Boskone 32
Con report by Evelyn C. Leeper

Table of Contents:

As usual, the schedule for this Boskone was available on-line before the convention, so we could plan out our weekend ahead of time. Of course, my planning *before* that was somewhat suspect, since I had said I could be on a 9 PM panel Friday, forgetting that the absolute best time to do the 255 miles was five hours. Luckily, we encountered *no* traffic jams (a minor miracle) and made it there by 8:15 or so.

Four years ago, panelists registered in the regular registration area and were given their panelist information there. Three years ago, we had to go to the Green Room to get our panelist information, and this was in the other hotel, so this was a trifle inconvenient. Two years ago, they returned to handing out the panelist information at the regular registration desk. Last year panelists had to go to the Green Room. This year ... yes, you've got it: panelists registered at regular registration. I think I have figured out the pattern: odd-numbered years in the Green Room, even-numbered in the regular area. See you next year in the Green Room!

For some reason, there was a very high proportion of at-the-door registrations, and one friend who registered at the door said it took him an hour. An hour?! An hour to register for a 800-person convention is totally unreasonable.

Hotel

The Sheraton Tara remains quite nice (albeit with a water pressure problem on Saturday morning), and sufficient for the size that Boskone seems to have settled in to (about 800).

Dealers Room

The Dealers Room seems to have reached a steady state, with a couple of dealers in general new science fiction, a few used paperback dealers (many of whom seem to have something against alphabetizing their stock) a few small press and specialty dealers, a half dozen dealers in used and antiquarian hardbacks, and the remainder in buttons, t-shirts, and so on.

Art Show

There was an art show. I never got to it. (I guess I am just a panel junkie.) Mark saw a bit of it, but then again, his origami demo was in the art show. (Note: Even though he was promised a two-hour slot, he was asked to leave after an hour because the art show was closing. Programming needs to sort this stuff out ahead of time.)

Programming

I attended twelve panels and one performance in the forty-two hours this year, the same as last year.

Old Friends with Tattered Corners: On Rereading Books
Friday, 9 PM
Evelyn C. Leeper (mod), Constance Hirsch, Teresa Nielsen Hayden

[Thanks to Mark for taking notes for this.]

The panelists started by listing their most reread books. Nielsen Hayden's was ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN by George Papashvily, which has been in print fifty years. It is the story of a Georgian immigrant who comes to the United States (that is the European

Georgia, not the Southern one), and what happens. Nielsen Hayden said there was nothing else quite like it, and that people who read it reread it over and over.

I said that one thing I plan on rereading every New Year's Eve is "'A History of the Twentieth Century, with Illustrations'" by Kim Stanley Robinson, because of the sense of transition it contains. Another book I reread a lot is Stephen Jay Gould's WONDERFUL LIFE, which has a fantastic feeling of strangeness. It is about the Burgess Shale and the discovery of pre-Cambrian creatures in it. These creatures were shoe-horned into the known species structure of the early 1900s, but now we are coming to understand how this is entirely the wrong approach, and how much more varied life was at that time. Most of them died out and left no heirs, so maybe it is my interest in alternate history that makes this fascinating. As Hirsch noted, "You are getting as much sense of wonder as from any science fiction book."

Hirsch said that last year she had kept a database of what she read and what she has reread the most is J. R. R. Tolkien's LORD OF THE RINGS (ever since as a teenager she discovered that there was a sequel to THE HOBBIT, as she related). This was also Nielsen Hayden's most re-read book (but not mine, which is probably Jules Verne's MYSTERIOUS ISLAND as a teenager or Olaf Stapledon's LAST AND FIRST MEN now).

(I noted that I also kept such a list, indicating that the requirement for being on this panel is that you are anal-retentive--and yes, it has a hyphen.)

Regarding THE HOBBIT, Hirsch got it out on books on tape from the library, and it "soaked up a marvelous part of the day." She said that she found it a new way of "listening" to the text. By literally listening to someone else's interpretation of the text, the reader gets a different way of understanding the text. For example, one actor did all the voices and the orcs started to sound like Cockney dock workers. What strikes her most strongly, besides the "voice" (or voices) that Tolkien is writing in is how sad the characters are, in that even if they win they lose. Also, while people run down Tolkien's prose, it is associated with a class and style of people, and is right for them.

Regarding "listening with the inner ear," I commented that have set myself the task of reading all of Shakespeare's plays and, to use Mark's comment about some of what he has reread, they have really punched them up since school. Because I have seen a lot of Shakespeare plays performed, I now *see* the plays in my mind and *hear* the voices in my mind, and the humor (in particular) comes through much better. Nielsen Hayden said this was because the people who create the textbook editions of the plays suck out the jokes--literally, when they feel that the jokes make the plays too long or too bawdy for young audiences. My belief is that rather than dumbing down the plays, they should *show* the plays to students, preferably performed in some informal outdoor theater. The best performances of Shakespeare's comedies I have seen were at the Renaissance Festival in Tuxedo, New York, and in a park in downtown San Jose, California. In fact, when I read the comedies now, I am sitting in that park, I am seeing that stage and those players, I am feeling the breeze, and I am seeing and hearing the play the way it was intended. Seeing a faithful production of TWELFTH NIGHT in which one of the characters moons the audience as part of the plot is more likely to get the "Ace Ventura, Pet Detective" crowd interested in Shakespeare than a dry reading of JULIUS CAESAR in a classroom. (And TITUS ANDRONICUS would make a great splatter film.) Even a movie like Kenneth Branagh's MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING can make Shakespeare come alive for students. Nielsen Hayden said that in that film, the funny parts were funny, the shocking parts were shocking, and you get into it and don't notice that everyone is "talking funny," the way they are in the usual sing-song "quality of mercy" renditions one gets in school. (At the TWELFTH NIGHT production in San Jose, Mark's mother asked at the intermission if they had changed the words, because it seemed much more understandable than she thought Shakespeare was.) But I digress, and should have saved these comments for the Shakespeare panel.

One reason students don't appreciate what they are reading is school (and hence get something different or better when they reread a work) is that not only do they never read the words aloud, they are never told to read *slower*. In fact, the reading loads students are given forces them to read *faster*, which makes the works less enjoyable. Speed-reading may be fine for non-fiction (at least some non-fiction), but doesn't work for George Eliot's MIDDLEMARCH. And there is no way to speed-read Shakespeare, which in any case shouldn't take more than two or three hours to read (per play), and if you don't have that much time to read great literature, then you have bigger problems than how to speed-read. Of course, the real problem is that when you have learned to speed-read, it's hard not to. When people learn to read slower and go back and reread a book, it's no wonder it seems totally different. Nielsen Hayden points out that speed-reading has its uses: for example, in reading the Net, how fast can you kill the articles? But Nielsen Hayden also says that she needs to read slow for her job (as an editor), so she needs to keep both skills honed.

Now part of what drives people to speed-read are things like shelves of books waiting to be read, lists of books, etc., all screaming, "Faster! Faster!" It really does take running as fast as you can to stay in one place, and even that doesn't work.

Another reason students don't appreciate books in school is that the knowledge that there is a test at the end means they are concentrating on what they think they will be tested on, not on what they can get out of the work on a personal level.

Another reason why rereading gives a different or better experience is that the reader has gone through more life experiences, or can relate this book to other books read in the interim, or just has a different perspective in general. A story about aging will mean something very different to a fifty-year-old than to a fifteen-year-old.

Not everything is worth rereading. The first science fiction novel Hirsch read was TRIAL BY TERROR by Jack Williamson, and when she mentioned this to him, he flinched. She has never reread it, and does not feel she has missed anything. We talked a bit more about what things we had read that were worse the second time through. Nielsen Hayden said that the style of DUNE bothered her a lot more the second time through. Learning in school to be more demanding of books made some "beloved books get bad." The only example I could think of was Stephen Donaldson's LORD FOUL'S BANE, which I didn't like the first time either. But I am sure that, like TRIAL BY TERROR, much of the science fiction I read and enjoyed in junior high school would be pretty bad if I reread it now.

However, I said that one of the earliest science fiction books that I read and reread was Franz Werfel's STAR OF THE UNBORN, which I think would bear rereading. Nielsen Hayden thought this odd, as this is a book usually read only by graduate students, and I was a thirteen-year-old. But I was reading it as a science fiction novel set ten thousand years in the future (or was it a hundred thousand?) instead of a philosophical work, although I suspect I got more philosophy out of it than out of most of the science fiction I read then. But it was science fiction, and in the house, so whenever I ran out of library books between my weekly trips to the library, it was that, or MYSTERIOUS ISLAND, or one of a small set of books in the house. (My parents were great believers in libraries, perhaps because being in the military meant we moved a lot and that made accumulating books inconvenient.) Bantam actually issued this in paperback a few years ago, where I suspect it sank with nary a ripple on the sales charts, alas.

Nielsen Hayden told of her husband's experience as a young reader. He had heard of this book called THE HOBBIT and went looking for it, but ended up with Sinclair Lewis's BABBITT instead, and all the while he was reading it, he kept waiting for it to become the fantasy book everyone seemed to be talking about. Nielsen Hayden thought this might be the best possible reading of BABBITT.

