

# Boskone 35

A convention report by Evelyn C. Leeper  
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## Index:

1. [Art Show Reception](#)
2. [Rediscovering Classic SF Writers](#)
3. [The Death of the Short Story Market Is Greatly Exaggerated](#)
4. [Origami Demo](#)
5. [The New Frontier: Australian SF](#)
6. [Beyond Godzilla: Japanese Fantasy and SF Without Large Reptiles](#)
7. [Plot Fidelity: What Does It Mean for a Movie to Be Faithful to a Book](#)
8. [Don't Forget These: Things to Remember at Hugo Nomination Time](#)
9. [More Lies With Statistics](#)
10. [The Single Book Series: Are There Still Stand-Alone Novels?](#)
11. [Do They Keep Kosher on Mars? Does SF Handle Religious Traditions Well?](#)
12. [Australian and New Zealand Science Fiction and Fantasy](#)
13. [State of the Genre: Australian and Far East SF/F](#)
14. [ALIEN SHORES edited by Peter McNamara and Margaret Winch](#)
15. [Japanese Non-Kaiju Science Fiction and Fantasy](#)

Boskone 35 was held in Framingham, Massachusetts, February 13-15, 1998.

Registration, attendance, green room, con suite, etc., etc., were all pretty much as before.

The hotel, however, had some major problems, with their computers being down all weekend, the coffee shop being closed for much of the weekend, people being pressured to use the buffets rather than the menus, and the bar being closed Monday. Given that there is no place other than the hotel within walking distance (the hotel is on a divided highway), better arrangements need to be made.

The Dealers Room has settled into a standard set of dealers in standard positions in the room. When we started going to Boskone (in 1969!), the used books in the Dealers Room (then called the Hucksters Room) were twenty-five cents each and we stocked up. If new books were sold there, I don't remember it. Now most used books are priced at or above new book prices (though there are still inexpensive ones to be had), and the superstores and Web stores have made the new book dealers somewhat less tempting than before. I did find a couple of books, such as Tesseracts 5, a (Canadian-published) book of Canadian science fiction. This is the sort of thing is still found primarily in Dealers Rooms. Button seen at the convention: "Programming: The art of debugging an empty text file"

## Art Show Reception

Friday, 10:30 PM

There was an art show reception for program participants Friday night, and for a change I actually got to it. This was a good thing, as it gave me a chance to see the Art Show--usually I'm so busy I don't make it there.

## Rediscovering Classic SF Writers

**Saturday, 10:00 AM**  
**Keith R. A. DeCandido, John R. Douglas, David A. Smith (m)**

Description: [no description provided]

Smith said he was on the panel because he likes to be a moderator and they were short of moderators. He also said, "It's time for me to be rediscovered because my discovery was so evanescent I can scarcely remember it." DeCandido said he was doing his share toward rediscovering classic authors by bringing Alfred Bester back into print at Vintage.

The panelists noted that there was a fine line between classic and forgotten. Someone asked, "Can you be rediscovered when you're still alive or is it a precondition of rediscovery that you be dead?" DeCandido replied, "You don't have to be dead; you just have to be out of print."

Douglas noted that some authors can't get published for business reasons even while they're still alive (and so are candidates for rediscovery), and gave the examples of James Gunn and Wilson Tucker.

There was a slight digression into the economics of publishing. To publish a mass-market paperback successfully, you need to sell 10,000 copies of a 25,000 run to succeed--and you need to do this in a six- to eight-week period. Trade paperbacks can sell fewer, but even more to the point, they don't have a time limit, since they are not stripped by bookstores after six weeks.

NESFA manages to be successful in its reprinting of older authors, because it doesn't have to make money, and it doesn't have to sell in bookstores over a six-week period.

One result is that sometimes authors need to change their names to dump their old track record. As Smith said, "A history of declining sales means that your name is a negative." Douglas added, "Robin Hobb exists because Megan Lindholm was not successful after four books." ("Successful" here means financially successful, not artistically successful.)

Another is that authors want ever-increasing advances. Eventually advances exceed expectations and authors price themselves out of the market.

