quoted are greats like Greg Benford, David Brin, Phil Dick—oh, and H.G. Wells. Book is a cheery beach read—as long as you can find a stony enough beach.'

**Margaret Atwood's** careful rejection of the sf label was rewarded on 15 Aug, when *Oryx and Crake* made the Booker Prize longlist. [PL]

**Ray Bradbury** revealed all about his sf career: 'It's a lie. I was never a science-fiction writer. Science fiction is the art of telling things that can really happen because they exist physically ... Fantasy is about things that can't happen, that you make happen anyway, which is what I do.' Bradbury never a science fiction writer? What, never? Hardly ever: 'The only completely science fiction story I've ever written was *Fahrenheit 451*.' (*New York Daily News*, 14 August) [TC]

**Edward Bryant** had a quadruple heart bypass on 11 August. He was off the ventilator and talking by the next day, and out of intensive care very shortly after. 'If you wish to send cards, please send them to his home address: 2103 W. 28th Ave, Denver, CO 80211, USA.' [LM]

**Kelly Freas** broke his hip in August. Lydia Marano writes: 'Despite his age, the prognosis is very good and he's not expected to be incapacitated for long.' But he couldn't be at Torcon as a guest of honour, alas.

**Diana Wynne Jones** reports fundamental flaws at the Edinburgh Book Festival: 'Not only did they seem to have little but Gaelic poetry in the bookshop tent, but they also had an insane arrangement whereby the author's loo (a specially provided Portaloo) was kept permanently locked. If you needed to go, you were supposed to go to a stone faced lady in boots and ask for the key. Then, provided you could PROVE you were an author, she grudgingly dispensed the key, with strict orders to bring it straight back afterwards. And—here was the cunning bit—there was no way of finding this out. I ran into this difficulty after having done two sessions and two signings and got—as one does—quite anxious for a loo. Having rattled unavailingly at the door of the thing, I was wondering if I could make it back to the hotel and risk an accident on the way, when a tiny Scottish lady—she had waist length white hair and was wrapped in a black crochet shawl—seemed to sense my problem. She stood opposite the nearest tent and screamed repeatedly into it, "This wumman needs the toilet!" And when, finally, a bored man grudgingly emerged, she positively shrieked, pointing wildly in my direction, "THAT WUMMAN THERE!" A small crowd gathered as the bored man came up to me and explained the arrangement. When I looked round for the tiny lady, she had vanished. Hm. Yes, I did get to the loo in the end. But I don't think I want to take part in this event again.'

**Terry Pratchett** admits to being subliminal: 'At no time do the words "follow the yellow sick toad" appear in *The Wee Free Men*, but judging from my mail, many readers read the pun by a sort of mental transmission.' (Discworld 101 panel, Torcon)

## Confiserie

15 Sep ● **Reading at Borders**, Oxford St, London. 6:30pm. With Pat Cadigan and guests TBA. 'The Diva requests that you show up especially for this because she will still be in the process of celebrating her 50th birthday [10 Sep]. So come and wish me a Happy Birthday. Or Else.'

24 Sep ● **BSFA Open Meeting**, Rising Sun pub, Cloth Fair, London, EC1. 7pm on, fans present from 5pm. Guest speaker TBA.

27 Sep - 3 Oct ● **Milford (UK) SF Writer's Conference**, Hedley House Hotel, York. Published authors only. Info from Liz Williams (Secretary), Top Flat, 8 Bedford St, Kemp Town, Brighton, BN2 1AN.

27-8 Sep ● **Phoenix Convention (P-Con)**, Ashling Hotel, Parkgate St, Dublin 8. €30 reg; €35 at door; €10 supp. Contact: Yellow Brick Road, 8 Bachelors Walk, Dublin 1, Ireland.