Hirsch said her "reading error" story was of a friend who read Ray Bradbury's short story collection R IS FOR ROCKET, but since she knew only about novels, she kept waiting for all the stories (chapters to her) to get tied together. Nielsen Hayden said when her students read Shirley Jackson's "Lottery," one was really surprised by the ending--she thought the winner would get a refrigerator or something. Hirsch said that when that story came out, there was a real uproar over it, and someone else said that some people took it as fact, and wanted to know where it took place. I commented that there seemed to be a lot of echoes of "The Lottery" in some of Stephen King's stories, and that loads more people had read King than Jackson, and probably thought all these ideas were original with him. None of this had much to do with rereading, of course, but then a lot of this hour diverged from the topic.

Nielsen Hayden asked if when we reread a book it was ever a very different book than we remembered. This led us to a discussion of the fact that it sometimes *was* a different book, now that many books are being re- issued in their "original, uncut" versions. This is particularly true of Heinlein's works. Hirsch said that when she reread RED PLANET the hero was more trigger-happy, because the editor had toned that down in the earlier version. I commented that I had read THE PUPPET MASTERS recently, and had a similar experience. On the whole, the panelists seemed to feel that the re-issuance of Heinlein's earlier novels as they existed before his editor imposed changes on them serve a very useful purpose: they show how valuable editors are. Heinlein hated his editor, as his memoirs show, but she may have been a major factor in his popularity, since his later novels, written when Heinlein was powerful enough to resist editing, were not his best work (even before his health problems). Another author who seems (in my opinion) to be going through this cycle is Stephen King, although Hirsch said if you liked the characters in THE STAND, you will like the "expanded" version. My gut reaction to this was that while I liked THE STAND the first time around, if I want to reread a 1400-page book, LES MISERABLES would probably be more rewarding. The longer the book, the more I have to love it to reread it.

This in some sense got us back to the heart of the panel. As Nielsen Hayden said, "We know our mortality when we realize we will not ever have time to read all we want." Someone suggested that one reason to reread a book is that it's a form of memory: you remember where you were and what you were all the other times you read the book. And if they were happy times, you are in a sense returning to them.

Being able to discuss books with people is another reason. Teachers say they often need to reread a book before assigning it. Usually teachers will have read the book at some point, but not always. I told the story of what happened when Mark's high school class had a substitute teacher who admitted she hadn't read DARKNESS AT NOON, the book under discussion. So the class spun an elaborate plot, very downbeat, which had nothing whatsoever to do with the book. This was passed from class to class during the day and embroidered upon as it went. By the end of the day, the teacher was saying, "This sounds really interesting; I'll have to read it some day if I want to get really depressed." The class agreed that she would get depressed, all right. (And when the real teacher returned and the class told her the story, she thought it was hilarious.)

People in book discussion groups also have a reason to reread books. (There's an idea for a panel at a future Boskone: how to organize a book discussion group, with an emphasis on science fiction. I volunteer to be on this, and I know NESFA runs a discussion group, so they must have someone.) For those of you who are not working a standard shift, National Public Radio has a book discussion on "Talk of the Nation" Monday through Thursday from 2 to 3 PM, where people can call in and talk about the book.

Parties

For some people, parties are the main point of a convention. I, however, am not one of them, and my taste in parties runs more towards the sort where one discusses whether the relationship of the Japanese of TALE OF GENJI to modern Japanese is more like that of the English of BEOWULF or of the English of Chaucer to modern English. Given that, you are probably just as happy that I am not going to review the parties. I will ask why, if Boskone sized down because of non-fans coming for the booze, they decided to allow a whiskey company to have a hospitality suite open basically all day Saturday serving free whiskey.

"I Remember Babylon": Missed Predictions in SF

Saturday, 11 AM

Hal Clement (mod), Jeff Hecht, Terry Kepner, Tony Lewis, Mark Olson

This was held in one of the small rooms, and was quite crowded. In fact, many of the items in this room seemed to be "over-attended," while the couple I went to in the larger room were half empty. Unfortunately, there is no room size in between. There were also no microphones, except in the Ballroom, which made hearing the more soft-spoken panelists a problem.

Hal Clement explained the origin of the panel's title for the benefit of the audience members who did not recognize it: an Arthur C.

Clarke story in which the Chinese launch a communications satellite and attempt to destroy Western civilization by broadcasting pornography, bull-fighting, snuff films, etc., direct to people's televisions. This story was written in 1960, so the title of the panel implied that Clarke was wrong in his predictions, but as Clement pointed out, we now do have direct broadcast television, and as someone else pointed out, we have these broadcasts, only they are going in the opposite direction, and the Third World accuses us of destroying *their* societies with *our* pornography. (When I was a student at the University of Massachusetts around 1970, Clarke came to speak there, and members of the Science Fiction Society were invited to join him at dinner beforehand. The Chinese had just launched their first communications satellite and I remember one of our members asking Clarke when "they were going to start broadcasting the good stuff.")

The focus of the panel, though, was what science fiction overlooked. Some people suggested the usual sorts of scientific bloopers in the category of, "If we knew then what we know now": Mercury's not having a light side and a dark side, Venus's not having oceans, and so on. But strictly speaking, this is not what the panel's title seems to be referring to. It appears more aimed at addressing what trends in technology, sociology, or other "developing" areas science fiction missed, rather than where science fiction used incorrect assumptions based on the current knowledge of the period in which the story was written. Stories written in 1950 and set in 1970 might seem a gold mine for this sort of thing, but the question is not whether the story got the name of the President in 1970 right, but whether the trends predicted came about, or were displaced by totally unexpected ones. Having a big anti-war movement would be an accurate prediction, even if the war were the Tanganyikan War instead of the Vietnam War. (Quiz for the reader: what major development would that have missed?)

Tony Lewis said that one reason science fiction is often "accused" of having predicted the wrong things and missed what did happen is that science fiction is "not predictive, but preventative." George Orwell did not necessarily believe that 1984 was an accurate prediction of what might happen, but it was a warning about the *sort* of thing that could happen if people did not do something about it.

One of the major developments that one might expect that science fiction would have predicted, the panelists said, was the widespread use of the personal computer. Yet no authors seemed to have latched on to this. The example given was that in the "Foundation" series Hari Seldon had some sort of hand-held computer (what we might call a palmtop), but this was described as being the latest leap forward in his time, tens of thousands of years in the future. As I type this on *my* palmtop, sitting in a movie theater waiting for a film to start, I would have to say that Asimov got the time factor a bit wrong. But then, he always pooh-poohed the predictive ability of science fiction writers, noting that he wrote a book on how to use the slide rule right before the advent of calculators.

In regards to the personal computer et al, Robert Lucky of Bell Labs once said that the industry is a very poor predictor of what would catch on. It thought the Picturephone of the 1960s would be a big hit, and missed out on predicting the enormous popularity of the fax machine, the cellular phone, and the personal computer.

Asimov also did not extrapolate on the positronic brain, which he saw solely as a way to control a rather large, human-shaped robot, instead of as something that could control machinery or whatever in any form. In fact, one of the major problems with the predictiveness of "Foundation"--at least the earlier stories--is that there appears to have been very little technological change between our time and Seldon's, but then suddenly the Foundation starts developing/discovering major advances. And of course John W. Campbell's "Blindness" shows another variation on this: a character spends so much time trying to achieve cheap atomic energy that he fails to realize that the photoelectric power he has developed along the way is really the answer to cheap power that people need and that will catch on. We cannot always see which development is really the important one.

One thing that makes science fiction "guess wrong," according the panelists, is that people are interested in things beyond the scope of technology, and conversely, have no interest in what is possible. This tendency to "write for the market" instead of doing serious extrapolation means that we get stories in which we have matter transmission, but no other aspect of the world has changed--the author has not bothered to think out the consequences of his assumptions. (Actually, there was entirely too much time spent discussing the technical details of matter transmission, in part because one audience member kept going back to it, but also because panelists like Hal Clement *like* to talk about technical details. This is fine for a technical panel, but a bit of a side-track for a panel looking at predictions. There was also *way* too much time spent talking about the technology of STAR TREK, again because the panelists could not or would not cut off one person from the audience.)

As another example of where science fiction missed a prediction, one panelist said that no science fiction author predicted the rise of suburbia. Someone disputed this, claiming that Clifford Simak did that in CITY, but other people felt that the description in CITY was more of a rural landscape than of suburbia. It was also claimed that science fiction missed out on malls, though at Chicon V Laurie Mann noted that malls, shopping concourses, etc., are just a variation of the "domed cities" which were indeed a staple of much early science fiction.

Another missed prediction of sorts that I can certainly understand is that computers will need to be backed up. I have mentioned this many times at work, usually as we attempt to figure out when we can do the backups, given that they make the computers unavailable while they are running.