Douglas said that it used to be that 60% of science fiction and fantasy sales were backlist, but now the percentage was much lower, because of the economics. (Bookstores used to wait much longer to strip books, but the huge increase in the number of books being published means that they want to clear space for newer, faster-moving "product.")

DeCandido said all this was why they did trade paperbacks for Bester. Also, Vintage is a "prestige" imprint and will help to sell Bester outside the field. Smith described this as "repositioning the author"; as he said, trade paperbacks say, "The words are worth reading."

Smith said that all this implies that "one criterion for being rediscovered is to have written well." (He suggested that if one checked out the other stories that appeared with Bester in F&SF, one would discover that they were of lesser quality.) In fact, he added, an author must have written well and sold well, then fallen out of favor. Someone noted that no one but John Norman is clamoring for a rediscovery of John Norman, leading DeCandido to observe that "popular fiction" doesn't age well because it plays to the sensibilities of the time, and that Norman was writing basically popular fiction. Smith said that Norman wrote a relatively rare (at the time) fantasy style and "easy listening S&M." At the time it sold because it was outre, but now is merely quaint. (And of course, it's not politically correct, a condition that has caused a lot of older fantasy works to go out of print as well because they had racial slurs in them.)

Smith added another criterion to his list: Write something that's seminal. Douglas modified this slightly to "Be influential."

I asked if it hurt an author to reissue his or her lesser works? DeCandido said it did and wants to save Bester from Heinlein's fate of having all his worst stuff appear after his death, so Vintage will not be reissuing Golem 100 or The Computer Connection. From the audience, Robert Ingria said that Bester had three periods, and only the middle period was good.

DeCandido said that another limiting factor is that sometimes dealing estates is nightmarish. And since publishers don't want to reissue massive tomes, one should write short enough to be easy to publish."

Someone mentioned Robert Sheckley, leading the panelists to observe that some authors have only a few good books in them. Douglas said that he felt that Sheckley "beat some of his themes to death."

On the one hand, Tom Clancy and Piers Anthony are examples of the momentum that a top author has--he can sell at least four really bad novels before people catch on. But you create a necessity for rediscovery if you write one great novel, then five bad ones.

While Isaac Asimov reads as dated, so do Jules Verne and H. G. Wells. Smith pointed out that we read Verne and Wells for the insight into Victorianism, not for the speculation, and the same, for a later period, is true of Asimov. Someone in the audience thought that steampunk brought back an interest in Verne and Wells, which led someone to note that stimulating an interest in academe would encourage rediscovery. There was then a somewhat off-topic discussion about how to edit old manuscripts (e.g., Verne): do you try to edit them to the literary conventions of the time, or of the present?

Some suggestions for rediscovery (unattributed were from audience members) included Alfred Bester, James Blish [Smith], Frederic Brown, John Brunner [Smith], Algis Budrys, Sir Arthur C. Clarke (A Fall of Moondust and Deep Range) [Smith], L. Sprague deCamp's short stories and essays [Connie Hirsch], Philip K. Dick, E. R. Eddison [Smith], James Gunn (The Listeners) [Douglas], Charles Harness (NESFA is doing him), Robert E. Howard (who is alive in the games market; someone referred to Howard as "Conan the midlist"), Cyril Kornbluth (recently done by NESFA), Henry Kuttner, Stanislaw Lem (whom Smith described as "all the rage in the early 70s," to which DeCandido replied, "well, some of the rage") [Smith], Richard Matheson, C. L. Moore, Eric Frank Russell, James Schmitz [Douglas], Clifford Simak, Olaf Stapledon [me], Theodore Sturgeon, Wilson Tucker (The Long Loud Silence and The Year of the Quiet Sun) [Douglas], Stanley G. Weinbaum [Robert Ingria], William Tenn, and Roger Zelazny. (Some, of course, are already in the rediscovery process.)

On the flip-side of rediscovery, someone observed, is the oblivion you get if you write a totally plausible near-future that turns out to be false.

