

**LoneStarCon 3**  
A convention report by Evelyn C. Leeper  
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LoneStarCon 3 was held August 8-12, 2013, in San Antonio, Texas.

**Stroll with the Stars Thursday**  
**Thursday, 9:00 AM**  
**Jason M. Hough, Steven H. Silver, Stina Leicht, Bobbie DuFault, Hagrid, C. J. Mills, Liz Gorinsky,**  
**Catherynne M. Valente, Phil Foglio**

Description: [none]

Attendance: [unknown]

These strolls were scheduled every morning and the promise was that we would be back in time for the 10AM panels. Luckily, we decided to test this on Thursday, when there was little or nothing at 10AM, and it ran well over. You might argue, "Well, they knew there was nothing to rush back for," but it was clear from the time spent gathering people from two hotels, walking at a pace set pretty much by the slowest people, and trying to cover something of interest, that this was not going to be suitable for anyone wanting to attend a 10AM panel.

**Coming of Age in the 60's**  
**Thursday, 12:00 N**  
**Fred Lerner (M), Robert Silverberg, Connie Willis**

Description: "Sex, Drugs and Politics: How Science Fiction was used as a marker for generational shifts on values."

Attendance: lots

Silverberg said that contrary to popular opinion, he had not attended every Worldcon--the first (in 1939) was held

when he was only four years old. "And he had already written his first three novels," Fred Lerner added.

As far as the periods "the 1960s" covers, Lerner said he would date it as starting with the publication of *Stranger in a Strange Land* in 1961.

Silverberg thought Robert A. Heinlein was ahead of his time. For him, the key markers of the 1960s were the Beatles (1964), Haight-Asbury (1966), and Baycon (1968). Of the latter, he said the first chemical people encountered was the tear gas in People's Park, followed by the "horse anesthesia pills." He would say that 1966 or 1967 through 1973 was "The Sixties." He also commented that at that time he was writing pornography because science fiction was boring.

Willis said that she hated, and still hates, *Stranger in a Strange Land*. "[Heinlein's] idea of what women want is nowhere close to the planet." And she thought that "the grass wants to be walked on [is the] dumbest idea." She described the book as trendy, but Silverberg insisted it was trend-setting.

In passing, Willis commented on trying to pin down decades; for example, the 80's was only 1984 through 1987, especially the shoulder pads and disco, because people were so eager to get out of it.

Silverberg observed that Heinlein was a nudist and in an open marriage in the 1930s, which is not how people think of him. Willis said she liked the females in Heinlein's juveniles, where he was "revolutionary in his females." Silverberg said the females were patterned after Heinlein's wife.

Silverberg described science fiction in 1960 and 1961 was constricted and constrained: the use of the word "testicles" was ground-breaking (as were the words "pregnant" and "virgin"). And Heinlein did nothing to change this. Silverberg said that in *The World Inside* he used made-up words for the F-word and the C-word. And in 1971, *Galaxy* was still printing "to f---" in its publication of *I Will Fear No Evil*. (Willis noted that she did the same in "All My Darling Daughters".)

Silverberg said that science fiction was the literature of thirteen-year-old boys, but now it has vampires and is the literature of fifteen-year-old girls.

Willis says it became "all sex, all drugs, all the time" in science fiction, but there was also wonderful stuff--it was "a very fertile time, a very exciting time." However, Silverberg observed, the audience did not want that sort of excitement.

As for the drugs, Silverberg claimed, "Some of us were required to use those drugs as research." In this context Willis mentioned Philip K. Dick. Silverberg said the Dick contributed a way of looking at the world, "not language or sex." But he "fit in with the 1960s and the drugs." He described a story titled "I Hope We Shall Arrive Soon", which sounded a lot like "Mind Partner".

Silverberg felt that "attitudes need to be put in context" and referred to the recent dispute over the recent cover of the "SFWA Bulletin". Some people seem to want to "require beliefs of the moment to be applied retroactively." He said that they are the sort who object because in *Othello* a black man strangles his white wife.

Willis talked about revisiting old favorites and discovering that "some stories are timeless, some transcend, and some the suck fairy has been at." But she also noted, "Science fiction has had great stories in every era."

Lerner said that some writers (such as Rudyard Kipling) go out of favor, then come back; is this possible in science fiction? He suggested Heinlein (particularly *Stranger in a Strange Land*), Dick, Frank Herbert's *Dune*, and some of Robert Silverberg's novels. Silverberg added Ursula K. LeGuin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Norman Spinrad's *Bug Jack Barron*, and some of Joanna Russ's works. Willis said she remembers the 1960s short stories, and J. G. Ballard.

Silverberg concluded by saying, "Science fiction, with rare exceptions, is commercial dreck for kids." Willis countered, "Science fiction always re-invents itself."

### **Hoaxes: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly**

**Thursday, 2:00 PM**

**Steven H. Silver (M), Bobbie DuFault, Jeff Orth, Fred Nadis, Anthony Lewis**

Description: "Bids, fanzines, Worldcon program tracks. We enjoy a good hoax in fandom. What are the good

ones? What are the ones that went horribly wrong? Can we see in advance what could go wrong?"

Attendance: [unknown]

Silver said that he found a list of fannish hoaxes, and it ran sixteen pages. They seemed to go in cycles, and the first ones involved non-existent fans. Next came the death hoaxes (which were not very funny), and the current trend seems to be for hoax Worldcon bids.

Orth said the last fall into two categories: the party excuses (which he said were obvious), and the "evil ones" actually intended to deceive. DuFault said she used to point out flaws in bids to identify hoax bids.

Orth said that in 2000 there was a Boston in Orlando bid, so there should be a Kansas City in Boston bid. DuFault pointed out that the winning Westercon 2013 bid started out as a hoax bid against the Portland bid, but people were so unhappy with Portland that the hoax bid won.

[No one mentioned the first Zagreb bid, which was basically a party excuse, but not obvious. The bid committee realized they could get money from the Yugoslav government to promote the bid, and so could travel to lots of conventions all over the world, but at some point they made the convention sound so good that they became terrified they would win and actually have to put on a convention, so they started spreading the one a bit more openly that it *was* a hoax.]

Silver noted that the Bermuda in 1988 bid was a hoax and almost won. Lewis mentioned the Highmore (South Dakota) in 1976 bid, where the accommodations were tents, etc.--slides were even passed around at Business Meetings.

The latest Australia Worldcon started as a hoax bid, with people throwing \$20 bills at Stephen Boucher when he suggested it. The most famous (and long-lasting) hoax bid is Minneapolis in '73 (post-supporting memberships are -1 cents each).

Non-convention hoaxes included the Richard Shaver Mystery ("I Remember Lemuria") promoted by Ray Palmer, with its mystery alphabet. Silver said that the fanzine *Ploy* by Ron Bennett came out with its first issue masquerading as the second issue, with letters referring to the pros and big-name fans in the first issue.

Silver was obliged to talk about the Chicon 7 hoax track. It was a tradition at Capricon, and was inserted in the Chicon 7 Program Book without much thought or consensus. It was variously called the Phineas T track or the Lake Wobegon track, and each item had one living panelist, one dead panelist, and one fictional panelist.

Oddly enough, they should have known better. The idea did not work even at Capricon--one year there was listed a track on kinship in Lois McMaster Bujold's writings. People heard about it ahead of time, and many showed up to join the convention just to attend that track.

Perpetrating this hoax at Chicon 7 had several problems. First, the architecture of the convention center/hotel was somewhat Escheresque, so it was not at all obvious that there was no such room as was indicated. Second, calling the room the Stagg Field Room was supposedly a clue, but probably only to Chicago people. There were far too many pointers to it in the programming. The panelist names were too clever, and even if you recognized that one name was that of a dead person (for example), you might figure it was the same sort of panelist that "Mark Twain" was at ConFrancisco. Even if people recognized it was a joke, they thought the joke would be *at* the panel.

The conclusion was that it would only work if it were more obvious and less advertised.

Silver said that Terry Carr was responsible for many hoaxes, including "Carl Brandon, the first black fan."

Are pseudonyms hoaxes? People mentioned Kilgore Trout, Richard Bachman, H. N. Turteltaub, and Robert Galbraith. Nadis said a pseudonym is a hoax when it comes with its own persona. Silver said that sometimes an author will take a pseudonym to avoid a one-author table of contents in a magazine. Orth thought that a pseudonym is a hoax when there is an attempt to deceive. The table-of-contents trick is an attempt to deceive, but no personae are supplied. For that matter, Stephen King (Richard Bachman) and J. K. Rowling (Robert Galbraith) *are* trying to deceive.

[Perhaps the best pseudonym hoax in the science fiction field--sort of--is *I, Libertine*. At one point, radio personality Jean Shepherd started making references to a racy Victorian novel titled *I, Libertine*. After a while,

people started writing or calling in asking where they could find it. Of course, Shepherd had made it up, but he found someone to write it under the pen name Frederick Ewing, and he found a cover artist for it. Frederick Ewing was Theodore Sturgeon and the cover artist was Kelly Freas, and Ballantine Books published it.]

Silver mentioned "Travis Tea" and *Atlanta Nights*. *Atlanta Nights* was written by a group of science fiction and fantasy authors in an attempt to see if PublishAmerica would accept "an unpublishably bad piece of work." It would, though the offer was withdrawn when the hoax was revealed.

[An actual hoax of a different sort is the one dramatized in the film *Argo*, where covert operatives pretend to be scouting locations for a science fiction film, while actually rescuing Americans from Iran.]

Tom Galloway said that he wanted to publish a hoax on the Hugo Winners.

There is a *Fancylopedia 3* article on hoaxes.