The panelists observed that science fiction writers generally take the science that we think we know and extrapolate it rather than try to predict new science. So even with the most "radical" developments in science fiction, there is an attempt to base them in current science. Most faster- than-light travel is based on some variation of Einsteinian physics, rather than some radical new discovery. (Thr panelists even gave an example: oil diffraction microscopes apparently dip their samples in oil to change the speed of light around them to improve performance. The panelists wanted to extrapolate this for faster-than-light travel although, as one panelist noted, it would mean that you arrived covered in oil, and another said this might lead alien races to think you were some sort of food.) Bob Shaw's "Light of Other Days" extrapolates from current (at least then-current) science to the "slow glass" and all its implications.

One problem is that the effects of technological or sociological changes take time. When Robert Heinlein wrote STARMAN JONES, computers existed, but Heinlein totally missed out on predicting the changes over time that computers would have had in navigation and space travel. Heinlein's DOOR INTO SUMMER, another panelist noted, had the beginnings of CAD/CAM (Computer-Aided Design/Computer-Aided Manufacturing), except it was implemented with "cut pieces of metal." (Sounds almost like steampunk, doesn't it?)

Clement says that he extrapolates on science, but not on history or sociology. But technology drives society and society (along with science) drives technology. What is more, we may be too close to the situation to know what is going on. For example, by some measurements, the rise in personal computers has not resulted in a rise in productivity. I think most people looking at the bigger picture would say this is incorrect (although a couple of the panelists commented on the large number of people playing solitaire and mine sweeper). Classic examples of technology driving society in unpredicted ways are the automobile creating a sexual revolution, and the VCR bringing about the breakdown of communal gatherings begun by television. (One could claim, of course, that Isaac Asimov in THE NAKED SUN, or Ray Bradbury in "The Pedestrian," did predict the latter.)

Writers have been known to deviate intentionally from extrapolation. Sometimes it is because they need a particular plot device (they are, after all, writing a story, not a predictive essay). Other times it is just a failure of imagination. The example given was STAR TREK. In the original series the communicators were hand-held. In the second series they were much smaller and put in badges. But the likely situation, at least according to one panelist, would be that they would be implanted in people's ear lobes (assuming they had ear lobes, as another noted) rather than still in a separate unit that could be lost, misplaced, etc.

Sometimes the mistakes in predictions that authors make are amusing because of their self-contradictory nature. Self-lighting cigarettes fall into this category--a high-tech version of something that science/technology has discovered is bad for us. Videophones with dials (from the old movies) are another example; even non-videophones rarely have dials these days.

Sometimes the mistakes are precisely because people extrapolate from their current knowledge. Olson gave the example of a writer from a couple of hundred years ago needing a method to have his hero travel great distances very quickly. Such a writer would give his hero seven-league boots rather than an airplane, since airplanes were not part of his knowledge base.

Of course, with any predictions there will always be those who have reasons why these predictions are wrong, and why technology X will never catch on. The panelists cited an essay written shortly after automobiles were first developed, which explained that they would never catch on for long-distance travel, because if you went far enough, you would need to refuel them and this would involve an entire network of fuel depots that obviously would not be possible.

Also, advances do not happen in isolation, and an author concentrating on one change will miss the synergy that occurs when it collides with another change. Herman Kahn's YEAR 2000 and the Club of Rome's LIMITS TO GROWTH both suffer from this--while they extrapolate some trends, they ignore (or perhaps more accurately, do not predict) others than move things in a different directions. It is like looking at a particle equidistant from three asteroids of comparable size, and calculating its movement based on the gravitational pull of only one of them. (Now there is a science fiction analogy for you!)

(Answer to the quiz question earlier: It would have missed the African independence movement of the 1960s.)

Bloopers and Bad Science on TV
Saturday, 12 N
Jeff Hecht (mod), Jeffrey A. Carver, Hal Clement, Don Sakers, Melissa Scott, Earl Wajenberg

The panelists started out by giving a prime example of what the panel was about: the introduction to BATTLESTAR GALACTICA in which the characters are described as "looking for a star called Earth." They said they did *not* want to discuss sound in space, which is necessary for dramatic effect, and should be considered almost as part of the music soundtrack.

One way of looking at this is to follow the approach that George MacDonald Fraser used in his HOLLYWOOD HISTORY OF THE WORLD: determine if the telling is true to the spirit of the times rather than to the "objective" truth. As he says (page xv), "Provided [the screenwriter] does not break faith with the spirit of history by wilful misrepresentation or hatchet job, he may take liberties with the letter--but he should take as few as possible." (This, by the way, is a book I highly recommend to fans of movies--or of history.)

Of course, people are less forgiving of shock waves in space--or at least feel that if there are shock waves, all those spaceships should have seat belts. Regarding all those little sparkles you see when you see a shot of a spaceship traveling in space, someone opined that these are really the "missing matter" in the universe. And when asked, "What is subspace?" Wajenberg replied, "Subspace is a convenient plot device."

Scott said what really annoyed her was the depiction of scientists (and how science is done) in films. As she said, "You know someone is a scientist because they stare at something for a while." (And, I would add, usually wear a white coat while doing it.) But Scott also said that you have to ask yourself if the story is about science, or about people in a future society, and allow more leeway in the latter. Later in the panel, some good movies (not television) about science were mentioned: THE MAN IN THE WHITE SUIT, DAM BUSTERS, and NO HIGHWAY IN THE SKY.

Much of the panel was about STAR TREK, in part because when you talk about science fiction on television, the one program that serves as a lingua franca for fans is STAR TREK. The panelists primary objection to science on STAR TREK (a.k.a. Treknobabble) was that it had no consistency. This week the transporter could be used to cure disease; next week that is completely forgotten. (As someone expressed it, "Star Trek resets its science every week.") And the show has fallen into what is referred to as the "particle- of-the-week" syndrome. But the writers' knowledge of even basic science is faulty. Sakers said that someone should

explain DNA to the STAR TREK writers, who talk about "the DNA of his molecules" and even have humans "regressing down the evolutionary chain" to become spiders! The recent description of an event horizon as "a force field that surrounds a star" also came under attack. Scott said that when she worked on a "Deep Space 9" novel, she found that the producers, apparently taking Emerson's comment about a foolish consistency to heart, describe the power conduits as extremely reliable on one page of the series "Bible" and extremely unreliable on another.

Carver said we should not be too hard on the bloopers in science in STAR TREK, because the producers and writers "have no better understanding of, say, religion than they have of science."

When it comes to violating scientific principles, it is not just science fiction that does it. Roadrunner cartoons did it all the time, and action movies and television shows do it as well, with cars bursting into flame every time they crash into something, except when driven by the hero, in which case no matter how violent the crash, they can still be driven away, and so forth.

Speaking of bursting into flames, Wajenberg said, "Someone has decided that the technology of the 24th Century depends on the magnesium transistor."

Basically, the panelists felt that an author should be allowed to break one (scientific) rule, but that the story should be *about* breaking the rule. In other words, if you postulate instantaneous matter transmission, your story should be about the consequences of that, not about your main character's angst over whether to go to Harvard or Yale.

The panelists seemed quite critical of small slips, such as SPACE: 1999's reference to "the dark side of the moon." Yet I noted that when Larry Niven had the Earth rotating backwards in the first chapter of the first edition of RINGWORLD, fans may have found it amusing, but did not anathemize him for it. (And the fact that MIT students with Cray computers eventually proved that Ringworld as described was unstable passed with nary a flicker.)

I asked about other television shows. LOST IN SPACE was considered one of the major contributors to the "Blooper Hall of Fame," consistently confusing solar systems with galaxies and so forth. Of TIME TUNNEL (one of my favorite shows when it was on) Sakers said, "The good thing about TIME TUNNEL was that its scientific inaccuracies were more than overwhelmed by its historical inaccuracies." VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA and LAND OF THE GIANTS were equally laughable. No one had anything critical to say about the science in BABYLON 5, although Scott (who has purple and yellow layered hair) said that the producers seemed to like to define their aliens by their funny hair. (I do not think this statement was intended ironically.) The anthology series (TWILIGHT ZONE and THE OUTER LIMITS) were dismissed as "not really science fiction," as was QUANTUM LEAP. (Do not ask me to explain this.)

Wajenberg reminded the audience that while we scoff at them, "Producers have their artistic pride, but it is a different art." They are trying to make something that works dramatically, and it is difficult to transmit information in a drama.

Essential Films for the SF Fan
Saturday, 1 PM
Mark R. Leeper (mod), Craig Shaw Gardner, Daniel Kimmel, Jim Mann

As usual, Leeper produced a hand-out for this, and therefore much of the hour was spent adding films to (and deleting films from) that list. It is included with comments in Appendix 1, but the films were (in chronological order):

- A TRIP TO THE MOON
- METROPOLIS
- THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN
- KING KONG
- ISLAND OF LOST SOULS
- THINGS TO COME*
- DESTINATION MOON
- THE THING FROM ANOTHER WORLD
- THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL
- THE MAN IN THE WHITE SUIT
- THE WAR OF THE WORLDS*
- GOJIRA
- THIS ISLAND EARTH
- THE INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS
- FORBIDDEN PLANET
- UNEARTHLY STRANGER*
- QUATERMASS AND THE PIT (FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH)*
- 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY
- THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN
- COLOSSUS (THE FORBIN PROJECT)
- PHASE IV*
- STAR WARS*
- BRAINSTORM*
- BLADERUNNER*

(Asterisked films are the ten "basic" ones.)