DeCandido said another way to achieve rediscovery was to form a religion.

Smith summarized the rediscovery criteria: Write something really good a while ago which was influential on people better than you. It should be short enough to be published, but long enough for the market, and be quirky and original while at the same time intellectual enough for critics. It also helps to die in some memorable way.

Douglas pointed out that because the older market was more slanted to short fiction, this often meant rediscoveries had to be collections rather than novels and that these didn't sell as well. This segues right into ...

# The Death of the Short Story Market Is Greatly Exaggerated

Saturday, 11:00 AM

Daniel Hatch, Warren Lapine, Charles Ryan (m), Ian Randal Strock

Description: "And we're here to tell you why."

Lapine publishes *Weird Tales*, *Dreams of Decadence*, and *Absolute Magnitude*. Ryan edits *Aboriginal*. Strock edits *Artemis*.

Over the last several years, the "flagship magazines" went from circulations of 100,000 to circulations of 50,000. Inept marketing may be part of that, according to the panelists, but the Internet, *Myst*, etc., are also cutting into reading time.

But Lapine said that even 100,000 would not be enough to produce returns that make stockholders happy, because 60% of magazine revenue comes from ads, and national advertisers want circulations in the millions. In addition, most corporations think of science fiction as "sci-fi" and don't want that image; 100,000 circulation for a yachting magazine would get ads.

Ryan said that small-circulation magazines can still survive, but they can't make a lot of money or pay a lot of money. This contributes to the fact that authors can survive by writing novels but not by writing short stories.

One problem is the mentality that leads people to say, "I don't have time to read short stories; I only read novels." It was claimed that the real cost of a paperback (after adjusting for inflation) has doubled and people are less willing to gamble on unknown works, but I would think that would apply to new authors' first novels as well.

Ryan explained how the chains are now "ordering to sell-through": if they sell 60% of what they ordered of author X's latest book, they will only order that much of author X's next book. But they will never sell all they order, because there are distribution problems, wear-and-tear, etc. So it's a downward spiral. Lapine said that strange as it sounds, a 60% sell-through means you aren't printing enough. In addition, since short-story collections don't sell as well as novels, "order to sell-through" hurts authors by capping their novel sales at what their short-story collection sales are. The result is that often the author will have his or her collection done through a small press that doesn't use the chains, or sometimes release a collection simultaneously with a novel to maintain the sales figures.

Ryan said that as long as writers writing short stories, there will be magazines to sell them to, because if there aren't, writers will start them. He also felt that the better writers are those who started with short stories in magazines, because the magazines force the authors to write tightly, and they also edit what they publish.

There was a lot on submission guidelines, publishing and distribution that I didn't report. Authors shouldn't send disks--they can't be read easily, they often have viruses, etc. Also, don't submit via FAX or email unless requested to. (The publisher does not want you using his paper instead of your own.)

In terms of sales, there are a few reliable performers. Dozois's "year's best" series sells well. (No one said whether the *Datlow/Windling* fantasy series did.) But for commercial reasons, the "best of" anthologies tend toward big names rather than the best stories--they publishers prefer a so-so Steven King story to a great Steven Nobody one. Original anthologies are mostly theme anthologies and this detracts from newness and surprise of the stories. And reaching an audience of 15,000 to 20,000 versus 50,000 (or were these print runs?) in a magazine means that authors who want audience go to the magazines.

Someone related that at first Allen Steele couldn't sell his short stories. Then he sold a novel, and the publisher told him that he should sell some short stories to get his name out and familiar. And now when he mentioned to the magazines that he had sold a novel, they would buy his short stories. Go figure.

Someone asked whether the Sci-Fi Channel could help promote magazines. It doesn't, because it promotes only its own. And Lapine said that "Science Fiction Age does whatever it can to crush everyone else and does not help the field."

I asked about the reviews of short fiction in *Tangents*, but it turns out that it has a circulation under 300. (If you are interested in short fiction, it is a quarterly that tries to cover the whole field of magazines and original anthologies, including non-US publications.)