### **Bloopers and Blunders of Science**

**Thursday, 7:00 PM**

**Barbara Galler-Smith (M), Bradford Lyau, G. David Nordley, Miguel Angel Fernandez**

Description: "Lord Kelvin claimed that craft heavier than air could not fly. The Piltown Man went from being one of the greatest discoveries of the 20th century to being exposed as a forgery more than 40 years later. Science is not immune to the foibles that plague ordinary citizens. Ranging from the somewhat humorous to the truly deadly, come hear our panelists discuss some of the classics."

Attendance: 250

Galler-Smith edits *On Spec*, and Lyau is a trained historian.

Galler-Smith cited Mario Livio's book, *Brilliant Blunders*. He talked about the bloopers in the proposed Texas science curriculum, including that the appendix and tonsils are vestigial, how amino acids are produced, and fraudulent embryo drawings.

Lyau talked about the Leibnitz-Clark correspondence. Leibnitz was an Aristotelian; Newton was a neo-Platonist. Leibnitz said that time and space could be relative.

Nordley said that a blooper was something simple ... and wrong, while a blunder was a determined denial of evidence. Bloopers include cold fusion, ether, the age of the earth, phlogiston, and absolute time. Blunders include the denial of continental drift, Lysenkoism, comments that space travel is utter bilge, and the denial that lunar craters were caused by impacts. The problem is often a reliance on intuition and feeling, or a desire to please authority.

Fernandez referred to Jack Garman's decision on Apollo 11 (see Wikipedia for details) as the avoidance of a major blunder.

Galler-Smith said that often people don't see what's in front of them.

Fernandez pointed out an article in the August 1954 *Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* on "plasmogenics."

Lyau listed the various methods developed by scientists: induction (Roger Bacon), deduction (René Descartes), and experiment (Galileo). Then Isaac Newton was the capstone to all of them.

Nordley commented (in connection to something) that intestinal flora determines species.

Galler-Smith talks about the blunders that were cures that did not work: exorcism, tonics (such as radium water), lobotomies, mercury, blood-letting, sex, cigarettes, dung, and sacrifices.

Nordley said another blunder was the introduction of the mongoose into Hawai'i. Galler-Smith said that Guam has no snakes because of the introduction of brown snakes. (One could add to this any number of introductions of non-native species--kudzu, anyone?)

Nordley said there are also people who give intentional disinformation.

No one mentioned things like the belief for centuries that women had fewer ribs (and fewer teeth) than men-- apparently no one ever bothered to count them!

[In general, there seemed to be a lot of anecdotes and off-hand comments that were pretty much off-topic.]

**All of Biology in One Hour or Less**  
**Thursday, 8:00 PM**  
**Sam Scheiner**

Description: "Learn the theory of biology and how to apply it to building worlds and alien critters. A dizzying romp through biology's fundamental principles in one easy lesson that will allow you to dazzle your friends with your erudition."

Attendance: 100

Scheiner described himself as "a bureaucrat by day, a scientist by night" and named the "Theory of Biology" with the term "GUT"; Grand Unified Theories.

He defined what a theory is, and what a general theory is. The domain of this theory is the diversity and complexity of living systems, including its causes and consequences.

Some of the core questions are:

- | Why does life manage to persist?
- | How does a cell maintain its structure and functionality?
- | How does an individual maintain its integrity?
- | Why do offspring resemble their parents?

There are ten fundamental principles that Scheiner covered, along with their ramifications for science fiction.

1. Persistence: "Life consists of open, non-equilibrium systems that persist." So life feeds and excretes, and repairs itself.
2. Boundedness: "The cell is the fundamental unit of life." (Hence viruses are not alive.) So this means no amorphous, gaseous aliens or energy beings.
3. Information: "Life requires a system to store, use, and transmit information." So this means you need a DNA equivalent. Computers can be alive, but you cannot have intelligent bacteria or viruses (not enough information content).
4. Variation: "Living systems vary in their composition and structure at all levels." So "the word for world is *not* forest," or *Dune*. (Scheiner said, "The science in *Dune* is total crap.") In reality, you cannot have an entire planet of all one type.
5. Complexity: "Living systems consist of complex sets of interacting parts." So again, no amorphous, gaseous aliens.
6. Emergence: "The complexity of living systems leads to emergent properties." So basically, expect the unexpected.
7. Contingency: "The complexity of living systems creates a role for contingency." So, you can get very low probability occurrences if they are needed to drive the plot." Someone in the audience described this as "the randomness of an emergent property is the determinism of the atoms."
8. Evolution/Mortality: "The persistence of living systems requires that they are capable of change over time." So alien species obey evolution by natural selection. He cited as good example Julie Czerneda's "Species Imperative" series, and C. J. Cherryh's "Chanur" series, and as bad examples Vonda McIntyre's *Dreamsnake* and Octavia Butler's "Dawn" trilogy. In general, two sexes is good biology, three sexes is not. Also, "All living organisms are mortal." (An audience member rephrased this as, "Anything immortal is not alive.")
9. Continuity: "Living systems come from other living systems." So (according to Scheiner) all life on a planet is related, and there are no interplanetary hybrids. [I have to express some skepticism that Scheiner's first conclusion on this is always valid. Just because life got started only once on Earth, or if more than once, only one tree of life survived, does not mean that on some distant planet there could not be two distinct "trees of life."]
10. Creation: "Life originated from non-life." Unless, as Scheiner notes, it originated in a time-travel loop.

**War of the Worlds at 75: The Power of Mass Media**  
**Friday, 10:00 AM**  
**Julie Barrett (M), John Maizels, Anthony Tollin, Bradford Lyau**

Description: "It's only one of the most famous broadcasts ever made, and it was the stuff of legends! Aliens in Grover's Mill! It was also a fantastic hoax perpetrated by Orson Welles. Our panelists discuss the impact and importance of Welles' fake newscast, and how we're still swallowing the same stuff in the 21st century."

Attendance: 40

Maizels works on standards, many (he said) in response to various panics.

Lyau said that H. G. Wells (and Jules Verne) were not just authors, they were major world figures. Wells had written major non-fiction works such as *The Outline of History* and *The Science of Life*, and was comparable to Herbert Spencer in late Victorian times. He was even on the cover of the September 19, 1926, *Time* magazine. But he started to fall out of favor in the late 1930s, and became known as a cranky old man. (One of his more notable predictions was in his 1914 novel, *The World Set Free*, when he coined the term "atomic bomb.")

Tollin pointed out that Orson Welles was also on a *Time* cover. Before the Mercury Theater he was known for his WPA Theater of Harlem production "Voodoo Macbeth". The Mercury Theater did a modern-dress "Julius Caesar"--it was cheaper to produce than a normal production, and used Army surplus materials.

Welles achieved realism in the radio broadcast by using H. L. Kaltenborn, a real radio announcer. And his timing was carefully planned. Six minutes into "The Chase & Sanborn Hour", Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy were done, Nelson Eddy started singing, and people started "frequency-surfing." Which is why they came into "War of the Worlds" after the warning announcement had been read.

Tollin said that Welles's versions of events were never reliable, and in particular his surprise at the result. John Houseman said the "surfing" was expected. And while Welles gets all the attention, Tollin said that Frank Reddick (who played Carl Philips) was the unsung hero of "War of the Worlds"; Ray Collins was another stand-out. The first half, he said, was very good, but the second half was "meh." However, all the governments denials are "one of the things that makes it believable."

Welles wanted realism, but he could not use the President in the drama. So he had someone referred to as the Secretary of the Interior who did a very good Roosevelt impersonation. He also compressed the sense of time; the first part is at least somewhat like real-time, but this did not last long. Tollin added that Orson Welles used silence better than anyone else in radio except Jack Benny.

Tollin talked about how people did not learn from their mistakes, with the result that when they did a re-creation in Quito, Ecuador, many years later, listeners were so outraged that they stormed the radio station, burned it down, and killed several employees. And after the Mercury Theater broadcast, "Newspapers were delighted to attack radio."

Lyau said that H. G. Wells was upset because he was not asked for permission to use *The War of the Worlds*. Tollin responded that Wells's United States agent gave permission, but then protested because of all the changes Orson Welles had made.

Trivia: H. G. Wells met Orson Welles in South America October 27, 1940 (almost exactly two years after the broadcast).

There was an explanation of "sustainer" shows (such as "X-1", "The Mercury Theater", and "Norman Corwin") which were scheduled opposite popular shows.

There were repercussions around the world. Maizels said that Australia passed laws prohibiting the broadcast of things like fire engine sounds that might fool people. He felt, though, that the "compressed time" would make it harder to fool people today. [I'm not sure this is true; people had pretty much stopped listening to the Welles broadcast by the time the compression became obvious.]

[A similar idea in film was the made-for-television film *Special Bulletin*, which ran with a lot of disclaimers throughout.]

Maizels and Lyau said that today such a panic would be started on Twitter or other social media. As Lyau said, "In social media, there are no rules."

Tollin said that Dick Clark and Walter Cronkite were going to hoax Orson Welles, but he died two days before the

date planned.

An audience member observed, "We check our reason and our intellect when fear is involved."

The broadcast has inspired a variety of works: a segment in *Radio Days*, *The Night That Panicked America*, the Jeff Wayne musical (mentioned by Maizels), and *Orson Welles & Me* (which Tollin found amusing).

**The Romance of Train Travel**  
**Friday, 12:00 N**  
**Elizabeth Moon (M), Jo Walton, Evelyn Leeper, Andy Porter**

Description: "No one associates romance with any other form of modern transport. What is it about train travel that evokes such passion?"

Attendance: [unknown]

"The romance of trains is leg room."

[Sorry, that's the only note I took.]