Kimmel and Mann had seen all the films except for UNEARTHLY STRANGER, which is a very difficult film to find.

Kimmel had a whole list of films that he said he would add (without saying what he would drop):

- INVADERS OF MARS (1953)
- THEM!
- THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN
- THE TIME MACHINE
- SECONDS
- FAHRENHEIT 451
- PLANET OF THE APES
- SOYLENT GREEN
- INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS (1978)
- E.T.
- BRAZIL
- THE FLY (1986)
- TOTAL RECALL

(This is thirteen films, over half the list, so what films from Leeper's list is would drop is a no-trivial issue.) Kimmel later mentioned a certain fondness for FANTASTIC VOYAGE and also the rather obscure YEUX SANS VISAGE.

Gardner said that one omission from both lists seemed to be Japanese animation, and suggested AKIRA. But Kimmel did not think that Japanese animation has broken out of its ghetto, and he is still waiting for that "breakthrough" film. For an animated science fiction film, the French FANTASTIC PLANET was suggested.

Mann said that when he drew up his list, he took "SF" to include fantasy, so he would add such films as THE MUMMY (1932) and SEVEN FACES OF DR. LAO, and he has a personal preference for THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK over STAR WARS.

Gardner pointed out that there were no Ray Harryhausen films mentioned, and that EARTH VS. THE FLYING SAUCERS would be a reasonable addition from a science fiction point of view.

Mann felt that perhaps either ALIEN or ALIENS should be included (or "some other James Cameron film," though Cameron did not direct ALIEN--Ridley Scott did). The panelists seemed to agree that films such as ALIEN and OUTLAND did change the depiction of space as clean and glorious to just another place to work.

The panelists all agreed that CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND was *not* on their lists, that Jurassic Park was too recent to judge, and that whatever ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW was, it was not something they wanted to discuss.

From the audience, Kate Pott asked about foreign films, of which she mentioned SOLARIS and ALPHAVILLE, to which Kimmel added LA JETEE, BEAUTY AND THE BEAST, and ORPHEUS, as well as the Czech animated films THE FABULOUS ADVENTURES OF BARON MUNCHAUSEN and THE FABULOUS WORLD OF JULES VERNE.

Gardner added ROAD WARRIOR, STALKER, and some Hong Kong fantasy film (A CHINESE GHOST STORY, ZU FROM THE MAGIC MOUNTAIN, or WICKED CITY, which he described as being like "Philip K. Dick directed by David Lynch").

In the made-for-television arena, Mann mentioned the PBS version of LATHE OF HEAVEN and the BBC version of THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS. (This reminded Kimmel that VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED had not been listed. His list of twenty-five must be up around fifty by now.) Leeper recommended PANDORA AND THE FLYING DUTCHMAN and DARK INTRUDER (the latter of which was made for television).

Kimmel's suggestion of WILD IN THE STREETS led Leeper to mention PRIVILEGE and THE WAR GAME. I would add to those The Manchurian Candidate, and the mention that the panelists should include at least one of the post- holocaust films such as TESTAMENT and THE DAY AFTER leads me to pick Threads as the best of that group.

Someone in the audience asked for a list of the worst films, which prompted Leeper to say this was like asking for the hottest cold day in that this would be a list of really bad films that were still good enough to be released. Someone said that if nothing else, "Mystery Science Theater 3000" has proven that PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE is far from the worst film ever made. (Leeper's choice of worst film he has ever seen is THE CREEPING TERROR.)

Is Research Necessary for SF&F?
Saturday, 2 PM
Hal Clement (mod), Ellen Kushner, James D. Macdonald, Delia Sherman, Joan D. Vinge

Clement started this panel by reminding us that the title was, "Is research necessary for science fiction and fantasy?" then saying, "Yes, and thank you for coming." This did not appear to satisfy the audience, so Clement said he could elaborate: "Yes for science fiction, and who cares for fantasy?"

However, this did not go over well with the fantasists (as Clement had predicted), and the panel decided they had to answer the question at greater length.

Kushner said she had been thinking about the topic and had come to the conclusion that "those who do, and who do believe in, research should do less and those who don't should do more." Macdonald asked, "How do you research faster-than-light travel in a distant galaxy?" Clement extended this to the general question of "What constitutes research?" and how much should one do. Sherman says the only way she can answer that is by saying that the author needs to match the research to the task at hand: one should not do as much research for a five-thousand-word short story as for a four- hundred-page novel. Clement later noted that the real problem was often that "you don't know what you don't know."

Kushner said that before researching something, the author needs to ask who s/he is trying to satisfy. If one is writing for a hard science audience, one needs to do more research for a matter transmitter than if it is just a small part of a novel where the main plot is about social transitions under a hierarchical government.

In this regard, Clement said that members of the MIT Science Fiction Society analyzed the planet in MISSION OF GRAVITY and proved Clement got the shape all wrong. Clement said that he eventually decided that the best approach was just to say to himself, "Well, I did write the book to give people pleasure."

Sherman said that the problem with doing too much research is that there comes a point when "you find that the details are taking over the tapestry."

In any case, the panelists agreed that even if you do not do a lot of research, you should at least avoid internal inconsistencies. (Sounds like good advice for the "Star Trek" producers as discussed in the panels on "Bloopers and Bad Science on TV.") Macdonald asked, "How many copy editors does it take to change a life bulb?" and then answered, "You said 27 on page 4 and 35 on page 60; which did you mean?"

Kushner said that we might be taking too narrow a view of research, and said, "Your entire life is and should be research." (This is more applicable to social science fiction than to the sort of thing that Clement writes, of course.) But Kushner also was in favor of traditional research, which she said made life easier. "If you look it up, you don't have to make it up."

Clement asked what the panelists do when they discover halfway through the story that one of their basic assumptions is discovered to be wrong. Sherman says since her assumptions are generally historical she just makes it alternate history. The other panelists did not have any real answers, probably because their styles of writing do not require the rigorous physical assumptions that Clement's does. Clement said that his approach was to come up with a way to make his assumptions true by changing some of the variables that would not affect his story.

The one thing that was clear from this panel was that Clement writes from a very different set of premises and with a very different purpose than most other authors. To Clement, the purpose of a story is the scientific extrapolation. While there is nothing wrong with this, it does mean that a panel with Clement and other people on it is somewhat bifurcated. Given this, a more neutral moderator might be a good idea.

Neglected Authors: Murray Leinster
Saturday, 4 PM
Mark Olson (mod), Hal Clement, Joe Rico

Let's start with the basics: Murray Leinster's real name was William Fitzgerald Jenkins, and he pronounced his pseudonym "lenster" (in the Irish fashion). Born in 1896, he sold his first story, "The Runaway Skyscraper," in 1919, and wrote up until the time of his death in 1975. Much of what he wrote was what has been called "gaslight science fiction" (although that term conjures up images of the 1890s rather than the 1920s). Many of his stories deal with worldwide catastrophes (e.g., "Mad Planet"). While he wrote some novels, they are generally conceded to be inferior to his short fiction, where he broke ground with stories such as "Sidewise in Time" (the first parallel worlds story, written in 1935), "A Logic Named Joe" (the first Net story, written in 1949), and "First Contact" (the first first contact story, written in 1945).

Though the panelists said that at times Leinster tended toward "unnecessary narration" (Olson added that he relied too much on the omniscient narrator), he was not an unsophisticated author. In "A Logic Named Joe," for example, he examines the sociological impact of his premises. And he does not resort to cardboard villainous aliens. Even when the aliens are villainous, they are villainous for a reason (e.g., "Proximi Centauri"). But the panelists agreed that Leinster should be read for his ideas, not his style.

Much of the hour consisted of a listing and description of Leinster's stories, without very much background. He did also write Westerns, and worked in Hollywood (where the panel claimed he invented the process of front projection).

Much of his short fiction was published in book form in now out-of- print collections such as OPERATION: OUTER SPACE and THE BEST OF MURRAY LEINSTER. In fact, there were two different books with this latter title, one British and one American. It was also mentioned that much of his science fiction was published in England under his real name, which sounded more English than the Irish-inspired Leinster. THE PLANET EXPLORER (a.k.a. COLONIAL SURVEY) was described as a collection of his "Colonial Survey" and "Med" series stories, though an audience member said that Nicholls and Clute list it as a novel. (Peter Nicholls and John Clute included only authors who had written novels in their ENCYCLOPEDIA, so there may be an unconscious prejudice here.) It was for one of the "Colonial Survey" stories, "Exploration Team," that Leinster won his only Hugo (Best Novelette, 1956).

Other sources for Leinster stories are the retrospective "Year's Best" series edited by Isaac Asimov and Martin Greenberg. Someone added that those books make a very good overview to the science fiction of the period, with the only major omissions being Bradbury and Heinlein. He did not explain why Bradbury was missing, but apparently Heinlein demanded such a high percentage of the royalties that there would have been hardly anything left for the rest of the authors. This gave me an image of a

future in which the only knowledge of the science fiction of this period was a set of these books, and as a result Heinlein was totally forgotten. In any case, Leinster's best work was from 1945 to 1950, so people should look for those particular volumes in their used bookstores.