4 Oct ● **NewCon2**, 'Roadmender', 1 Ladys Lane, Northampton, NN1 3AH. 11am-6pm. £8 reg (£5 students/unwaged); £9 (or £5) at door. Northampton SF Writers Group, 16 Albany Rd, Northampton, NN1 5LZ.

10-12 Oct ● **Grissecon 1** (Wraeththu), Tillington Hall Hotel, Staff-ord. GoH: Storm Constantine. Advance booking now closed. £60 at door. Contact (address change) 8 Rowley Grove, Stafford, ST17 9BJ.

21-23 Nov ● **FantasyCon 2003**, Tillington Hall Hotel, Stafford. Now £50 (BFS members £45), rising to £60 (£55) after 30 September. Contact (SAE) Beech House, Chapel Lane, Moulton, Cheshire, CW9 8PQ.

2-6 Sep 04 ● **Noreason 4** (62nd Worldcon), Boston, MA. \$160



reg, rising to \$180 on 1 Oct. Unchanged: children \$105, supporting membership \$35. Contact PO Box 1010, Framingham, MA 01701, USA.

23-27 Aug 06 • **L.A.con IV** (64th Worldcon), Anaheim, California. GoH Connie Willis, James Gurney, Howard DeVore, Frankie Thomas. \$125 reg, site selection voters \$80, other complex discounts. Contact L.A.con IV, c/o SCIFI Inc, PO Box 8442, Van Nuys, CA 91409, USA.

**Rumblings** • **The Wrexham Science Festival** (18-28 Mar 04) plans to include an sf event with the help of the Welsh SF Association, and possibly a £1,000 prize competition for short sf films.

## Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See Us.** Rebecca Eckler of Canada's *National Post* took an unprejudiced view of the Torcon Hugos: 'I wasn't happy about attending, to say the least, as it was a Saturday night, on the long weekend, and I could think of a trillion things I'd rather be doing—like absolutely nothing—than hanging out with a bunch of sci-fi geeks. (It's OK to call them geeks because they call themselves geeks. This year's Hugo winner, Canadian Robert J. Sawyer, even described himself that night as a "fat, bald geek who knows way too much Star Trek trivia.")' (2 Sep) [EW] A notable feat of telepathic reporting, since Robert Sawyer's Big One was presented last and (after getting substantially less polite) Eckler also brags about 'walking out halfway through the awards.' Another mordant comment, couched in tones of sartorial horror, was that '75% of those in attendance were wearing glasses'. How geeky of them.

**Astronomy Corner.** '... it was often thought that Venus might be more promising as a potential colony. It is twenty miles closer to the Sun than we are, making it more outwardly attractive.' (Sir Patrick Moore, *Eighty Not Out* [autobiography], 2003) [DAH]

**R.I.P.** **Charles Bronson** (1921-2003), US actor who made rare genre appearances in *House of Wax* (1953), *Master of the World* (1961) and TV's *Twilight Zone* (1961), died on 30 August aged 81. [SG] • **Russ (Louis Russell) Chauvenet** (1920-2003), old-time US fan whose 1940s fanzines included *Detours* and *Sardonyx*, died peacefully on 24 June, aged 83. [AH] He will always be remembered—in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as well as sf fandom—for coining the word 'fanzine' in October 1940. • **Gordon Creighton** (1908-2003), UK diplomat, civil servant, and editor of *Flying Saucer Review*, died on 16 July aged 95. He saw his first UFO in 1941, became a contributor to the magazine in 1955, and took over as editor in 1982. [JE] • **James Hale** (?1946-2003), UK editor and literary agent who notoriously 'discovered' Iain Banks's *The Wasp Factory* on the Macmillan slushpile, died on 14 August aged 57. Iain always insisted on Hale as his freelance editor, even when they'd both left Macmillan. • **Mike Hinge** (1931-2003), New Zealand-born sf artist long resident in the USA, died on or near 9 August, his 72nd birthday. [MM/SM] I admired his 1970s covers for *Amazing*, whose (then) editor Ted White writes: 'I ran more than half a dozen covers by Mike—all of which I loved—as well as interior art and running heads in *Amazing/Fantastic*. Mike also had two covers on *Time* magazine.' A selection of his work appeared as *The Mike Hinge Experience* (1973) [NR] • **Martin Smith** (1963-2003), popular UK fan affectionately known as 'Bloody Martin Smith of Croydon', died from liver failure in mid-August, a few weeks after being diagnosed with diabetes. He was only 40 and will be much missed. [RH] • **William Woolfolk** (1917-2003), US novelist and TV writer who as Bill Woolfolk scripted many 1940s comics (including Superman and Batman for DC) and created the character Plastic Man, died on 20 July; he was 86. He liked to boast of having coined Captain Marvel's famous ejaculation, 'Holey Moley!' [JS]