Ryan closed by saying, "One of the biggest problems in this field is that it's very incestuous."

## **Origami Demo**

**Saturday, 11:00 AM**  
**Mark R. Leeper (m)**

Leeper repeated his ever-popular origami demo/class, teaching the "Star Wars" X-Wing fighter, a T. rex, and an Anubis head, and demonstrated the morph. He had come ready to teach Japanese monsters, but the participants had their own ideas.

Without War: Alternate Histories that Don't Involve Wars as Turning Points Saturday, 12 N Ellen Asher, Laura Anne Gilman, Mark Keller (m), Evelyn C. Leeper

Description: "Most alternate histories have turning points involving one of two things: a war or a great scientific discovery. However, there are other types of turning points. Kim Stanley Robinson, for example, proposed a turning point in which Percy Shelley did not die so young. Instead he went on to become a great humanizing influence in what, in our timeline, became Marxism. What such turning points have been used in SF? What others can be used?"

[Since Mark was doing his origami demo, he couldn't take notes for me, so this will be briefer than usual.]

The statistic that I gave was that of the thousand or so alternate histories listed on the Uchronia List (<http://www.skatecity.com/ah>), about half have wars or their equivalent (e.g., assassinations) are the turning point. If one drops off those remaining that rely on technological advances, this still leaves a third--but they are not the most interesting third.

Why are wars so popular as turning points? Well, wars are easy: it's up or down, yes or no.

Then there's the whole "Great Man Theory" versus the "Tide of History" theory. (I realize that I mention this on every alternate history panel, but it is critical to the field.) It is more difficult to do alternate histories that rely on the "Tide of History" theory, since by its very nature that implies history is resistant to change. But it was noted that people have to be ready to do something with the Great Man's ideas. Someone proposing a completely representative democracy in, say, dynastic Egypt is not going to achieve very much. (An non-alternate history story that looks at this is Frederik Pohl's "Mute Inglorious Tam.") Science and technology are also cumulative.

So if you're writing an alternate history, you need a pivotal point. And wars, in addition to being pivotal, are also well-researched. A final contributing factor is that people have heard of wars. Alternate histories turning on obscure historical events will probably not hold the reader's attention,

assuming s/he can even figure out what's going on.

The panelists observed that it is hard to separate the military and economic sectors from human drive in general, which is why these sectors figure so heavily in deciding on change points.

One possibility outside these areas is births (e.g., what if Catherine of Aragon has a son who survives?). But subtracting someone is more common than adding someone. Why? Well, adding someone seems like cheating somehow: there are far fewer built-in restraints on this sort of change.

Someone suggested one possibility would be George Washington accepting the crown. Other suggested changes in royal families, various diseases, and so on. For example, if Prince Albert (Queen Victoria's husband) had survived longer, Britain might have become more technologically oriented and not fallen behind Germany in that regard. It was also suggested that many of the people who died on the Titanic might have had major effects had they lived. Someone claimed that Harvard got their library primarily from a Titanic victim and that is what started the change in universities from "rich men's finishing schools" to institutions of research and learning. Many people disagreed, saying this trend was already happening, and this one instance may have helped it, but was not necessary. This led someone to suggest "Alternate Libraries" as an anthology theme, which I suggested would be best done by Fred Lerner.

Religions provide popular turning points. Other than the obvious ones (let's just say there are a lot of stories with turning points between 4 B.C.E. and 33 C.E.), people mentioned alternate versions of Joseph Smith and L. Ron Hubbard. (I think it's too soon to tell how much lasting effect the latter will have). Readers can provide their own additions.

Other suggestions included a frozen Bering Strait (providing on-going communication between the Americas and Eurasia), alternate literary people, and alternate sports stories. There were several mentioned about various people, and at one point Asher said, "[Elvis] Presley was a musician in a way that [Sonny] Bono was not," which I would nominate for one of the most obvious statements of the convention.

Putting your change in prehistoric times is one way to avoid wars, but you will probably have to explicitly tell the reader this, and if rigorously extrapolated, the present will be so different as to be unrecognizable.