Clement, who had met Leinster, described him as "just a nice guy, easy to talk to on just about any subject."

In part this panel was an advertisement for (or suggested by) NESFA's work on a collection of Leinster's short fiction, including some that have never been previously collected before.

Leinster's bibliography in Donald H. Tuck's ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY runs two and a half double-column pages and only goes up to 1968; it is not included here.

Like Death and Taxes, the Hugos are Coming
Saturday, 5 PM
Evelyn C. Leeper (mod), Claire Anderson, Mark Olson, Darrell Schweitzer

And like death and taxes, the panel recommending Hugos is also coming.

Olson brought copies of the NESFA recommended list (see Appendix 2).

One reason for this panel, of course, is to let readers know about books that have been "published with great stealth" (as Schweitzer put it). (This applies to the other categories as well, though the situation there is somewhat different.)

I started by saying that we were not going to do what the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences does during the Oscars: we were not going to start with the "minor" categories, but rather dive right in to the Best Novel.

Since I have included the list as Appendix 2, I will not list the individual works here unless there was elaboration. (Or unless I want to plug them--hey, the other panelists can write their own con reports.) Caroline Stevermer's Ruritanian fantasy, A COLLEGE OF MAGICS, had the most nominations. But while I did keep reading it to find out what happened, I still thought it was not Hugo material.

It is important than a work be recognized as science fiction. E. L. Doctorow's WATERWORKS is certainly as good as just about any book which was marketed as science fiction, yet its chances of being nominated are very small. (Schweitzer seemed to think that Doctorow would be mortified to have it called science fiction, but science fiction it is, combined with magical realism.)

For short fiction, Schweitzer said that if you subscribe to ASIMOV'S and F&SF, you will see most of what has a chance at the Hugo, since exposure is more important than absolute quality. There may be a story or two from ANALOG, and one from OMNI, and lately there have been some from original anthologies, but that about covers it. (With the Worldcon in Glasgow, it is remotely possible that something from INTERZONE may make the ballot.) Olson said that the list of recommended short fiction in LOCUS was as good a predictor as any.

We moved on to non-fiction, which I said tended to be a category determined by the wealthier fans, simply because most of the eligible books are expensive. (Last year's winner, Nichols and Clute's ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION cost $75. THE ART OF MICHAEL WHELAN cost $60.) Olson said we should start with the winner, I, ASIMOV, which he described as 166 very entertaining short essays that were quite true to Asimov himself. (It is also the only non-fiction book of last year available in mass-market paperback, so it has a vastly larger base than the other possible nominees.) It is *not* a sequel to Asimov's two other autobiographical works, IN MEMORY YET GREEN and IN JOY STILL FELT. Olson felt that Heinlein's wife did him a great disservice by publishing his GRUMBLES FROM THE GRAVE, which left readers with the picture of Heinlein as a bitter old man, while I, ASIMOV was very much written to be how Asimov wanted to be remembered.

I enjoyed Teresa Nielsen Hayden's MAKING BOOK, published by NESFA press. (This year's BOOKMAN'S FANTASY by Fred Lerner looks to be equally good.) Anderson liked Cathy Burnett and Arnie Fenner's SPECTRUM: THE BEST IN CONTEMPORARY FANTASTIC ART, which she described as a "sort of year's best of art." Schweitzer thought Michael Andre-Driussi's LEXICON URTHUS: A DICTIONARY FOR THE URTH CYCLE, a reference book for Gene Wolfe's "Book of the New Sun" was worth nominating. (This was the book Schweitzer said was "published with great stealth.") But Schweitzer agreed that Asimov would win, because everyone reads Asimov. (I suppose I should be embarrassed to admit it, but I have not read it yet.) Anderson liked Edward James's SCIENCE FICTION IN THE 20TH CENTURY. One book I forgot to mention was Christopher Priest's BOOK ON THE EDGE OF FOREVER, about the (non)making of LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS. It's published by Fantagraphics, which may mean you're more likely to find it in comics stores. Of what is listed in LOCUS, I would love to see Robert Crossley's OLAF STAPLEDON: SPEAKING FOR THE FUTURE. And I have a certain fondness for Jerry Hewett and Daryl F. Mallett's THE WORK OF JACK VANCE: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY & GUIDE since I helped provide some of the information for it.

While the non-fiction books are usually too high-priced to get a broad voting base, the dramatic presentations often garner more votes than the novels. Unfortunately, what appeared on NESFA's list was the same old "Hollywood films with big budgets." I personally would vastly prefer ED WOOD to any of them. I also reminded the audience that while television series cannot be nominated, individual episodes can, and that various groups on the Net were deciding which episodes of the series to throw their support behind to avoid scattering them too widely to get any of them on the ballot. (Olson said there was a move afoot to amend the WSFS Constitution to allow series to be nominated.) I noted that what I thought was the best of the big-budget films, INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE, was not even on NESFA's list. Schweitzer seemed to think STARGATE would win. Again,

the problem of perceptions arose, when an audience member cited a NORTHERN EXPOSURE episode which was magical realism, but would never make the ballot. Olson noted that there was one time when an episode of a non-science-fiction series made the ballot: "L.A. 2014," which was part of the series THE NAME OF THE GAME. Again, the Glaswegian location might mean something British would make it to the ballot.

For the Campbell Award, I said I really wished that the people preparing the ballot would provide a bibliography for the nominees. (Since it would cover at most two years, it should not require a lot of space.) I asked what happened to a recent winner, Ted Chiang, and Schweitzer said that the problem with winning the Campbell Award is that you have to live up to your reputation, and that authors who had won thought the best thing that could happen to a new writer was that s/he *not* win.

Olson said that he would like to put in a plug for throwing a monkey wrench into the works: guerilla voting, as he called it. For example, he thinks nominating ED WOOD falls into this category. I noted that Jules Verne was eligible for a Hugo for PARIS AU XXE SIECLE (and would be again next year when the English translation comes out).

There were a couple of suggestions for Best Original Artwork, but I said it seemed as if that category was not very successful, except for maybe last year, when a concentrated effort to remind people of them got the "Space Fantasy" stamps on the ballot. They eventually won. (Interestingly, they placed next to last in a poll of stamp collectors.) I hear there is a proposal to eliminate this category because what people are voting on are covers as seen by the public, which are often different from the artwork submitted by the artist.

This year's special category is "Best Music." (Each year, the Worldcon can designate a special category to be voted on.) Olson said that the filkers wanted a "Best Filksong" category, but the Business Meeting rejected that, and instead made a recommendation to Intersection that they "try out" a Music Hugo. What I, and just about everyone else, is predicting is that what will appear on the ballot will be soundtracks for the Dramatic Presentations. Again, what gets nominated is what is accessible.

On the other, pushing things on the Net does have an effect, if only to remind people they are eligible. The "Space Fantasy" stamps last year is one example; Mike Resnick in the Best Professional Editor category is another. Without various postings reminding people that the best editor did *not* have to be a magazine editor, I believe it would have been the same list of magazine editors it had been for years. So if you have something you think people will overlook, speak up!

Is SF Mainstream? Can We Still Tell the Difference?
Saturday, 6 PM
Gregory Feeley (mod), Ellen Asher, Don D'Ammassa, Peter Johnson, Don Keller

Going in to this panel, I thought about the title and concluded that some of the answer might be in recognizing two distinct definitions of science fiction. On one hand, science fiction could be fiction based in science, with all that includes. On the other hand, it could be fiction that is written with science fiction sensibilities. The latter is unclear, I realize, and boils down to "science fiction is what feels like science fiction." But vague as it is, this is a valid distinction: as was mentioned earlier, E. L. Doctorow's WATERWORKS is science fiction in the first sense, but not in the second.

But even science fiction of the second, more narrow, sort is becoming "mainstream," with authors such as Robert Jordan, Terry Brooks, and Anne McCaffrey appearing on the best-seller lists. (STAR TREK novels are a special case that will not be dealt with here.) Asher refers to this as "appeal outside the confines of the science fiction audience."

One reality in asking about whether SF is mainstream is that markets fragment, so from a marketing standpoint, there is not a single category science fiction, and there is not a single category mainstream. The former are science fiction, fantasy, horror, techno-thriller, etc., and the latter are thriller, literary, adventure, etc. About the only way to define contemporary mainstream fiction is to say that it is whatever is not anything else.

Regarding whether SF was becoming more mainstream, Johnson said, "We're not getting closer to them, but they're getting closer to us." Someone agreed, citing Erica Jong's latest, SERENISSIMA, which was described as an alternate history on Shakespeare. (Other mainstream alternate histories included Len Deighton's SS-GB and Robert Harris's FATHERLAND.) The appearance of such works as THE WITCHES OF EASTWICK by John Updike indicates that there is an acceptance of SF works in the mainstream--as long as they are not labeled as such.