**C.o.A.** **Bill Bowers** (from 1 Oct), 6000 Townevista Dr, Apt 114, Cincinnati, OH 45224-1762, USA. **Andrew M. Butler** (from 13 Sep), 1 Henry Court, Gordon Rd, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 3PL. **Erika Maria Lacey**, 10/8 Prince St, Woodridge, Qld 4114, Australia. **Sue Mason**, 19 Boundary St, Lostock Gralam, Northwich, Cheshire, CW9 7NG.

**World Fantasy Award** finalists for 2002 work: NOVEL Jeffrey Ford, *The Portrait of Mrs Charbuque*; Gregory Frost, *Fitcher's Brides*; Graham Joyce, *The Facts of Life*; Patricia A. McKillip, *Ombria in Shadow*; China Miéville, *The Scar*. • NOVELA Charles de Lint, *Seven Wild Sisters*; Paul Di Filippo, *A Year in the Linear City*; Neil Gaiman, *Coraline*; Elizabeth Hand, 'The Least Trumps' (*Conjunctions* 39); Zoran Zivkovic, 'The Library' (*Leviathan* 3). • SHORT Jeffrey Ford, 'Creation' (*F&SF* 5/02) and 'The Weight of Words' (*Leviathan* 3); Neil Gaiman, 'October in the Chair' (*Conjunctions* 39); Stephen Gallagher, 'Little Dead Girl Singing' (*Weird Tales* Spring 02); William Browning Spencer, 'The Essayist in the Wilderness' (*F&SF* 5/02). • ANTHOLOGY Ellen Datlow & Terri Windling, *The Green Man and Year's Best Fantasy and Horror* 15; Peter Straub, *Conjunctions* 39: *The New Wave Fabulists*; Brian M. Thomsen, *The Amer-*

*ican Fantasy Tradition*; Jeff VanderMeer & Forrest Aguirre, *Leviathan* 3. • COLLECTION Charles de Lint, *Waifs and Strays*; Jeffrey Ford, *The Fantasy Writer's Assistant*; Robin McKinley & Peter Dickinson, *Water*; Richard Parks, *The Ogre's Wife*; Jeff VanderMeer, *City of Saints and Madmen*; Chet Williamson, *Figures in Rain*. • ARTIST Kinuko Y. Craft, Tom Kidd, Gary Lippincott, Dave McKean, John Jude Palencar, Charles Vess. • SPECIAL/PROFESSIONAL Paul Barnett (Paper Tiger art books), Ellen Datlow (editing), William Schafer (Subterranean Press), Gary Turner & Marty Halpern (Golden Gryphon Press), Gordon van Gelder (*F&SF*), Terri Windling (editing). • SPECIAL/NON-PROFESSIONAL Peter Crowther (PS Publishing), Gavin Grant & Kelly Link (Small Beer Press), Sean Wallace (Prime Books), Michael Walsh (Old Earth Books), Jason Williams & Jeremy Lassen & Benjamin Cossel (Night Shade Books).