***Barbarian Days***  
**Friday, 1:00 PM**  
**Director: Damian Horan**

Description: Most people spend their whole lives searching for what makes them happy. Few find it. Even fewer get the chance to share it with friends. Every year, hundreds of fans flock to tiny Cross Plains, Texas, the home of Robert E. Howard, creator of Conan the Barbarian. Nearly 80 years after his death by suicide, Howard, an outsider himself, has attracted his own merry band of self-admitted outcast followers. We followed the Big 4, the top two Howard scholars from the old guard and two up and comers, through their world of fandom at "Howard Days," the annual celebration of Howard's life and works. Despite the cheery air of the celebratory weekend, drama and emotions often run high as Howard fans take their pastime very seriously, but in the end, however, the fans have all gathered for the same reason: to share their passion for Howard, and, for one weekend a year, leave their ordinary lives behind.

[I did not see this at the convention, but Mark did, and based on his description, I ordered the DVD and watched that. Pretty interesting.]

**The Future of the Future**  
**Friday, 2:00 PM**  
**Gregory Benford (M), Steven Diamond, Joe Haldeman, Norman Spinrad**

Description: "Why isn't there more science fiction that has grand generational or eons of focus. Where is the human race going?"

Attendance: 400

Benford began by noting, "In the front row, as ever, is Evelyn Leeper." Well, if I want to be sure to hear everything (and see who says it), I pretty much have to sit in the front row.

Spinrad said that he had researched China in the 15th century. They were two hundred years ahead of everyone else, but then they just stopped. He sees our present like this. In science fiction, he said, "We see all these dreadful movies" with superheroes, post-apocalyptic scenarios, vampires, etc. We are in the Golden Age of Astronomy, there are 17 billion earth-like planets in the galaxy, and we see little of this in science fiction. "Our place is smaller and the Universe is much grander and more complicated than we thought." This should result in a scientific, spiritual, and religious revolution.

Diamond responded, "So I'm supposed to follow that, huh?" He felt that the films reflect what we are worried about.

Benford said that the Singularity is the other side of this. And Haldeman said that editors are not buying Stapledonian science fiction; what sells is closer to realist fiction. Benford replied that he wanted to see more

Stapledonian science fiction, so Spinrad asked him, "Why don't you write more [of it]?" Diamond suggested that Stapledonian science fiction does not do characters well, and Benford asked, "Do you think the scale dwarfs the characters?"

Benford also pointed out that if we will get smarter for the Singularity, characters are even harder to write. Haldeman noted that he has done a far future novel (*The Accidental Time Machine*).

Spinrad opined, "The Singularity is a bummer. Why would we build a thing like that?" He said we should not make a distinction between intelligence and consciousness. "If [machines] can't be stupid, they can't be conscious."

Someone mentioned Robert Sheckley's "The Gun with No Bang". Spinrad also said that Bede Rundle's book *Why Is There Something Instead of Nothing?* does not really answer its own question.

Benford noted that Thomas Aquinas said that time and space were created together. He also observed that a vacuum is unstable if it is created with no mass. Haldeman said that he still knows only particles, but Benford said that "particles are emergent properties of fields." The problem, he added, is that science fiction that has all this "is hard to write; zombies are much easier." Haldeman agreed that it is difficult to come up with plots dealing with quantum mechanics.

Benford said that people do not write like that anymore, and people do not buy that anymore. "Writing is seduction. And I don't mean just vampires. Vampires are about seduction; werewolves are about rape."

Benford also said that he has been told that "space is over," indicating a growing cynicism. Spinrad said it was "not cynicism so much as ignorance." He has written *Child of Fortune* and some stuff on the evolution of consciousness, but editors want to establish a franchise rather than do something innovative. As he pointed out, drug dealers do better selling addictive drugs than non-addictive drugs.

[I wonder if it is easier for established authors to write the far-future stuff.]

Diamond said that he wants a plot with a definite end, interesting characters, and characters in some sort of danger (i.e., "there are stakes"). He gave the examples of James S. A. Corey's "Expanse" series and Ian Tregellis's "Milkweed" series.

Haldeman said that for writers, it becomes harder to come up with satisfying endings. Spinrad said that you need the ending before starting, and the ending should exemplify the "arc" of the characters. Benford disagreed, saying that he does not know his endings before starting. Haldeman recommended the novel *The Sense of an Ending* by Julian Barnes.

**Two-Gun Bob: The Somewhat True Tales of Robert E. Howard**  
**Friday, 4:00 PM**

**Mark Finn (M), Rusty Burke, Patrice Louinet, Damon Sasser, Rob Roehm**

Description: "Writing a biography is an inexact science, and it's made all the more difficult when the subject in question was less than truthful about what they chose to tell other people about themselves. Four Robert E. Howard experts will shatter long-standing myths about Howard's life and talk about how they separate fact from fiction when writing about REH."

Attendance: [unknown]

Finn began by noting that until the late 1990s, there was only one theory and one story about Robert E. Howard. There was "only one biography by one guy, and a contentious one at that." [The "guy" was L. Sprague de Camp and the biography was *Dark Valley Destiny*.] Burke added that the biggest challenge was that Howard was a professional liar, especially in his letters to H. P. Lovecraft. Roehm said that de Camp believed everything interviewees told him, even when it was contrary to existing documents. Finn also said that de Camp was not just too trusting of his sources, but also of Howard himself, who was an unreliable narrator. And Sasser added that Howard's father also had a tendency to prevaricate, especially after Howard's death. And finally, Louinet said everyone who came after was too imbued by de Camp to correct or even to detect his errors.

For example, Finn and Burke noted, de Camp claimed that Howard did not go to school until he was eight years old because of bullies, but in fact everyone in Texas started school at eight years old.



Roehm said that the most damning, and damaging, of de Camp's claims was that Howard was "maladjusted to the point of psychosis." Louinet felt that de Camp would never admit his ignorance on a topic, but would just make it up.

Burke referenced his "Purist Manifesto of 1990" ([http://www.hupa.com/OLDWEB/burke\\_manifesto.htm](http://www.hupa.com/OLDWEB/burke_manifesto.htm)) and said he saw a disconnect between de Camp's introductions and the stories themselves. He observed that people always gave a negative view of events. Roehm said that he saw spin rather than facts in de Camp.

Sasser said that he likes the challenge and the hunt for the truth.

Louinet said that he researched the genealogy because "Howard" is not an Irish name (though there are some), and so Howard's claim to Irish ancestry seemed unlikely. (One assumes he was specifically claiming it on his father's side, since the Irishness of "Howard" would have nothing to do with the maternal line. In any case, Howard would not have been the first person to manufacture a false history for himself.)

Finn felt that more than inaccurate, de Camp was "mean" to Howard. He said that de Camp did not account for the fact that Howard was a Texan, and Finn's book "put the Texan back in the biography." (I assume that "Texan" in this context implies "teller of tall tales" or some such.) He added that de Camp did not understand boom town psychology, or even why Howard always carried a gun. The latter was because he had been mugged one time when his car broke down, and he decided he needed a gun for protection.

Burke observed that in many ways it was easier for de Camp to continue writing "Conan" stories if Howard was not a real genius, or at least was not considered one.

Basically, Robert E. Howard was not a misfit loner. Finn said that E. Hoffman Price was jealous that Howard was younger and more successful, and so got "snarkier" with time; de Camp used this as some of the basis for the biography.

Finn said that the elephant in the room was why Howard killed himself--at least that is what people most want to know. Sasser said there are other unanswered questions (e.g., when did his dog die?).

Finn pointed out that while de Camp promoted Conan (and sword and sorcery in general) as escapism, Howard had many axes to grind and many opinions he was promoting. Burke said that Howard was more of a conscientious artist than we thought. For example, Howard claimed he did only one draft, but he actually did three or four. Burke referenced Carl Jung's *Psychology and Art* and warned against the intentional fallacy.

In de Camp's favor, Roehm pointed out that de Camp did a lot of interviews, and had others do even more research. Finn felt that de Camp's appearance worked against him when he was interviewing. (I am not sure if he meant he looked slightly satanic, or what.) He said that Novalyne Price's book, *One Who Walked Alone--Robert E. Howard: The Final Years*, was a response to de Camp's book, and both he and Burke recommend it. (This book was the basis of the film *The Whole Wide World*.)

### **Do SF Stories Have Fewer Happy Endings Now?**

**Friday, 6:00 PM**

**Bryan T. Schmidt (M), Jessica Reisman, Martha Wells, David Nickle, Grant Carrington**

Description: "In the 1940s, 50s and even 60s the Good Guy usually won and the Earth was saved. How and why did our stories' endings change?"

Attendance: 15

Nickle began by claiming, "Most of the time, victorious endings are a cheat." He defined these as those in which the protagonist gets out and learns something.

Schmidt said that at least these have some sense of hope, and asked whether you can have a happy ending for some but not for all. Reisman said it was a question of it being a happy ending for the narrator. And Nickle thought these were such wistful, nostalgic questions.

Wells observed that in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, not all stories had happy endings, and cited "The Cold Equations" by Tom Godwin. (However, that seems most notable in having an ending so atypical of the time.) Reisman named other stories of the era he felt did not have happy endings: *Childhood's End* by Arthur C. Clarke,

*A Canticle for Leibowitz* by Walter M. Miller, and *The Martian Chronicles* by Ray Bradbury. (I suppose one could add *1984* by George Orwell, *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, *The Wicker Man* by Robin Hardy, and *The Body Snatchers* by Jack Finney.)

Reisman said that pulps were more simplistic, and largely adventure. [Could it be that the Depression and World War II required happy endings, but the 1950s not so much? The (non-SF) film *Sullivan's Travels* addresses this. However, John Steinbeck did not necessarily follow this rule.] Schmidt suggested readers are more sophisticated now. Reisman said it was a question of different cultural perspectives. Wells said that we now have the concept of the "antagonist," rather than just a villain. Or perhaps we have carried it even further, with people "rooting for the bad guy."

Schmidt asked whether happy endings require a positive future.