The Tempest
Saturday, 9:30 PM
Bruce Coville, Ellen Kushner, Joe Mayhew, Jane Yolen

Maybe I am in the minority, but I much prefer something like this (a serious retelling of a play by Shakespeare) to the sort of thing that has been common in the past, humorous fannish plays. At the end, after the applause, Kushner announced, "Next year, King Lear!" I for one am looking forward to this. (Someone is bound to tell me this was intended as a joke. All I can say is that I hope it isn't.)

Shakespearean Influences in SF&F
Sunday, 10 AM
Gregory Feeley (mod), Bruce Coville, Laurie Marks, Delia Sherman

Since I have just started a project of reading all of Shakespeare's plays, I could not miss this panel. (And I did recently review Katharine Kerr and Martin Greenberg's WEIRD TALES FROM SHAKESPEARE, which had Feeley's excellent story, "Aweary of

the Sun.")

Feeley began by saying that every century has its own Shakespeare. In the seventeenth century he was a hack who violated the classical unities in drama. The eighteenth century saw the pendulum swing the other way, into what Feeley called "Bardolatry." In the nineteenth century Shakespeare was a great story-teller and a "read-out of wisdom." In the twentieth century there is less of an emphasis on his stories and more on the poetry of the words, although later someone else claimed we read the plays for the characters in them (but again, not the plots). Harold Bloom, for example, focused almost entirely on characters, especially Falstaff. And Russell Nye even wrote a novel titled FALSTAFF, in which Falstaff tells his side of the story. Of course, there was at least some historic basis for Falstaff in Sir John Oldcastle.

Marks said that the primary influences on fantasy (more than on science fiction) were the obvious ones which showed up in A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM and THE TEMPEST: the overlap of faery and reality.

Many authors have taken Shakespeare's stories and retold them, especially for younger audiences. (Charles and Mary Lamb did this almost two hundred years ago.) This makes sense if you think the stories are more important (or at least as important) as the language.

But there are some slightly less direct re-uses. Coville said that his first exposure to Shakespearean influences was the film FORBIDDEN PLANET; his second was THE COLLECTOR. You need to know your Shakespeare to understand, or even to recognize, the references.

Someone mentioned that another obvious descendent of Shakespeare's work was Poul Anderson's MIDSUMMER'S TEMPEST, which is written entirely in blank verse.

The panelists never distinguished between what I would think to be the two classes of Shakespearean-influenced works: those that are science fictional retellings of Shakespeare's stories, and those that are extensions of or contain references to Shakespeare's own works. For an example, FORBIDDEN PLANET theoretically falls into the former category, while Feeley's story or a sequel to THE TAMING OF THE SHREW would be in the latter.

Feeley read some of Terri Windling's introduction to BLACK THORN, WHITE ROSE in which Windling claimed that Shakespeare "mined the ore of old tales." Well, I do not think anyone disputes this in general, though Feeley claims that in particular MACBETH, A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, and THE TEMPEST are original with Shakespeare. Feeley also read a passage in which he claims that Windling is implying that Shakespeare is using "simple language to get to the heart of the matter," but I think what she was saying that Shakespeare drew upon older stories that used "simple language to get to the heart of the matter," and then tried to use more elaborate language while still "getting to the heart of the matter."

One panelist claimed we use Shakespeare to give fantasy respectability, and also to justify stealing and re-using old plots.

People discussed the tendency of putting actors like Mel Gibson and John Travolta in Shakespearean productions. As one person pointed out, this does serve to bring people to Shakespeare who would never see his plays otherwise, and who come to it fresh, without carrying a whole lot of baggage and expectations going into it. Sherman said this was really in keeping with the origins of the plays and that "effectively, Shakespeare was writing television scripts." His early narrative poems may have been an attempt to write serious lasting work, but he soon switched to the more immediately lucrative play-writing, supporting what Sherman said: "You write for the people around you. If you try to write for the ages, you'll write crap."

Also, people generally agreed that Shakespeare was meant to be seen, not read, although the plays were published in their own time as well as performed. (I described my feelings about this in my comments on the panel on rereading books, so I will not repeat them here.)

Someone summed up the hour (which did not touch much on Shakespearean influences in SF&F) by describing Shakespeare as "a hack whose characters are dense and whose language is rich."

The Forgotten Anthologist of the 40's and 50's
Sunday, 11 AM
Jim Mann (mod), Darrell Schweitzer, Ben Yalow

This would have been better titled "The Forgotten Anthologist*s* of the 40's and 50's," since it was about the entire set of people doing anthologies rather than just Groff Conklin (who was certainly the person *I* thought of when I heard the title).

The panelists began by announcing that Ballantine/Del Rey had decided to reprint several of its "Best of Author X" series, including the one for Henry Kuttner. (This means that NESFA will be dropping their plans for a Kuttner collection, since their goal is to bring back into print stories and authors that are not available elsewhere.) The panelists also drifted into discussing posthumous stories, and a discussion of L. Ron Hubbard. The panelists all said he could write fast enough to have written all the books published over his name, and Schweitzer said the real proof that they were written by Hubbard is that they stopped (unlike the V. C. Andrews books).

But they eventually did get back to the topic--more or less. They talked a bit about the "Instant Remainder Anthology Boom" that we are going through: the whole series of "100 {adjective} Little {noun meaning stories}" available from Barnes & Noble. There is also the "Greenberg Phenomenon," which bears a superficial resemblance to the "Conklin Phenomenon" of the 1950s, but is quite different. Conklin was both the creative force and the businessman behind his anthologies, while Martin H. Greenberg serves

only the latter function, selling the idea to a publisher and making all the rights and royalties arrangements. His co-editor(s) provide the creative work and editorial direction.

After Conklin in the 1950s, there was Robert Silverberg, who was described as "the Groff Conklin of the 1960s."

In the early days, however, there were three distinct anthology forms being developed. The first was the "year's best" which covered either a single magazine (F&SF, GALAXY, and so on), or the field in general (such as those edited by Everett Franklin Bleiler and T. E. Dikty, or by Judith Merril). There was the general anthology (such as was done by Raymond J. Healy and J. Francis McComas with ADVENTURES IN TIME AND SPACE [1946], or, most notably, by Groff Conklin). And then there were the anthologies of new works (such as those done by Damon Knight [ORBIT], Terry Carr [UNIVERSE], and Robert Silverberg [ALPHA]).

Several of the early anthologies which are now classics were listed: Orson Welles's INVASION OF MARS, Philip Van Doren Stern's MIDNIGHT TRAVELLER (should this be THE MIDNIGHT READER or THE MOONLIGHT TRAVELER instead?), Phil Stong's 25 MODERN STORIES OF MYSTERY AND IMAGINATION [THE OTHER WORLDS] (1941), Donald A. Wollheim's POCKET BOOK OF SCIENCE FICTION (1943), Herbert A. Wise and Phyllis Fraser's GREAT TALES OF TERROR AND THE SUPERNATURAL (1944), Anthony Boucher's TREASURY OF GREAT SCIENCE FICTION (1959), and John W. Campbell's BEST OF ASTOUNDING. Most of these are out of print, though some are not difficult to find in used book stores, as they were very widely distributed in their time. For anthologies covering an even earlier period, Schweitzer recommended Christine Campbell Thompson's NOT AT NIGHT series, which covers the 1920s horror field. Schweitzer suggested that people who were going to Britain for the Worldcon might have better luck there, though he warned that while the stories are historically important, they are not very readable.

There was also discussion of contemporary versus retrospective anthologies. Until David Hartwell and Kathryn Cramer's ASCENT OF WONDER, no one had done a really substantial retrospective anthology since Boucher in 1959 and before that, Healy and McComas in 1946, almost fifty years ago! There is some feeling that Hartwell and Cramer are trying to rewrite the history of the field, and certainly their definition of what is hard science fiction has aroused much debate, but their achievement is certainly indisputable.

The panelists also explained the difference between the "Bad Martin Greenberg" and the "Good Martin Greenberg." The "Good Martin Greenberg" goes by the names "Martin Harry Greenberg" and "Martin H. Greenberg" to distinguish himself from the "Bad Martin Greenberg," an anthologist and editor of the 1950s who had a tendency not to pay authors for their work. In fact, when the "Good Martin Greenberg" started putting together anthologies, he got no response to the letters he sent to authors asking for stories, and was quite puzzled by this until someone explained that his name was like a giant warning flag. He has apparently cleared up the confusion since then.

Other anthologies of note include Ben Bova's and Robert Silverberg's HALL OF FAME anthologies, Sam Moskowitz's SCIENCE FICTION BY GASLIGHT, and James Gunn's ROAD TO WONDER series.

Interview with Fred Lerner
Sunday, 12 N
Tony Lewis (mod), Fred Lerner

Lewis introduced Lerner as "a gentleman and a scholar," and said that Lerner was one of the founders of the Science Fiction Research Association, which Lerner said was not conceived as an academic organization, but as a "sercon" (serious and constructive) organization to bring together academics and fans to learn about each other work and techniques. For example, Tony Lewis pointed out that there are a lot of amateur bibliographers among science fiction fans.

When Lerner was in library school, every term paper he wrote had something in it about science fiction. And science fiction tied to in a lot--he cites the case of the class on ancient bookbinding techniques which talked about an eighteenth century French binding technique called "deux-a- deux" in which two books were bound together, back to back. Sound familiar?