**Random Fandom.** **Martin Hoare** sent an exultant postcard from Finncon/Eurocon: 'I won the Drabble competition and they are publishing it.' • **Rich Lynch** explained his and Nicki's fanzine plans after *Mimosa*: 'We're waiting for the economy to recover.' • **Pádraig Ó Méalóid** announced that on 13 August 2004, 'myself and the lovely Deirdre Walsh are getting married. To one another, that is.' • **Catherine Pickersgill** casually let slip that she is no longer Catherine McAulay.

**Rhysling Awards** for sf poetry: SHORT Ruth Berman, 'Potherb Gardening' (*Asimov's* 12/02). LONG Charles Saplak and Mike Allen, 'Epochs in Exile: A Fantasy Trilogy' (*Eotu Ezine*, 2/02). [SEG]

**As Others See Us.** John D. MacDonald, writing about his sf novels, was an early adopter of our favourite distancing technique: 'They are both more accurately categorized as science fantasy than as science fiction, in that they are neither space-adventure, nor mad-scientist, nor doom-machine epics.' (1968 afterword to *Ballroom of the Skies*) [BA]

**Outraged Letters.** **Paul Barnett/John Grant** is 'vaguely wondering if I've scored a unique (albeit a mightily trivial) "first". I cannot recall anyone before having been nominated for Hugo and WFA in the same year under two different names. I must make the time to check this out, then if necessary send a telegram to *The Guinness Book of Records* ...' • **Malcolm Edwards** reveals his secret longings: 'As a lifelong supporter of Sunderland FC, can I express my delight that *Ansible* has finally seen the light and run a news story about one of our players, namely goalkeeper Thomas Sorensen (SORENSEN IN A BLACK HOLE). Admittedly he's on his way to Aston Villa, but it still gave me a warm glow. I'm sure Steve Baxter, if no one else, will join me in calling for more football-related items in your columns.' • **John Jarrold** liked 'Mike Moorcock's very kind words in A193, very gratefully received. I think everyone who knows me is perfectly well aware how I feel about the demise of Earthlight. However, I should say that Darren Nash has done a terrific job in very difficult circumstances. I left Simon & Schuster on July 31 2002 and Darren moved from a very successful job in their marketing department to take over Earthlight in the autumn, having asked about the imprint's future and been given assurances. He deserves far, far better treatment than he has received. Darren is both very enthusiastic and very knowledgeable about SF and Fantasy. I hope his marketing background will allow him to return to publishing very quickly.'

**Personal Note.** I'm very sorry to record the unexpected death on 28 August of Jean Salter (1925-2003): Hazel's mother, a kind lady and an avid sf reader who was amazingly tolerant of having me as son-in-law. She is survived by her husband Jack. This is why *Ansible* is late.

**The Dead Past. Thirty Years Ago:** Peter Roberts disclaimed responsibility for the Toronto Worldcon newsletter's line 'HEAR ME TORCON 2 YOU', and quoted a word-of-mouth report of 2,700 attendees. The big Worldcon list now says 2,900.... (*Checkpoint* 42, October 1973)

**Group Gropes.** **Brum Group** meetings (2nd Fri each month) have moved to the Britannia Hotel in New St. • **South Hants SF Group** (2nd & 4th Tue) now at rear of The John Jacques, Fratton Rd, Portsmouth.

**Thog's Masterclass. Striking Simile Dept.** '... the abbot watched dazedly as they rushed like lemurs towards destruction.' • **Literality Dept.** 'Dr. Runicels, Immaculate's chief of staff, literally dripped Southern courtesy.' • **Theology Dept.** 'Catholics as a rule avoid divorce—unless one of them dies.' • **Eyeballs in the Sky Dept.** 'Anita's brow, penetrating eyes never left David's face, except to pour cups of tea.' • **Aerostatics Dept.** 'The vultures, aware of this supernatural transformation, halted in their flight.' (all from Frank Corsaro, *Kunma*, 2003) [PB]

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