Nickle felt that the writing of the period in question was warped by the Hays Code for motion pictures, probably in the sense of warping the expectations of readers. He said that it was works such as *Night of the Living Dead* and *Pet Sematary* by Stephen King that changed expectations by being satisfying even with "unhappy" endings. Reisman added *Rivers of London* by Ben Aaronovitch (titled *Midnight Riot* in the United States); Carrington listed James Gunn's *The Cave of Night*.

### **Latino Characters by Mainstream Authors: Diversity or Cultural Appropriation?**

**Friday, 7:00 PM**

**Derek Kunsken (M), Norman Spinrad, Rudy Ch. Garcia**

Description: "Non-Latino authors have been more successful publishing "Latino SF" than Latino writers. What role have agents and publishers played in this and why? When do non-Latino authors go too far-cultural misappropriation-assuming we can define "too far"? The panel will explore these issues from a variety of perspectives."

Attendance: 8

Kunsken had taught in Honduras, and was a diplomat in Colombia and in Ecuador. He asked whether non-Latino authors *have* been more successful in publishing Latino science fiction than Latino authors. (At this point, the panel clarified that they were talking about only in the United States and only science fiction.)

Spinrad said he has various connections to Mexico, and does not feel as if he is appropriating anything when he writes Latino science fiction.

Garcia made a distinction between cultural appropriation versus diversity. For example, the film *Armageddon* has no people of color. He said, "We want dark people in other people's novels," as well as in novels by Latinos. He said the important thing was to be authentic, e.g. do not put Puerto Rican food in Mexico. (Actually, I think it is more likely to go the other way around, but you get the idea.)

Garcia mentioned a website, <http://www.scifilatino.com>.

### **LSC3 Film Festival: Frankenstein's Monster**

**Friday, 8:00 PM**

**Director: Syd Lance**

Description: A light steampunk adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

Attendance: [unknown]

An interesting "steampunk" version--or at least "steam", since the Monster seems to be steam-driven.

### **Magic Realism**

**Saturday, 11:00 AM**

**Darlene Marshall (M), Howard Waldrop, Rudy Ch. Garcia, Guadalupe Garcia McCall, Stina Leicht"**

Description: "Magic Realism, Science Fiction, Fantasy. How can you use these terms to describe the varied work of Angélica Gorodischer, Gabriel García Márquez, and Laura Esquivel?"

Attendance: 30

Garcia McCall has written *Summer of the Mariposas*, a young-adult magical realism retelling of *The Odyssey*. Leicht has written *Of Blood and Honey*, a magical realism novel about Ireland.

Ch. Garcia said that magical realism is not a strictly Latino genre--that is a stereotype, like the idea that only certain groups have rhythm.

Marshall said there are many definitions, but magical realism is basically realistic fiction with fantastic elements, e.g., *The Metamorphosis* and *The Trial* by Franz Kafka, *The Tin Drum* by Günter Grass, and *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift.

Waldrop said that he had written such magical realism works as *A Dozen Tough Jobs*. He said that the film *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* was similarly structured of necessity. He also cited "The City Quiet as Death" by Steve Utley and Michael Bishop as another example of magical realism.

Leicht thought that United States culture has no myths of its own. Yes, there are such stories as that of Paul Bunyan, but they are not integrated into daily life. We do have urban fantasy, however.

Ch. Garcia quoted George R.R. Martin as having said, "Magic realism destroys the line of demarcation between what seems real and what seems fantastic."

Leicht suggested that the play *Man of La Mancha* was magical realism. [What about *The Life of Pi* by Yann Martel?]

Marshall asked what makes one book magical realism and another fantasy; is it the publisher who decides? [One is reminded of the old Avon Bard series of magical realism, so influential that someone on a panel many years ago jokingly defined magical realism as being a book published with a white banner at the top with the title, the author's name, and one or two short blurbs, and the rest of the cover displaying a surreal, brightly colored image.]

Ch. Garcia thought that explicitly labeling a book magical realism was pretentious.

Marshall asked, "Is magical realism tied to political overtones?" Everyone seemed to agree with this idea. (One example from film would be *Pan's Labyrinth*.) Ch. Garcia mentioned *The Sound of Things Falling* by Juan Gabriel Vásquez as a Latin American novel with political overtones that is *not* magical realism.

[I should note that a lot of the list of magical realism works at <http://leepers.us/evelyn/reviews/magreal.htm> (compiled from Usenet) is not political.]

Ch. Garcia said, "All children young enough are magical realists."

[I have to note that Marshall is a *great* moderator.]

**Sidewise Award for Alternate History**  
**Saturday, 12:00 N**  
**Evelyn Leeper (M), Steven H Silver (M)**

Description: [none]

Attendance: 25

The Sidewise nominees were:

Short Form

- | Lou Antonelli, "Great White Ship"
- | Sean McMullen, "Steamgothic"
- | Ian Sales, "Adrift on the Sea of Rains"
- | Catherynne Valente, "Fade to White"
- | Rick Wilber, "Something Real"

Long Form

- | Thomas Brennan, *Doktor Glass*
- | Mark Hodder, *Expedition to the Mountains of the Moon*
- | Jack McDevitt & Mike Resnick, *The Cassandra Project*
- | Matt Ruff, *The Mirage*
- | C. J. Sansom, *Dominion*

The winners were Rick Wilber for "Something Real" and C. J. Sansom for *Dominion*.

Both winners are first time winners. In fact, none of this year's nominees have ever been nominated before.

**30 Great SFF Films You Almost Certainly Haven't Seen**  
**Saturday, 2:00 PM**  
**Perriane Lurie (M), Adam-Troy Castro, Terry Floyd, Elektra Hammond**

Description: "The many new options for home viewing have greatly increased the availability of any number of obscure, independent, and foreign films available to anybody willing to risk a journey off the beaten path. Panelists will take two minutes apiece to sell you some little-known masterpieces you should check out at your first opportunity. Be prepared to take notes."

Attendance: 200

[Film notes by Mark R. Leeper]

Well, this was a popular panel! The panelists asked the audience members to raise their hands if they had seen the movies the panel suggests. Mark and I had our hands in the air for most of the films. Panelists and people around us were amazed we had seen so many of the films. Since we sat toward the front of the room we were unaware that we were alone in the number of films we recognized.

Rather than list the films chronologically, we will list each panelist's suggestions. And, yes, there are more than thirty. (The ones with question marks I was unable to find in the IMDB, so I may have gotten the name wrong.)

- | Adam-Troy Castro:
  - | *STRINGS*  
[This is one strange and clever film. It takes place in a world where everyone is a marionette. The story is interesting by itself, but the real question is how does such a world function? There is even a scene of giving birth, and how does that work with everyone including suspended the baby from strings?]
  - | *SECTOR 7*
  - | *CASTAWAY ON THE MOON*  
[A man tries to commit suicide by jumping off of a bridge. He is washed up on a small island, one of the supports of the bridge. He is right within view of the city and passing tour boats, but nobody realizes he needs help. He has to learn to survive on his island the way that Robinson Crusoe did on his. He forms a relationship with an agoraphobic woman who photographs him from her room in the nearby city.]
  - | *THE SOUND OF NOISE*  
[This is a fantasy from Sweden. Terrorists are performing wanton acts of music. Clatter of the City is being channeled into music to be music. For example back hoes are being used as musical instruments. The only person who can stop the musical terrorists is one tone-deaf policeman with a secret in his past.]
  - | *X-CROSS (?)*
  - | *WOMB*
  - | *HANSEL & GRETEL*  
Not to be confused with *HANSEL & GRETEL: WITCH HUNTERS* (2013). This is a real surprise. This is a South Korean film inspired by the fairy tale, but which goes deliciously askew. A man finds a strange young girl in a forest and comes to her home where everybody is happy and everything is sugary sweet. Or so it seems before the axe drops. What kind of bizarre mind can make this film from a children's fairy tale?
  - | *NOTHING*  
[This film has a slow start as two losers who share a house are to be evicted by eminent domain. One wishes the outside world would just go away... And it does. The two discover they have the power to

wish things out of existence, but then they cannot wish them back. Still they keep rubbing each other the wrong way and using their new-found powers against each other. Where will it all end?]

i *THE TROUBLESOME MAN (?)*

[I suspect this is THE PENITENT MAN. I do not remember the film really well, and do not want to spoil what I do remember, but the plot involves time travel.]

i *WRONG (2012)*

Strange story set in a surreal absurdist world. Dolph's dog has been kidnapped and Dolph is trying to find him. It may or may not have something to do with a messianic cult leader. Like the first third of BEING JOHN MALKOVICH one strange touch after another is dropped on the viewer, but here the weird touches just keep coming. From director Quentin Dupieux who also did RUBBER, a film about a tire with evil powers.

i *THIRST (2009, directed by Park Chan-Wook)*

i *DEATH NOTE (2006)*

i *OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN*

[Peter Weller stars in a study of mania, a modern Moby Dick. A man finds a rat in his house but is outsmarted at every turn in getting rid of it. In lesser hands this could have been a Road Runner cartoon. Instead it is quite chilling.]

i *A TOWN CALLED PANIC*

[Western story told with animation of what looked like toys. I cannot say it held my attention.]

i *THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE WEIRD*

[This is a Spaghetti Western, but it was not made in Italy or set in the American West. It was set and made in a South Korea that somehow becomes just a transplanted American West. It is funny and sometimes does some amazing stunts on the screen. It is trying to be the ultimate Spaghetti Western and if a Korean Western is given a chance it just might be.]

i *TRAIL OF THE SCREAMING FOREHEAD*

i Terry Floyd:

i *PRIMER*

[This is not a film to be seen only once. About the fifth or sixth viewing it starts making sense. A group of techies in a startup corporation stumble on a means of time travel. Then the plot gets really complex.]