Someone asked, "What if muckrakers went after the stock market instead of contaminated meat at the turn of the century?? My immediate response was, "Who cares?" both in the sense that people would not have gotten stirred up to support it the way they did cleaning up the meat industry (hence it wouldn't have gone anywhere), and that as a story idea it doesn't really grab the reader. Alternate histories are, after all, stories, and should generate some interest in the reader.

Someone mentioned lost scientific discoveries (such as no one picking up on Darwin and evolution). It was pointed out that most discoveries were really made by several people, and if one was lost, another would be found. Someone else suggested that Sir Walter Raleigh might have brought back three stocks of potatoes rather than one, hence there would have been no Potato Famine. First of all, the panel pretty much agreed that he brought back tobacco and not potatoes. And second, it was not just a single strain of potatoes that was susceptible, but many (all?).

## **The New Frontier: Australian SF**

**Saturday, 1:00 PM**

**David G. Hartwell (m), Evelyn C. Leeper**

Description: "Several prominent SF writers, most notable of whom is probably Greg Egan, are from

Australia. Australia has also given us the late George Turner, Terry Dowling, and others. The panel discusses Australian SF: what makes it special, who its key players are, and who to watch for."

This was more a listing of authors than an analysis of Australian (and New Zealand) science fiction. I had a handout of my report of a panel on the subject at LoneStarCon 2, and a review of *Alien Shores*, which is attached at the end of this. Hartwell mentioned the additional anthologies *Metaworlds: Best Australian Science Fiction* (edited by Paul A. Collins), *Strange Attractors: Original Australian Speculative Fiction* (Edited by Damien Broderick), *The Pacific Book Of Australian Science Fiction 1 and 2* (edited by John Baxter), and *Rooms of Paradise* (edited by Lee Harding). All are out of print. What is in print, at least in Australia, is *The Year's Best Science Fiction and Fantasy Volume 1* edited by Jonathan Strahan and Jeremy G. Byrne. If my notes are at all correct, Hartwell is working with Damien Broderick on a new anthology, *Centaurus: Best Australian Science Fiction*, due out in early 1999 from Tor. Jack Dann and Janeen Webb are also working on *Dreaming Down Under*, due out from HarperCollins Australia in mid-1998.

The "Big Four" discussed were (chronologically) A. Bertram Chandler, George Turner, Greg Egan, and Damien Broderick.

Also listed as past Australian writers were John Baxter, David Lake, and Jack Wodhams (whose work appeared in *Astounding*).

The current wave of Australian writers is due to a workshop Ursula K. LeGuin held in 1976 and 1977 in Australia (shortly after she was a Guest of Honor at Aussiecon One) which brought new writers in. Hartwell compared this to Judith Merrill's efforts in Canada in late 1970s, which led me to comment that women certainly seem to affect world science fiction out of proportion to their numbers. (And let us not forget Mary Shelley.)

Someone said that culturally Australia was ten years behind the United States and Britain, but this is not true for the writers; according to Hartwell, they are writing "cutting-edge postmodern fantasy with a nod to science fiction, science fiction, and magical realism."

One reason that we in the United States haven't seen many of the authors mentioned is that writers tend sell in their home market first, and later go outside.

Other authors mentioned were Damon Briggs, Simon Brown (short fiction in *Aurealis*, *Eidolon*, and *Omega* and the novels *Privateer* and *Winter*), Isabelle Carmody (a "hot new writer," young-adult novel *The Gathering*), Hal Colebatch ("The Colonel's Tiger" in *Man-Kzin Wars VII*), Terry Dowling (who probably should be moved into what would then be the Big Five), Leanne Frahm (short fiction that has won several *Aurealis* and *Ditmar* awards, and the novel *Borderline*), Rosaleen Love ("Turtle Soup" and other short fiction), Kevin McKay ("Pie Row Joe"), Phillipa Maddern ("The Pastseer"), Anthony Peacey ("Jagging" and "Time and Flowers"), Lucy Sussex (short fiction, essays, and the novels *Deersnake* and *The Scarlet Rider*), Andrew Whitmore (short fiction and *Fortress of Eternity*), Cherry Wilder (New Zealander, lots of short fiction and *The Luck of Brin's Five*), and Sean Williams ("Passing the Bone"). [Thanks to the Internet Science Fiction Database (<http://www.sfsite.com/isfdb>) and LOCUS (<http://www.sff.net/locus>) for this information!]