Lerner's doctoral dissertation (of which his book MODERN SCIENCE FICTION AND THE AMERICAN LITERARY COMMUNITY is a "retelling in English") led to some interesting situations. First, he requested and got Lester Del Rey as the fifth examiner, and said that when everyone arrived it was probably the first time that half the examing board was asking another member for his autograph. Then later when the board was questioning Lerner about the sources for his claim that all the good science fiction written in the 1950s found a market, Del Rey said, "Fred's right," and Lerner immediately asked him if he could cite Del Rey as a reference--which he did.

Lerner reminisced about his early introduction to science fiction (MISS PICKERELL GOES TO MARS, Tom Corbett books, and science fiction on television). When he first read Robert Heinlein at age eleven he hated it, but when he returned to Heinlein at age fourteen, he discovered he liked Heinlein's books after all.

Rudyard Kipling is a particularly favorite author of Lerner's (who has written articles for a special Kipling issue of NIEKAS), but when he first started reading Kipling books from the library and found them very different from each other, he was "confused by the fact that so many different writers had the same name."

Most recently, Lerner has been reviewing science fiction in the WILSON LIBRARY BULLETIN and also in the VOICE OF YOUTH ADVOCATES, in a column aimed at "young adult librarians" (those are librarians who purchase books for young adults, not librarians just out of school). "YA librarians," observed Lerner, "have an obligation to be knowledgeable about science fiction even if they have no personal interest in the subject." However, though he reviews science fiction and fantasy for the WILSON

LIBRARY BULLETIN, he does not review horror, because he has no interest and (more importantly) no expertise in the field.

As a tip for authors, Lerner says that when a reviewer needs to do six books a month and the deadline is looming, s/he will opt for a shorter book rather than a long one. So shorter books are more likely to be reviewed.

In addition to his interest in Kipling, Lerner has written articles for NIEKAS on Austin Tappan Wright's ISLANDIA for the Wright Centennial and on John Myer Myer's SILVERLOCK. The latter article was a set of annotations on the literary references in SILVERLOCK, and Lerner said he was happy that the issue came out before Myers's death, although he said he did not ask Myers for help on it, "because that would have taken some of the fun out of it." (I suggested that if SILVERLOCK was not in print, perhaps NESFA could reprint it--with Lerner's annotations.)

Regarding SILVERLOCK, Lerner said he once found a copy inscribed, "To Jim Putnam: You already have your own keys to the Commonwealth [of Letters]; these are mine." (The phrase "Commonwealth of Letters" comes from Moliere.)

Lerner is currently working on a history of libraries through the ages. For example, the earliest known use of a library was a Babylonian king who kept track of everyone that he had cursed and what effects his curses had. There was also discovered a Babylonian database of fossilized sheep livers, presumably as a teaching aid for augerers. And Lerner promises to reveal who *really* burned the Library at Alexandria.

Someone asked about famous librarians of history and Lerner said that the best-known were probably Leibnitz, Casanova, and Jorge Luis Borges.

Currently Lerner is working with the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder doing a bibliographic database of all material on the subject. Someone asked if he had read ACHILLES IN VIETNAM, to which he replied "I haven't actually read it, but I've indexed it." (The Center is located in rural Vermont because when it was formed, it was decided that Matt Freedman should be the head, and so it was placed near where he lived.)

Lerner expressed distress that the American Library Association is spending too much time on politically correct stuff and not enough on its basic business. He also talked about such issues of the homeless in the libraries, and said that the problems of the homeless in the United States are serious, but should be solved by agencies designed to do that, not by the libraries.

Asked about Project Gutenberg (digitizing all public domain literature), Lerner said that the obsolescence of digital material worried him: the classic examples of this are Beta-format videotapes and 8-track cartridges. Given that in computer backups, the conclusion is that the best medium for *long*-term storage (more than twenty years) is high-quality punched paper tape (because it will last and the equipment to read it is easy to reconstruct), it may be that high-quality paper is the best preservation medium for books. But I still think that digitizing books is better for widespread distribution and usage. (We don't insist people do their day-to-day computer work with punched paper tape instead of disk files.)

With All of These Books, Is There Any Room for Short Fiction?

Sunday, 1 PM

David A. Smith (mod), Gregory Feeley, Tony Lewis, Darrell Schweitzer

While the panelists started out by saying that it is easier for a new writer to sell short fiction than a novel (short fiction appears in a magazine with other works and doesn't have to stand or fall on its own, so editors are more willing to take a chance on it), there is also a negative trend in the current glut of theme anthologies.

Although the peak of the science fiction magazine (at least in terms of volume) came in October 1952 when there were fifty magazines on the newsstand, we are currently in a mini-boom, and the number of pieces of short fiction published last year is probably close to, and may even exceed, the number of novels.

But a lot of the market for these are in things like shared worlds anthologies, mosaic novels, and theme anthologies, of which the ultimate will apparently be ALTERNATE VAMPIRES, according to Schweitzer. Theme anthologies are seen as acting as kudzu, eating up space and budget that could be spent on "good" anthologies. (This argument would be more convincing to me if I actually thought that there *would* be more "good" anthologies if there weren't these theme anthologies. But I didn't see any trend in that direction before these came along.)

The panelists also felt that the current theme anthologies degrade the concept of the original anthology, which used to be more general (such as Damon Knight's ORBIT series). By contrast, the current crop has very specific focuses (e.g., fantastic amphibians) which mean that authors are writing much more to specification and much less what they want to write, and that stories authors do write that don't fit these themes have much less chance of getting published.

Also, anthologies used to carry a certain guarantee of quality for the stories included--you got a dozen stories, all of high quality. Now you get thirty stories, but the quality is much more variable--because the stories are written for a specific market and by invitation, the editors have more tendency to accept a story of lower quality because they know the author, who wrote it at their request, will have difficulty selling it elsewhere.

The panelists also objected to many editors' attitudes towards the stories in these anthologies, treating the stories more as commodities than art. For example, Feeley said he had resistance to his "Aweary of the Sun" in WEIRD TALES FROM SHAKESPEARE (the best story in the book, in my opinion), because it was so much longer than the rest of the stories. Short stories seem in general to be getting shorter, while novels are getting longer.

(As far as numbered anthologies, one of the panelists said they usually falter around number four.)

Speaking of shortness, or lack thereof, in novels, this was also discussed. Novels used to be a lot shorter, but once a couple of long novels were successful, editors were more willing to accept longer manuscript. It was compared to breaking the sound barrier, with the barrier being 200 pages, then 300 pages, and so on. (Now the barrier seems to be somewhere around 800 pages.) Another factor is ego inflation: when an author becomes popular enough, editors cannot or will not suggest that they should cut some of the excess verbiage. (Stephen King is the classic example of this, which proves this is true in the mainstream as well.)

I noted that there are also shorter books being published, books that are novellas rather than novel. Feeley said the mainstream examples are people like Robert James Waller and Jonathan Bach, whose books are what Feeley referred to as "nouvelle cuisine" books. However, while we may see thin science fiction books, the panelists thought there are far fewer thin fantasy books. (I'm not sure. I get a lot of relatively thin fantasy books as review copies, but maybe they're not making it into the stores.)

And before you complain about the current trend of bloated novels, just remember that the old novel VARNEY THE VAMPIRE is about 900,000 words long, or about four times the length of DUNE.

The panelists closed by exhorting the audience to write more short fiction and send it to magazines.

Miscellaneous

The newsletter came out on time, but the fourth (and final?) issue was on legal-sized paper instead of the letter-sized paper used for the others, making life difficult for those of us who save these sorts of things.

Next year for Boskone 33 (February 16-18, 1995) the Guest of Honor is Lois McMaster Bujold. (This is a welcome return to science fiction after a couple of years emphasizing fantasy, at least as far as I am concerned. Give me rivets or give me death!)

25 Important Science Fiction Films

Mark R. Leeper (mark.leeper@att.com)

The BOSKONE Science Fiction Convention has asked me to moderate a panel on the essential science fiction films--whatever that means. This is my list of the 25 and 10 and 1 most important science fiction films. Some are here because I consider them to be great, but may not be well known. Others may not be of what I consider the highest quality, but are here because they have been highly influential. My top 10 are prefaced by asterisks. The film I consider #1 is QUATERMASS AND THE PIT. In each case I have given a phrase or two to explain why it made this list. I don't promise that I wouldn't come up with a different list if asked again. I have limited myself to films over 10 years old, but frankly I don't think that made any difference.