i *UPSTREAM COLOR*

[This film by Shane Carruth is even harder to follow than is his PRIMER. Two lovers are controlled by some sort of a deathless parasite. It does not make a lot of sense to me, but perhaps a little study is all that is needed.]

i *PULGASARI*

[This is a North Korean giant monster film about peasants creating an iron-eating giant beast out of a magic rice ball. The beast itself looks like Godzilla crossed with a bull. True story: the film's director was kidnapped from South Korea and forced to make this film. The story of the kidnapping and escape is a better story than the film itself. PULGASARI is available on YouTube.]

i *DAIMAJIN*

[The Japanese like historical films in which leaders who abuse their power are brought up short at the end. This film was intended to get the audience interested in historical dramas and the giant monster audience. A bad leader goes unchecked until a statue the size of a cliff gets angry enough that it comes to life and stomps the bad leader. Two sequels had almost identical plots: THE WRATH OF DAIMAJIN and RETURN OF DAIMAJIN.]

i *RIGHT AT YOUR DOOR*

[Terrorists have detonated a chemical bomb in Los Angeles. But our characters are lucky being some distance from the detonation living in the suburbs. Brad, who is home, has to seal off doors and windows with plastic and duct tape. Then there is the problem that some people did not get to safety and want to be let into Brad's house even though they are carrying poisonous chemicals in the dust on their bodies. And what about Brad's wife who survived the blast but now is a walking death trap. Actually this is very disturbing. Don't be surprised if you find yourself stocking up on duct tape after seeing this film.]

i *CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST*

i *ZACHARIAH*

i *WICKED, WICKED*

[This is a serial killer film whose only real novelty is that the entire film is shot in split screen. You can watch both the killer and the victim. The gimmick does not compensate for the poor, unimaginative plotting.]

i *STAR WORMS 2: ATTACK OF THE PLEASURE PODS*

i *CUBE*

[Vincenzo Natali began his career directing and co-writing this story of seven complete strangers who wake up in a three-dimensional maze made up of identical room-size cubes. This is a brilliant idea for a low-budget SF film since the filmmakers only had to make one cube. The film has a decent enough story that it inspired two sequels from other filmmakers. Natali went on to make CYPHER and NOTHING, both covered elsewhere on this list. Later Natali also wrote and directed SPLICE which got a much larger release, though it was not his best work.]

┆ *CYPHER*

[Vincenzo Natali does this (non-comic) pastiche of Philip K. Dick stories. This is a very Philip K. Dick sort of film dealing with industrial espionage and reality-bending devices. Jeremy Northam and Lucy Liu star. It would be a sin to tell more.]

┆ Elektra Hammond:

┆ *RUBY SPARKS*

[This is a fantasy along the lines of STRANGER THAN FICTION but from the point of view of the author. A novelist writes about someone who would be his ideal woman. Somehow she comes to life from his description. The author then has to come to terms with what has happened. It is a nice romantic fantasy with a sort of "Twilight Zone" premise.]

┆ *THE WIZARD OF SPEED AND TIME*

[In real life Mike Jittlov made a series of very entertaining animated shorts for Disney Studios. His best known being "Animato", "Time Tripper", and "The Wizard of Speed and Time". He used stop motion and pixilation to create shorts that were hypnotic, though his effects can now be done better in a computer. In 1989 he directed and starred in a feature film, THE WIZARD OF SPEED AND TIME about an animator doing work for an evil film studio and his own breaking away from them. He used his short films in the longer one. The evil studio was probably a disguised version of Disney. The connective plotting felt a bit like it was muckraking and though released to theaters, it was not really good enough to compete against contemporary feature films. Much of Jittlov's animation can now be found on YouTube.]

┆ *MY BEST FRIEND IS A VAMPIRE*

[Formulaic 1980s comedy about a teen who becomes a vampire but is determined not to take human life. Just okay.]

┆ *THE PURGE* (2013)

┆ *KNIGHTRIDERS*

[KNIGHTRIDERS director George Romero criticizes it, but I think this is his best film. A travelling Renaissance Fair has jousts on motorcycles. Some promoters want to super-commercialize the sport, which brings divisions among the participants as to what their goals should be, idealistic or profitable.]

┆ *SHOCK TREATMENT*

[People who have huge successes generally believe that it was through their own talent and their efforts to repeat those successes are frequently embarrassments. SHOCK TREATMENT is nominally a sequel to THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW, a film that needed no sequel and if it did, this was not it. Brad and Janet (played by different actors), now married, have an unrelated adventure. Brad and Janet find that their town as been transformed into has been transformed into a giant TV set for reality TV.]

┆ *SCREAMERS*

[Lesser Philip K. Dick. In wars of the future it will no longer be easy to tell real humans from robotic assassins. It might have been an engaging idea when Dick wrote the original idea in the story "The Second Variety" but now it is just a bleak violent movie from Canada.]

┆ *SLIDING DOORS*

[One short instant can change your entire life. Gwyneth Paltrow runs for a subway train as the doors are closing. The film then splits into two timelines. One is her life if she makes it onto the train and one is her life if she does not. Using different looks, there is never any doubt which Paltrow we are seeing and which timeline we are in. There are some unexpected plot twists in the double romantic film.]

┆ *THE QUESTOR TAPES*

["Demon with a Glass Hand" meets "Run For Your Life". In an un-sold 1974 TV-pilot written by Gene Roddenberry an android that passes for human has just part of its programming and wants to get the rest. It is looking for its creator and for knowledge of what it was created for. Meanwhile it mixes in with people's lives.]

┆ *"Venom: Truth in Journalism"*

┆ Perrine Lurie:

┆ *WINGS OF DESIRE*

- [Wim Wenders film from Germany. An angel flies around in Berlin examining people lives. One of the people he observes is Peter Falk playing someone much like himself. At times it is poetic, but it can also be overly long, slow, dull, and cold. The angel is played by the excellent Bruno Ganz.]
- i *FAR AWAY SO CLOSE*  
[Wim Wenders wrote and directed sequel to his own WINGS OF DESIRE. Mostly it is more of the same. We still have Bruno Ganz but lose Peter Falk for Nastassja Kinski. Again angels wish they could be real people. Lucky us who are already human.]
  - i *UNTIL THE END OF THE WORLD*  
[Wim Wenders turns from fantasy to science fiction. A couple are on the road being chased by the CIA because they have a strange device that allow the blind to see. Meanwhile an Indian nuclear satellite is falling from orbit and will destroy all life on the planet. The film was made in 1991 and set in 1999. Wenders is not a very entertaining director to my taste.]
  - i *CITY OF LOST CHILDREN*  
[French director Jean-Pierre Jeunet, on the other hand, is always entertaining. He fills his films with kinetic visual insanity. He is probably best known for AMELIE, but his DELICATESSEN and MICMACS are also visually inventive in a sort of surrealism. CITY OF LOST CHILDREN begins with a young child in a crib being visited by Santa only to have things turn sinister when one Santa after another comes down the chimney packing the room. Jeunet even beats Terry Gilliam for strange unexpected visual happenings in his films. This one also has a steam punk atmosphere.]
  - i *THE NAVIGATOR: A MEDIEVAL ODYSSEY*  
[The men of a medieval village beset by the coming of the Black Plague believe they can get protection in the "Celestial City". They have to dig a tunnel underground to get to this legendary city. Whether it is to be taken literally or not, the Celestial City is modern day Auckland, New Zealand. Can they get a cure for their village in the Celestial City or must they see their home die?]
  - i *ALICE (directed by Jan Svankmajer)*  
[Czech Jan Svankmajer has his own style of animation, mixing live action and often intentionally jerky animations giving his animations a three-dimensionality. Terry Gilliam certainly borrowed a lot of Svankmajer. His animation is surreal, though not so nihilistic as the animation of the Brothers Quay. This is his take on Lewis Carroll's Alice In Wonderland. It can be found on YouTube.]
  - i *EUROPA REPORT*  
A pure science fiction film. This is the story of an international crew on a mission to explore Europa, the moon of Jupiter. The science is darn near flawless and the whole story is very credible. Still the film builds some real tension. One of the best pure science films I have seen. [Actually this film deserves a longer review. And I am just the guy to do it. See .]
  - i *BEING JOHN MALKOVICH*  
[This was the first film written by Charlie Kaufman if ADAPTATION and ETERNAL SUNSHINE. The film has an uneven structure where for the first third of the film it piles fantasy absurdity onto fantasy absurdity with a straight face. Then suddenly the addition of new absurdities stops and Kaufman just plays the cards he has at that point. The plot involves the finding of a tunnel that leads to a most unexpected place.]
  - i *BUBBA HO-TEP*  
[Two old men in a nursing home are or claim to be Elvis Presley and John F. Kennedy. The two old men are stalked by a mummy from Ancient Egypt. The film also throws absurdity onto absurdity. The two marginalized old men fight the onslaught of cloth-wrapped feet. The film is an adaptation of a story by Joe Lansdale.]
  - i *ROBOT & FRANK*  
[With echoes of Twilight Zone we have the story of an former jewel thief who is given a household robot to take care of him. Instead he sets about to corrupt the robot and perhaps lead it to a life of crime.]
  - i *THE WORLD'S END*  
Academy Award short nominees  
[This is generally a good collection, though some years the selection is better than others. I cannot say a great deal because each disk is different.]

**Trends in Banned Books**  
**Saturday, 3:00 PM**  
**John Klima (M), James Gunn, Norman Spinrad, Evelyn C. Leeper**

Description: [none]

Attendance: 100

Spinrad said there is more than one way that a book can be "banned". It can remain unpublished, or the author can be forced to re-write parts in order to get it published. He said that he has experienced all of this in a democracy, and it is always corporate censorship, rather than the government. The books he had the most trouble with were *Bug Jack Barron*, *The Iron Dream*, and *Osama the Gun*.