Jack Dann is a recent arrival to Australia.

## **Beyond Godzilla: Japanese Fantasy and SF Without Large Reptiles**

**Saturday, 2:00 PM**

**Bob Eggleton (m), Craig Shaw Gardner, Daniel Kimmel, Mark R. Leeper**

Description: "When most people hear the phrase 'Japanese SF and fantasy film,' they think either of Godzilla or of animation. But there is a lot more out there in Japanese SF and fantasy film. The panel discusses live action Japanese SF and fantasy that doesn't involve guys in big rubber suits."

Leeper had a hand-out listing all the non-giant-reptile, non-anime Japanese science fiction and fantasy films he could find. (It's attached at the end.)

Eggleton divided the films into decades. In the 1950s there was *Battle in Outer Space* (a semi-sequel to *The Mysterians*). As Eggleton said, "The effects may be completely inept, but it's beautifully filmed." (Eiji Subaraya did the effects.) (I think of them as stylized--you are not supposed to think them realistic, but rather they are supposed to be reminiscent of what they represent.) Eggleton also mentioned *The H-Man*.

Kimmel broke the rule about not saying the "G-word" by pointing out that the original *Gojira* (before the addition of Raymond Burr) was a serious film, and had a sub-text of nationalism in the post-war period and of the national anxiety of nuclear attack.

Eggleton mentioned other films, such as *Warning from Space* and *The Mysterians* (which had a cameo token monster, the drilling robot *Mogura*). He observed that in the United States, science was always the savior; in Japan science was the enemy. Leeper disagreed about the United States, saying that many United States science fiction films of the period also painted science as the enemy.

Kimmel said that the 1950s saw more Japanese films distributed in the United States than later, because they were cheap to buy, spectacular, and "rode Kurosawa's coat tails," that is, took advantage of the positive cachet that Japanese films had. Leeper added that *Rodan* was the first Japanese science fiction film in color; color film and processing was expensive, and they used it well.

Moving on to the 1960s, Eggleton started with *Gorath*, which he described as *When Worlds Collide* with a giant walrus. Of course, the walrus (named *Magma*) was not in US version, and the editing made it a bit confused; at one point, planes are firing on a valley for no apparent reason and completely independent of the rest of the plot! There was also *Atragon*, which is not the name of a monster, but of a submarine in a story which also had a monster sea serpent (*Manda*) and the undersea kingdom of *Mu*. Eggleton said that *Matango* (*Attack of the Mushroom People*) was "one of the scariest films I've ever seen." He also mentioned that it was based on William Hope Hodgson's "Voice in the Night." Leeper said that there were echoes of *Matango* in *Goke*, *Body Snatcher from Hell*.

Kimmel listed the two similarly titled films, *The Final War* and *The Last War*, which he compared to *Dr. Strangelove*. Eggleton added *The Green Slime* and *Latitude Zero*. Gardner said that movie-goers couldn't tell *The Green Slime* was Japanese until they saw it, because the cast was not Japanese. But when people went to it, it was obviously Japanese, "because it works by Japanese logic." Leeper said that the problem was that slime solidified into something four feet high and cute, and all sense of menace was destroyed.

Kimmel said that after the commercial failure of *The Green Slime*, theatre owners decided it didn't sell because it was Japanese, so it became harder to see or find Japanese science fiction films. Eggleton remembered *Dogora*, *The Space Monster*, which was mostly a gangster film. Leeper talked about the "Majin" films with a golem-like statue brought to life by the prayers of children. Eggleton also remembered this, and felt it had the best miniature work in Japanese science fiction. Gardner said that these were the only monster historical films that he knew of.

Another 1960s film mentioned was *Goke*, *Body Snatcher from Hell*.