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  I.  Silent
   A.  A TRIP TO THE MOON--Birth of SF film
   B.  METROPOLIS--Visual impact
 II.  30s
   A.  THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN--Creative though only fringe SF
   B.  * KING KONG--Big step forward in SPFX
   C.  ISLAND OF LOST SOULS--Literate interpretation of Wells
       straddling Gothic and Realistic approaches
   D.  * THINGS TO COME--Vision of future, spectacle
III.  40s--nothing major
 IV.  50s
   A.  DESTINATION MOON--Birth of the 50s cycle
   B.  THE THING FROM ANOTHER WORLD--Solid thriller, good acting
   C.  THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL--Message that people responded to
   D.  THE MAN IN THE WHITE SUIT--Serious social comment wrapped in
       amusing comedy
   E.  * THE WAR OF THE WORLDS--Great SPFX, real shocker
   F.  GOJIRA--Spawned Japanese SF market and series, exploration of
       post-nuclear trauma
   G.  THIS ISLAND EARTH--First real presentation of interstellar
       warfare, somewhat mechanical but still has real sense of wonder
   H.  THE INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS--Great piece of political
       paranoia, powerful allegory (though it is not clear if anti-
       McCarthy or anti-Communist)
   I.  * FORBIDDEN PLANET--Highly influential (inspiration for Star
       Trek), powerful images, first film set totally off Earth (?)
  V.  60s
   A.  * UNEARTHLY STRANGER--Powerful, dramatic use of cinema, good SF
       without SPFX
   B.  * QUATERMASS AND THE PIT--(U.S. title: FIVE MILLION YEARS TO
       EARTH) Finest idea SF film I can name
   C.  2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY--Highly influential (though story-value is
       overrated)
 VI.  70s
   A.  THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN--Well-researched and current technology
       worked into the plot of a film
   B.  COLOSSUS--(a.k.a. THE FORBIN PROJECT) Technological age updating
       of Frankenstein
   C.  * PHASE IV--Strong tale of two really alien intelligences
       warring, humans and ants.  Extremely intelligent use of science
       fiction
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D. * STAR WARS--A huge leap in representation of imaginative images on the screen. One of the most influential films ever made, it changed how the film industry sees its business

VII. 80s

A. * BRAINSTORM--Very believable view of the research, very believable view of how the right tool can really transform a society. It breaks down in the last half-hour, probably because of notorious difficulties in production, but this is a film that really could have dozens of fascinating sequels.

B. * BLADERUNNER--Terrific set design (though story is over-rated)

NESFA 1994 Hugo Recommendations

5 January 1995 -- mlo

NESFA continues to maintain a list of Good Stuff to read. Any NESFA member who reads something that they would like to recommend to others to be considered for a Hugo nomination can add it to the list. We will publish it from time to time in Instant Message and on the nets. (Feel free to reproduce it provided you reproduce it intact!) It's neither definitive nor complete, but it contains the stories, novels and non-fiction works that a bunch of well-read fans feel may be worthy of a Hugo nomination.

Novels

Feersum Endjinn	Iain M. Banks	Orbit (UK)	ca
Ring	Stephen Baxter	HarperCollins UK	mlo, daa
Brittle Innings	Michael Bishop	Bantam	el, gf
Mirror Dance	Lois McMaster Bujold	Baen	arl, ec, jr
Finder	Emma Bull	Tor	mlo, po, ec, cjh
Tripoint	C. J. Cherryh	Warner Aspect	pal
Foreigner	C. J. Cherryh	DAW	arl, ec, gf
The Waterworks	E. L. Doctorow	Random House, BoMC	el
Queen City Jazz	Kathleen Ann Goonan	Tor	ca
Rhinegold	Stephan Grundy	Bantam Spectra	el
Seeker's Mask	P. C. Hodgell	Hypatia	pal
Nimbus (1993)	Alexander Jablokov	AvoNova/Morrow	cjh
Gun, with Occasional Music	Jonathan Lethem	Harcourt Brace	gf, daa
Starmind	Spider & Jeanne Robinson	Analog	Aug-Nov arl
In the Cube (1993!)	D. Alexander Smith	Tor	cjh
Heavy Weather	Bruce Sterling	Bantam Spectra	cjh, ca, daa, gf
A College of Magics	Caroline Stevermer	Tor	daa, gf
Manhattan Transfer (1993!)	John E. Stith	Tor	jam
Paris au XXe Siecle	Jules Verne	?	el
Mysterium	Robert Charles Wilson	Bantam Spectra	ca, po, gf, el, daa
Lake of the Long Sun	Gene Wolfe	Tor	mlo, ec, gf, rk

Novella

Remains of Adam	A. A. Attanasio	Asimov's Jan 94	arl, gf
Melodies of the Heart	Michael F. Flynn	Analog Jan 94	ca, gf
Another Story	Ursula K. Le Guin	Tomorrow Aug 94	gf
Forgiveness Day	Ursula K. Le Guin	Asimov's Nov 94	arl
Scissors Cut Paper Wrap Stone	Ian McDonald	Bantam Spectra	gf
Seven Views of Olduvai Gorge	Mike Resnick	F&SF Oct/Nov	arl
Les Fleurs du Mal	Brian Stableford	Asimov's Oct 94	arl
Uncharted Territory	Connie Willis	Bantam Spectra	gf

Novelette

The God Who Slept with Women	Brian Aldiss	Asimov's May 94	arl, gf
Shadow of the Falcon	Janet Berliner and Jack Kirby	Galaxy Jul-Aug 94	arl
In the Dazzle	Robert R. Chase	Analog Jun 94	gf
The Transcendentalists	David Ira Cleary	SF Age Nov 94	arl
Things of the Flesh	L. Timmel Duchamp	Asimov's Jan 94	ca
The Wild Ships of Fairny	Carolyn Ives Gilman	F&SF Mar 94	gf
1894	Charles L. Harness	Analog Aug 94	arl
In the Valley of the Humans	Phillip C. Jennings	Asimov's Nov 94	ca
The Singular Habits of Wasps	Geoffrey A. Landis	Analog Apr 94	arl, gf
The Martian Child	David Gerrold	F&SF Sep 94	arl
Out of the Quiet Years	G. David Nordley	ASF Jul 94	arl
Waging Good	Robert Reed	Asimov's Jan 95	arl
The Remoras	Robert Reed	F&SF May 94	arl, gf
Stride	Robert Reed	Asimov's Nov 94	ca
Fan	Geoff Ryman	Interzone Mar 94	arl
Dark Star	Jack Williamson	F&SF Feb 95	arl

Short Story

Inspiration	Ben Bova	F&SF Apr 94	arl
Last Rites	Ray Bradbury	F&SF Dec 94	arl
Paris in June	Pat Cadigan	Omni Sept 94	ca
Death and the Librarian	Esther M. Friesner	Asimov's Dec 94	arl, ca
None So Blind	Joe Haldeman	Asimov's Nov 94	ca
Fortyday	Damon Knight	Asimov's May 94	gf
Killer Byte	Mercedes Lackey	MZB Fantasy Spring 94	arl
Wells of Wisdom	Brad Linaweaver	Galaxy May/Jun 94	arl
Sealight	Ian MacLeod	F&SF May 94	gf
Assassin	Bruce McAllister	Omni, Jan 94	ca, gf
Standard Candles	Jack McDevitt	F&SF, Jan 94	gf
Bible Stories for Adults, No. 20, The Tower	James Morrow	F&SF Jun 94	el, gf
Director's Cut	James Morrow	F&SF Mar 94	el
Abridged Edition	Jerry Oltion	F&SF Jul 94	el
Treasure Buried	Robert Reed	F&SF Feb 94	arl, gf
Barnaby in Exile	Mike Resnick	Asimov's Feb 94	arl
The Changeling's Tale	Michael Swanwick	Asimov's Jan 94	gf
Household Words, or, the Powers-That-Be	Howard Waldrop	Amazing Winter 94	ca
Why Did?	Howard Waldrop	Omni Apr 94	ca
The Moon Garden Cookbook	Laurel Winters	F&SF Feb 94	el

Non Fiction

I, Asimov	Isaac Asimov	Doubleday	mlo, po, ec
Spectrum: The Best in Contemporary Fantastic Art	Cathy Burnett & Arnie Fenner	Underwood	ca, mlo, ged, gf
Making Book	Teresa Nielsen Hayden	NESFA Press	mlo, arl, po, ec, ged

Dramatic Presentation

All Good Things ST:TNG	po, ged
Earth 2 premiere	po, sls, ged
Ed Wood	ca, daa, el
The Mask	sls, ca, daa
Mary Shelley's Frankenstein	ca, daa
The Puppet Masters	ca, daa, rk, gf

Original Artwork

Cover of 10/94 IASFM	Kinuko Y. Craft	Asimov's Oct 94	el
Cover of J. Lethem's Gun, with Occasional Music	Michael Koelsch Harcourt, Brace	ca	
Cover of R. Pollack's Temporary Agency	Ron Walotsky	St. Martin's	ca

Campbell Award

Daniel Marcus	ca
Felicity Savage	ca
Elizabeth Willey	mlo, po

Key to nominators: arl--Tony Lewis, by--Ben Yalow, ca--Claire Anderson, cjh--Chip Hitchcock, daa--Dave Anderson, ec--Elisabeth Carey, el--Evelyn Leeper, ged--Gay Ellen Dennett, gf--George Flynn, jr--Joe Rico, kp--Kelly Persons, mh--Mark Hertel, mlo--Mark Olson, pal--Paula Lieberman, pf--Pam Fremon, po--Priscilla Olson, rk--Rick Katze, sls--Sharon Sbarsky

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Return to Index | Other Conventions | FANAC Homepage