[I left early, because this panel seemed to be more strident than I was hoping for.]

**Brain-Melting Nonfiction That Every SF Writer and Fan Should Read**  
**Saturday, 4:00 PM**  
**Carol Berg (M), Patrick Nielsen Hayden, Jo Walton, Gail Carriger, Rick Wilbur**

Description: J. B. S. Haldane said, "The Universe is not only queerer than we suppose, but queerer than we can suppose." Can reality provide the same sense of wonder as speculative fiction? Panelists will recommend and discuss works of nonfiction, from ancient history to modern science, that offer the same hit of strangeness and wonder as the best science fiction and fantasy.

Attendance: 200

Berg asked for the first book of this sort that people thought of. Wilbur said it would be the works of Sean Carroll (e.g. *Endless Forms Most Beautiful*). Carriger said it would be *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* by Thomas Kuhn. (He added that you need not agree with it, but you should know it.) Berg named *Mao's Last Dancer* by Li Cunxin. Walton added Charles C. Mann's *1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus* and Nielsen Hayden added Mann's *1493: Uncovering the New World Columbus Created*.

Wilbur said that *Science News* was a good source of information. (I might suggest the "Best Science & Nature Writing" series--actually, I think there are two series.)

Someone in the audience observed that "not all of us are writers, but all of us are readers."

Carriger suggested *Heads in Beds: A Reckless Memoir of Hotels, Motels, and So-Called Hospitality* by Jacob Tomsky and *Sleepless in Hollywood: Tales of the New Abnormal in the Movie Business* by Lynda Obst. Walton named *The Backroom Boys: The Secret Return of the British Boffin* by Francis Spufford and works by John McPhee. Nielsen Hayden added another Spufford book, *Red Plenty*.

Walton returned to the classics with *De rerum naturum* by Lucretius, but also *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* by Steven Greenblatt. Carriger stayed with the classics with Herodotus. Another history book suggested by Nielsen Hayden was *The Discovery of France: A Historical Geography* by Graham Robb.

Berg named *Touching the Void: The True Story of One Man's Miraculous Survival* by Joe Simpson. Carriger recommended *A World Lit Only by Fire: The Medieval Mind and the Renaissance--Portrait of an Age* by William Manchester, but Walton said it was unreliable. Along these lines, Nielsen Hayden added *At Day's End: Night in Times Past* by A. Roger Ekrich.

Wilbur listed *The Monuments Men: Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves and the Greatest Treasure Hunt in History* by Robert M. Edsel, *Hedy's Folly: The Life and Breakthrough Inventions of Hedy Lamarr, the Most Beautiful Woman in the World* by Richard Rhodes, *Blackett's War: The Men Who Defeated the Nazi U-Boats and Brought Science to the Art of Naval Warfare* by Stephen Budiansky, and *The Girls of Atomic City: The Untold Story of the Women Who Helped Win World War II* by Denise Kiernan. Nielsen Hayden rounded out the list with *How to Live: Or a Life of Montaigne in One Question and Twenty Attempts at an Answer* by Sarah Bakewell.

In magazines, Walton recommended *The Atlantic* and *Rolling Stone*.

An audience member recommended the "Ex Urbe" blog, and both Walton and Nielsen Hayden agreed. Carriger added the "All in the Mind" podcast.

**Historical Space Ships Patents**  
**Saturday, 6:00 PM**  
**Carolina Gómez Lagerlöf**



Description: Space ships designs from the past, viewed through the lens of a patent examiner.

Attendance: [unknown]

[For some reason I thought this was going to be about fictional spaceships. It wasn't.]

**Gorillas in Science Fiction: The Encore Performance!**

**Saturday, 7:00 PM**

**Mark Finn (M), Howard Waldrop, Rick Klaw, Scott A. Cupp, Joe R. Lansdale**

Description: You've heard about it for years! Now it's back for one final presentation you do not want to miss! There is no movie that cannot be made better by the judicious application of a gorilla. Examples abound, and you'll get a ringside seat when our panel discusses the best - and the worst - of simian cinema, and celebrate the 80th anniversary of the film that started it all, KING KONG!

Attendance: 80

[Though the title referenced only gorillas, and the panel talked about apes, there were occasional references to monkeys.]

Klaw promoted his anthology, *The Apes of Wrath*. Waldrop is the author of "Dr. Hudson's Secret Gorilla".

Klaw began by saying he likes the film *Son of Kong*. Finn thought that *Son of Kong* undercuts the pathos of *King Kong*. Cupp said that King Kong was supposed to be the last of his kind. He did think that *Doc Savage: Skull Island* by Will Murray was "cool."

Speaking of the Peter Jackson remake of *King Kong*, Finn said that its biggest sin was that Carl Denham never takes responsibility.

Cupp said that there was a "Supermonkey" in *Supergirl*, and also many other animals in the Legion of Super-Pets.

Finn said that King Kong is in public domain. (That doesn't sound right--the book and movie were in 1933, and most copyrights extend back to works from 1922.) He also claimed that *King Kong* was the first fantasy film, and then the first giant creature film. Clearly *The Lost World* predates it, although one can argue that by giant creature he meant a creature larger than its species' normal size. Klaw said (more accurately) than *King Kong* was the first film where the creature was the focus. (In *The Lost World* there were several creatures that shared the spotlight equally.)

Lansdale said that we cannot bring back Tarzan's savagery (as personified by Johnny Weissmuller), or King Kong's. Finn felt that Tarzan's savagery was based on total fabrication. Klaw said that Edgar Rice Burroughs had tigers in Africa, but they could not climb trees.

Lansdale said that his favorite ape movie was *Mighty Joe Young*.

Klaw claimed there are more orangutans than gorillas on fiction. Someone mentioned Karen Joy Fowler's novel *Sister Noon*, and there was also a discussion of the sub-genre of stories about super-intelligent apes, as well as apes in comics.

Asked for their favorite gorilla movie (and why), the panelists were mostly in agreement on the 1933 *King Kong*. Klaw said his used to be *Planet of the Apes*, but was now *King Kong*. Finn listed both *King Kong* and *Planet of the Apes*. Lansdale stood alone with *Mighty Joe Young*, partly because he preferred Ben Johnson to Robert Armstrong. He also felt that the remakes (of all the films) added too much "stuff" to the original.

**The Legacy of Omni**

**Sunday, 11:00 AM**

**Ellen Datlow (M), Howard Waldrop, Ben Bova, Robert Silverberg, Pat Cadigan**

Description: [none]

Attendance: 40

[At the start of this I put souvenir *Omni* plastic bags on the panelists' table. I discovered these in the garage a couple of years ago, left over from the promotion when *Omni* was launched.]

Bova and Datlow said they had been fiction editors of *Omni*. Bova said that he had proposed a similar magazine, to be titled *Tomorrow!*, to Conde Nast, but they turned it down, and this was part of the reason he left *Analog* (which he edited from 1971-1978). Bob Guccione presented the idea of *Nova* ("Bova at *Nova*", as Bova said). He recommended someone who did the first issue, then left, and Bova replaced her. The title was changed to *Omni* because the name *Nova* was in use by WGBH for their science show. (Guccione claimed he looked at every possible four-letter title.)

Bova emphasized that *Omni* was not a science magazine, but a magazine about the future. Because of this, he was able to take stories that *Analog* had refused as not being "hard science fiction."

After a year, the editor-in-chief left and Bova was offered the job. He took it to avoid having an outsider come in and purge a lot of stuff he had accepted. His big job was to convince advertisers that "*Omni* was not *Penthouse* in space." At first Robert Sheckley became the fiction editor, and then Ellen Datlow took the job.

Silverberg said that he had retired in 1974 or 1975 from writing, and would wake up thinking, "Gee, I'm not going to write anything today." Then he was offered US\$2000 for a short story. He said he thought about it for thirty seconds, then said yes, and could hear Sheckley at the other end of the line shout to Bova, "He's going to do it!" And thus was born "Our Lady of the Sauropods". Silverberg said the cover announced "Robert Silverberg returns!" as if I were the CoMC." [I wish I knew what this note I took meant! Coming of the Messiah?]

After this, he wrote more for *Omni*, including "The Far Side of the Bell-Shaped Curve" (1980).

Datlow claimed that when she first called Silverberg up, he asked, "Who the hell are you?" Silverberg disputed this, saying, "I am always very courteous--firm and arrogant and cold and sterile, but never rude."

He was also very surprised to get a rejection slip from her (at that stage in his career he just did not get rejection slips). He asked her to read *Son of Man* and comment on it. After that, he never got another rejection slip (presumably because he now understood what she liked and what she did not).

He said that it was "a high-gloss magazine; I would write high-gloss stories."

Waldrop said his first contact with *Omni* was with the story "Flying Saucer Rock and Roll", which he wrote for *New Dimensions 13*. When that volume got canceled, he submitted the story to *Omni*.

Silverberg noted that Bova had been excluded from the *Omni* party at Seacon. Datlow asked Bova, "Why did you hire me?" "You were ager, you looked intelligent, and I was desperate," was the response.

Datlow said she got to read everything under Sheckley, not just the slush.

Cadigan said her first sale had been "Criers and Killers" in 1980 to *New Dimensions 11* (though she said it was a better story when it appeared in the French edition of F&SF). "[Datlow] taught me everything I know about being a writer."

Cadigan also said, "There was one story that put a roof on my house, which says something about how cheap a roof was in Kansas."

Waldrop said that one time they had to shape a story around an ad with two liquor bottles, which involved a lot of "cuts and adds" to get the line lengths right. Datlow said that part of *Omni*'s legacy was the design, and gave *Science Fiction Age* and *Marion Zimmer Bradley's Fantasy Magazine* as examples.