In the 1970s, according to Eggleton, there was a trend toward earth-saving stuff. Kimmel said that one aspect was the emphasis on ecological disasters. For example, *The Submersion of Japan* (Tidal Wave). Eggleton said that this had an indirect sequel ("the Japanese love indirect sequels") called *Catastrophe 1999* (also *The Last Days of Planet Earth* and *The Prophecies of Nostradamus*). This he described as an anti-story, with the whole second half turning out to be the main character's warning of what might have happened. There were also Star Wars "rip-offs": *Message from Space* and *War in Space*. Kimmel said, "At this point anime kicks in big," with *Akira* finally being the breakthrough film in 1986. Gardner added that in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Japanese film industry fell apart, which was another reason for the end of the live-action Japanese science fiction film.

There were still a few films, though. Gardner named *Tetsuo*, and Eggleton gave *Ziram 1 and 2*.

Leeper pointed out that the panelists hadn't even mentioned the many Japanese ghost stories. Kimmel named *Ghost of Rambo* (*Rambo* was Edogawa Rambo, a pen name which is the Japanese pronunciation of "Edgar Allan Poe").

Gardner said that ghost stories come from a different source in Japanese culture. They use Noh drama and kabuki. Leeper said that Japanese ghost stories are really morality stories. Kimmel said that a recent one was Akira Kurosawa's *Dreams*.

One that Gardner said was quite unusual was *Double Suicide*, done with live actors in the style of Japanese puppet theater.

My question is, if only giant reptiles were ruled out (and giant non-reptiles allowed), why was there no mention of *Gamera*?

Sources for these films are difficult to find, but a few were mentioned. There is *Video dai Kaiju* in New Jersey, *Sinister Cinema* (for a few), and the media fest *Chiller Theater* in the Meadowlands Hilton in New Jersey. There are also two stores in Harvard Square.

## **Plot Fidelity: What Does It Mean for a Movie to Be Faithful to a Book**

**Saturday, 4:00 PM**

**Daniel Kimmel (m), Mark R. Leeper, Jim Mann, Steven Sawicki, Joan D. Vinge**

Description: "There is often a lot of debate on whether a book is faithful to a movie, but rarely does this debate involve the underlying questions. What does it mean for a book to be faithful to a movie? How different can the movie be and still be considered faithful? Can a movie be faithful in spirit but not in detail?"

Sawicki began by reminding the audience that with books and films we are dealing with two different media. A novel has about 80,000 words (these days often more), while a screenplay has 8,000. So to adapt a novel into a screenplay, the screenwriter needs to do a lot of cutting. Because of this, it is generally more important to capture the spirit of the book rather than a scene-by-scene breakdown or exact dialogue. Kimmel later said that it helps to have a short story to work from rather than a novel.

Vinge added that you can't put in all the dialogue because it's just too wordy--what works on the printed page won't work on the screen. Mann also felt that it was important to capture the feel, the basic ideas, and some memorable parts of the basic story.

One problem is that people become so attached to the books that they've read so many times. Leeper

said that if what you liked in the novel made it to the screen, you'll think it was faithful, but if it didn't, you won't.

Kimmel thought that 1997 was a terrible year for movies, but an interesting year for science fiction movies. Contact, Starship Troopers, and The Postman were based on novels, and Mimic on a short story. Mann thought The Postman did an excellent job translating David Brin's original novella, if not the entire novel, and Kimmel agreed. Also, Brin was pleased with it. Vinge added that Philip K. Dick thought that Bladerunner captured the essence of Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?

The panelists felt that Starship Troopers was if anything sometimes too close to Heinlein's philosophy for some people, but someone in the audience thought it was more that the movie parodied Heinlein's philosophy.

>From the audience, Joe Ross said he thought that Dune was too faithful in detail to the Frank Herbert novel.

Someone else said that the Sci-Fi Channel's adaptation of "The Cold Equations" was faithful to the events in Tom Godwin's short story but completely changed the reasons for them. Someone mentioned Nightfall, which Kimmel said was a "travesty" of Asimov's story.