Bova said that one thing *Omni* proved was that there was a market for a magazine about the future; it had a huge readership (several million). He said he also spent a lot of time and money tracking down flying saucers for Guccione, who believed in them.

Someone in the audience asked what killed *Omni*. Datlow said that Guccione's wife wanted to reach one million subscribers, so they sold cheap subscriptions, which in turn drove the advertising rates down. And the on-line version did not have paid advertising (no one did at that time).

Waldrop claimed, "I killed *Omni* on-line." Apparently he wrote a story which "was up for exactly one day before they pulled the plug." (Waldrop had a whole riff on how he has killed various magazines and anthology series by writing a story for them.)

Datlow said another factor was that they paid more to authors to get credibility as not being pornography. Waldrop added, "At my scale of living, yes." He then talked about making a living writing short stories. I don't recall exactly what he said this time, but from previous versions I know part of how he did this was by not having a telephone, and by catching fish for food.

**Forgiving History**  
**Sunday, 1:00 PM**  
**Bradford Lyau (M), Kent Bloom, Mary Morman**

Description: "When you are reading your favorite writers of old, how do you deal with outdated views on race, gender, and violence - and still enjoy the writing? What classics can still be enjoyed despite our modern sensibilities?"

Attendance: 40

Bloom suggests, "Anything is the product of the milieu in which it is written and to which it is directed." The suspension of disbelief is as important in this regard as in reading fantastic literature.

Morman thinks this is summed up with *I Will Fear No Evil* by Robert A. Heinlein. It was a product of its time, but is now unreadable, while a much older book like *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* by Jules Verne is still very readable.

Lyau talked about a college course that used the film *Birth of a Nation* and got a lot of flak for it. We need to come to terms with the past, he said, and quoted Octavia Butler: "The worst form of censorship is self-censorship."

Morman said there were two types of problem: the technological and the social. [I will note that one does not need to *forgive* technological errors.]

Someone in the audience suggested that World War II was a dividing line on genocide in science fiction. [Although as has been noted, Isaac Asimov has genocide in *Second Foundation*.]

Lyau said that there was flak over Robert A. Heinlein's *Sixth Column*, which was written in 1940, from both the left and the right. "It is not forgiving history, it's understanding."

Morman said there are certain "hot buttons" such as slavery and women's rights. You cannot put modern mores in a time or place where they do not fit, she observed.

Lyau brought up steampunk, founded by Tim Powers, James Blalock, and others, but who did not realize they were launching a genre. "How can you honor Victorian England?" he asks. Bloom suggested that steampunk authors did not understand Victorian England.

Someone suggested we should try to see the context of the time when a work was written, but sometimes this is not possible (e.g., when slavery is shown as a good thing). Steampunk is a "situationalist" attempt to refashion an era.

Someone else said that everybody (in steampunk) in the future was white, spoke English, and (if in power) was male.

Bloom said that Heinlein's *Farnham's Freehold* demonstrated that power corrupts (similar to Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson*).

Someone in the audience thought that the Society for Creative Anachronism "does the Middle Ages as it should have been"; there is understanding and acknowledgement.

Someone else said, "Every generation thinks itself more tolerant and understanding than the previous generation." [And they may well be right, which does not mean that there is not still room for improvement.]

I observed that some authors seem to get a pass: Arthur Conan Doyle's references to Mormons and Jews in the Sherlock Holmes stories are abysmal. Bloom suggested that we need to look at intent--if the author's intent is to be a bigot, it is harder to forgive them than if they are merely parroting common stereotypes and attitudes of the time without thinking about them.

Someone in the audience mentioned John Norman's "Gor" novels as another example.

Someone else suggested that perhaps older books needed reader's guides. And another person said that the Bible has all the stuff that people object to.

### **Have We Lost the Future?**

**Sunday, 2:00 PM**

**Karen Burnham (M), Brenda Cooper, Karl Schroeder, Willie Siros, Derek Kunsken**

Description: "Where science fiction once looked to the future as the setting for speculation, nowadays the focus seems to be on alternate pasts, fantasy worlds, or consciously "retro" futures. We're no longer showing the way to what things might be like. We discuss whether this is connected to the general fear of decline and decay in the English-language world - or has science fiction simply run out of ideas?"

Attendance: 100

Kunsken said this concentrates on short fiction. Siros said that Gregory Benford suggested this panel, but could not make it. Schroeder said this is not a steampunk problem (though often seen as one).

Kunsaken gave "Womb Factory" by Peter M. Ferenczi, "Immersion" (author unspecified--probably one of Gregory Benford, Aliette de Bodard, or Kara Hartz), "Dolly" by Elizabeth Bear, and the Canadian anthology *Blood and Water* as examples of science fiction dealing with the future.

Siros said, "Steampunk is a fashion statement and aesthetic, not a subgenre." Nanotech has been treated as magic.

Siros also noted that Fritz Leiber predicted microwaves in 1940. (This was interesting, since in the last panel Mary Morman said that Robert A. Heinlein first mentioned them in *Farmer in the Sky*, a much later book about travel to Ganymede.)

[I found it odd that no one on this panel mentioned Judith Berman's article "Science Fiction Without the Future" (*The New York Review of Science Fiction*, May 2001).]

### **Getting Research Right in Historical Fiction**

**Sunday, 3:00 PM**

**Rick Wilber (M), Laura Frankos, Barbara Galler-Smith, Harry Turtledove, Kay Kenyon**

Description: "How much research needs to be done when writing a story set in an historical period? How far can you stray before readers will notice? Do the readers care, or even know enough to care?"

Attendance: 75

Galler-Smith said that all periods are interesting. (This may be true, but setting a story in an unfamiliar and peaceful period is not as likely to engage the reader.)

Turtledove said that the research for *The Guns of the South* was motivated by fear--while it is a good bet he knew more about Byzantium than his readers, this was not true of the American Civil War.

Frankos and Galler-Smith both agreed that research is fun; the problem is knowing when to stop.

Kenyon has written , an alternate history about Victorian England (actually set in India). Kenyon said she loved Victoriana, and 1875 in India was not already over-done (unlike the period of the Sepoy Rebellion, a.k.a. India's First War of Independence).

Siros has written stories about Moe Berg (a baseball player and a spy). He said he needed to "limit [the research used] to the amount of baseball that science fiction readers will take." He admits that Moe Berg

shows up everywhere, and has an attractive female companion, just like the Doctor.

Turtledove admitted that he was unable to realize or predict where his big series was going (e.g., Featherstone as Hitler). He said that World War II was the scariest time to write about--it was still in living memory, but not his. Siros asked, "How far can you stray before readers notice? Well, they notice aliens [in World War II]."

Galler-Smith warned that readers of a druid book are more knowledgeable about druids than most people, and popular knowledge is often wrong, so you must check even what you think you know. And Turtledove warned that in this, and in general, you need to use primary, not secondary, source. Galler-Smith that she used the writings of Julius Caesar (in translation) and other Roman authors.

Kenyon advised that a variety of sources is important. Galler-Smith said she did a year of hard research before starting the novel, and then more as she wrote. Turtledove agreed, and also sometimes you need to change what is already written. For example, in *The Guns of the South*, Turtledove had written about activity in Richmond at the government offices on February 22, but then discovered that Washington's Birthday was an official holiday of the CSA.

Regarding alternate histories, Turtledove suggested, "You cannot be right or wrong after the divergence; you can only be plausible." This is also true of real, but unknown, history, e.g., what Julius Caesar had for breakfast on March 15.

***Life Tracker***  
**Sunday, 4:00 PM**  
**Director: Joe McClean**

Description: When documentary filmmaker Dillon Smith decides to follow a news story about a company called Life Tracker, which claims it can predict a human's future by analyzing DNA, he has no idea how much it will damage his life and the world around him.

**Hugo Awards Ceremony**  
**Sunday, 8:00 PM**

Description: "The Hugo Award is the only major science fiction award that is voted on by fans around the globe. Join us as we honor our nominees and winners Sunday evening in the Grand Ballroom. The ceremony starts at 8:00 PM, doors open at 7:30 PM."

Attendance: lots

And the winners were:

- | Best Novel: *Redshirts: A Novel with Three Codas*, John Scalzi
- | Best Novella: "The Emperor's Soul", Brandon Sanderson
- | Best Novelette: "The Girl-Thing Who Went Out for Sushi", Pat Cadigan
- | Best Short Story: "Mono no Aware", Ken Liu
- | Best Related Work: *Writing Excuses* (Season Seven), Brandon Sanderson, Dan Wells, Mary Robinette Kowal, Howard Tayler and Jordan Sanderson
- | Best Graphic Story: *Saga* (Volume One), written by Brian K. Vaughn, illustrated by Fiona Staples (Image Comics)
- | Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form: *The Avengers*
- | Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form: *Game of Thrones*, "Blackwater"
- | Best Editor, Short Form: Stanley Schmidt
- | Best Editor, Long Form: Patrick Nielsen Hayden
- | Best Professional Artist: John Picacio
- | Best Semiprozine: *Clarkesworld*, edited by Neil Clarke, Jason Heller, Sean Wallace and Kate Baker
- | Best Fanzine: *SF Signal*, edited by John DeNardo, JP Frantz, and Patrick Hester
- | Best Fancast: "SF Squeecast", Elizabeth Bear, Paul Cornell, Seanan McGuire, Lynne M. Thomas, Catherynne M. Valente (Presenters) and David McHone-Chase (Technical Producer)
- | Best Fan Writer: Tansy Rayner Roberts
- | Best Fan Artist: Galen Dara
- | The John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer: Mur Lafferty

**Reading: Howard Waldrop  
Monday, 10:00 AM**

Description: [none]

Attendance: 30

Waldrop managed to do his reading even though he had tripped on a step on the Riverwalk and had to be taken to the hospital to have the injury to his head bandaged. He talked a little about his writing history, including mentioning that his "Heart of Whitenesse" was the original landboat story. He also said that his recent story, "The Dead Sea-Bottom Scrolls", for the anthology *Old Mars* was his best-paid (\$3000 for a 6200-word story, or about 49 cents a word). He then read from "Horse of a Different Color (That You Rode In On)".

**Cambrian Explosion: A Developmental Toolkit for Complex Body Plans  
Monday, 11:00 AM  
John DeLaughter, Sam Scheiner, Mel White**

Description: "For most of the nearly 4 billion years that life has existed on Earth, evolution produced little beyond bacteria, plankton, and multi-celled algae. But beginning about 600 million years ago in the Precambrian, the fossil record speaks of more rapid change. First, there was the rise and fall of mysterious creatures of the Ediacaran fauna, named for the fossil site in Australia where they were first discovered. Some of these animals may have belonged to groups that survive today, but others don't seem at all related to animals we know. Then, between about 570 and 530 million years ago, another burst of diversification occurred, with the eventual appearance of the lineages of almost all animals living today. This stunning and unique evolutionary flowering is termed the 'Cambrian explosion,' taking the name of the geological age in whose early part it occurred."

Attendance: 150

For what it's worth, none of the panelists was a paleontologist.

The Cambrian was described as a "huge diversification of multi-cellular animals that has never been duplicated."

White started by pointing out that the body plan is the blueprint of the way the body of an organism is laid out. DeLaughter noted that anything before the Cambrian had only soft body parts. Scheiner added that all the life of the time was marine, and we really do not know what lines have modern descendants.

DeLaughter thinks symmetry is basic, and what non-symmetry we find may be the result of injury, scavengers, etc. Later Scheiner said that bilateral symmetry arose very early.

Scheiner recapped what he considered the times of the major extinctions before the Cambrian: 650 MYA, 517 MYA, 499 MYA, and then 488 MYA (the Cambrian-Ordovician). By the time of the Cambrian, all the major phyla were established.

White mentioned that in this period there was also mouth part diversity and eye diversity in trilobites. Someone in the audience asked if there was an explosion of diversity after each extinction event, and the answer was yes.

Scheiner said that the explosion started with sponges and cnidaria, then mollusks and arthropods, and then echinoderms and chordates. DeLaughter noted that tunicates (sea squirts) start life as chordates, then lose their backbone. And Scheiner warned that horseshoe crabs may look like trilobites, but they are only an example of convergent evolution. (Someone in the audience pointed out that horseshoe crabs have copper-based blood.)

Someone asked how the sea horse fit in. Scheiner compared it to the pipe fish, a long skinny fish with a bent-up tail.

Recommended was *The Cambrian Explosion: The Construction of Animal Biodiversity* by Douglas H. Erwin and James W. Valentine.

**"An Age Undreamed Of...": World Building with Robert E. Howard**  
**Monday, 1:00 PM**  
**Jeffrey Shanks (M), Mark Finn, Dave Hardy**

Description: "Critics have argued that Howard threw Conan's Hyborean Age together with "careless haste." In fact, Howard was a meticulous world-builder. And not just with Conan's world, either. Our experts will set the record straight once and for all."

Attendance: 30

Shanks began by saying that Howard used anthropology and archaeology to build his worlds in the same way that J. R. R. Tolkien used philology. He also claimed that Howard was the first author to use maps to do this.

Hardy said that Howard's worlds (Conan, King Kull, Bran Mrak Morn) overlap each other, and he also wrote in shared universes with H. P. Lovecraft and others.

Shanks said that Howard's skill was in providing a sense of verisimilitude. The Hyborian Age derived somewhat from the theosophy and the tales of antediluvian worlds at the time he was writing.

Hardy said that Kull is a barbarian from Atlantis raised by tigers, and a proto-pirate. These are tales of the rivals of the Picts (from northern Britain). To Howard, the Picts are special, and not connected to anyone in the modern world (well, maybe the Basques). At the time, they were thought to be the basis of the tales of the fey. Finn observes that in "Worms of the Earth", Howard seals their fate.

Shanks said that in Howard's works, it is a race rather than a character that has a story arc. [This sounds like Olaf Stapledon's *Last and First Men!*]

[I wonder if anyone has done a timeline of all of Howard's stories.]

Finn talked about Howard's "theory of the cycles of history." Shanks said it was all connected to theosophy and Madame Blavatsky. There were the "root races," then the Lemurians and the Atlanteans, and now the Aryans. Howard replaced the root races with the Picts.

Hardy recommended Howard's essay "The Hyborian Age". He postulates that the Atlanteans migrate to the mainland and become the Cimmerians, who later become the Celts.

Finn observed that L. Sprague deCamp said that Howard wrote "in careless haste." But his writing reflected cycles of history, and Conan in particular takes place before recorded history.

Hardy said that Howard's characters often have Latin names, and the names are a shorthand for the setting. It is similar to George R.R. Martin's Westeros, where the Dothraki are Mongols, etc. Solomon Kane is the 16th century "real" world first, then changed into a fictional one. So Kane is trying to figure out what reality is, while Conan is immersed in reality. Shanks said that Kull has no parallel historical names, because it is set 100,000 years ago. Hardy said that Bran Mrak Morn is set in Roman Britain with fantasy, and "Kings of the Night", set in this world, has Kull as a character. Shanks said that all three are one long story, and developmentally, the order was Bran Mrak Morn, then Kull, and then Conan.

Finn switched the discussion to the world of Howard's boxing. Howard put fictitious characters in a real boxing world. And then Blackstone and Bran Kull are from the Cthulhu Mythos.

Finn said that Michael Moorcock said that his Elric was in reaction to Conan.

Hardy said that in Howard's works, the gods are referred to, but generally ignored. Finn said that Howard called himself an agnostic. In the "Conan" stories, the gods are either monsters or just men.

Shanks gave dates for a couple of the main characters: Bran Mrak Morn was around 200 C.E., Solomon Kane was around 1600. But whatever the internal chronology, he thought the stories are best read in the order they were written.

Finn said that the films *Conan the Barbarian* and *Conan the Destroyer* implied a trilogy. He wants that third

movie just to close it out. Shanks said that Arnold Schwarzenegger was a bad Conan in a good movie, while Jason Momoa was a good Conan in a bad movie.

Shanks thought the story "Hour of the Dragon" would be the best for a film. Hardy disagreed; he preferred "Queen of the Black Coast". Finn suggested combining several "single-night event" stories, starting with Conan coming out of the wilderness:

1. "The God in the Bowl"
2. "The Tower of the Elephant"
3. "Rogues in the House"
4. "Queen of the Black Coast"

He felt the last could then segue into a sequel.

They all agreed the television series was not good. Shanks said that Conan is historical horror, but being post-Tolkien, it makes it historical fantasy. The worst Conan story, he feels, was *Conan the Liberator*, written by L. Sprague deCamp and Lin Carter. To Shanks, Conan is just like "Game of Thrones"; it is not an immersive fantasy, but an intrusion fantasy. (These are two of the four types of fantasy Farah Mendlesohn into which divides the field in *Rhetorics of Fantasy* and elsewhere: portal-quest, immersive, intrusion, and liminal.) He notes that George R.R. Martin is a huge fan of Howard.

Hardy noted that the "Conan" cycle was short stories, and that Howard's references to Lemuria and Atlantis were a shorthand to avoid having to write too much description for a short story.

### **Computers Using DNA for Storage**

**Monday, 2:00 PM**

**Helen Umberger (M), [something] Broun, John Wardale, Andrew Adams**

Description: "A recent paper in Nature announced an encoding method makes it possible to store at least 100 million hours of high-definition video in about a cup of DNA. Will this take the place of memory diamond? With full development, what are the implications?"

Attendance: 100

Broun said there are 700 terabytes in a gram of DNA, and one exabyte of digital information in a half kilogram of DNA.

Umberger reminded us of the progression--gigabyte, terabyte, petabyte, exabyte, zetabyte--each a thousand times the previous.

Adams said this would be useful for smuggling data, but Wardale said that we can swallow micro-SD cards now.

Adams asked, if storage is cheap, why would you ever delete anything? It is more expensive to delete than to store, but more expensive to read than to delete.

Umberger said that if you have data that cannot be read, you may have to pay to read it somehow (at least for corporations). (Someone asked if it was a destructive read.)

Adams expressed the truism that nobody wants backups, but everybody wants restores.

Broun said one advantage would be a data lifetime of 5000 to 1000 years.

[I have to admit I did not quite follow what everyone was talking about on this panel.]

### **Miscellaneous**

The restaurant guide had its problems. It was not keyed to a map, there were no distances indicated, and it was in a PDF form too big for my Kindle. This was particularly annoying, because the amount of content did not warrant anything so large.



There were quite a few free books from various publishers, put out near Registration over the weekend rather than all at once. I am not sure there would even have been room for all at once, but this meant some titles did not even make a appearance until Monday! The books were mostly from various series and were not exactly hot items--by the end of the convention there were still a lot left.

There were also free water bottles, which I suppose were valuable for those who flew in, but those of us driving through Texas would already have figured out we needed a water bottle. And there were pens on the freebie table, advertising some publisher, but they tended to make blotches when one wrote with them.

The Green Room was very minimal--there were no major food spreads brought in (which is okay--I'm just reporting). It was a bit annoying to have to go outside to get to it from the main convention area, since this *was* Texas in August.

There was WiFi in the display and dealers area, which were on the second floor, but the signal also leaked down into the outside garden/river area below it, which was a more relaxing area in which to sit.

As far as programming, I found the panels less interesting than at previous Worldcons. Maybe I have just been to too many. I also no longer recognize the names of most of the panelists.

There was an interesting film track, but it was far enough away from the panel rooms that it was difficult to get to a film without sacrificing at least three panel slots.

## T H E   E N D

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