Kimmel said that some stories are by their very nature unfilmable in any literal fashion, and gave the example of "We Can Remember It for You Wholesale" (made into Total Recall). So the question was asked, "Why do people persist in filming things that are basically unfilmable?" One panelist gave the example of Mimic, in which Del Toro wanted to use a single image from the Donald A. Wollheim story, and wasn't trying to film the story. But the real answer is probably that fans keep asking for it. (If I had a dollar for every time someone in Usenet's rec.arts.sf.written posted asking, "Which of your favorite stories would you like to see filmed," I'd be rich. The answer to this question, by the way, is, "None of them-- please!")

Also, sometimes the "unfilmable" turns out to be filmable after all. People said The English Patient was unfilmable. Mann saw the film version of Ulysses (the Joyce, not the Homer). There is also a supposedly good film of Finnegans Wake.

Someone in the audience said that PBS's Lathe of Heaven was fairly faithful to the Ursula K. LeGuin novel, and Sawicki added that they also did John Varley's "Overdrawn at the Memory Bank."

Mann said that as far as accurate television adaptations, he could recommend the BBC adaptation of The Day of the Triffids. I would also recommend their adaptation of The Invisible Man.

Someone asked for unfaithful, good movies. Kimmel said that Invasion of the Body Snatchers changed the novel a lot but is superior. Someone asked which version; Kimmel said he could defend any of them.

Ellen Asher, in the audience, said that someone once said, "The better the book as a work of art, the harder it is to be made into a movie." Mann somewhat disagreed, saying that Jane Austen has been made into good movies. Vinge added that she thought The Last Unicorn was also a good movie.

Someone recounted the story about what Tom Wolfe said when someone asked him what he thought of what they did to his novel The Bonfire of the Vanities. "They didn't do anything to my novel," Wolfe said. "It's still there on the shelf, the same as before."

Leeper said that was true, but if you read a novel after having seen a film, you'll never get the images out of your mind, so in a case the book has been changed.

Someone in the audience said that the anime *Lensman* was worst adaptation of a book he had seen. This led to mention of the Barrymore version of *Moby Dick*, although other recent literary adaptations (e.g., *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*) are giving it a run for its money. This led to a bit of a digression about how history is also treated rather cavalierly by the movies. One person said that no one goes to animated musicals for history, but another noted that's still where they learn it.

Someone asked, "What's the problem with translating a work to film? Who's to blame?" After all, William Gibson did *Johnny Mnemonic* himself, and Stephen King did several of his. But as Kimmel said, "The less King has to do with it, the better it will be as a movie." Someone in the audience claimed, "The song 'Firestarter' is better than either the movie or the book." Mann said that *The Shining* was a very good movie but not faithful to the book. The television version was more faithful to the book, but not as good. (See Kimmel's Rule, above.) Kimmel agreed, saying that a good adaptation will capture the essence, the core of a book. It was noted that a television version of *Huckleberry Finn* that eliminated Jim completely missed the core.

(My initial response is the question of whom to blame is that the audience is to blame because they're the ones driving this basically futile effort.)

Someone said that *The Princess Bride* was good, and that William Goldman wrote the screenplay. Ellen Asher said it was because it had the vitality of the performances. *The Martian Chronicles* was described as not entirely successful, though panelists thought that the mini-series format helped. Kimmel added that he thought that *Fahrenheit 451* was an interesting film.

In closing, Sawicki said, "I really wish that Hollywood or screenwriters would stop trying to adapt." Leeper said, "A film version of a novel is a labor-saving device." And Kimmel thought that Hollywood uses adaptation too much as a crutch.

## **Don't Forget These: Things to Remember at Hugo Nomination Time**

**Saturday, 6:00 PM**

**Don D'Amassa, John R. Douglas, Daniel Kimmel, Jim Mann (m)**

Description: [no description provided]

The panelists started with their "credentials." Douglas is an editor with HarperPrism (more on this later). D'Amassa reads a book a day. Kimmel is a self-described "media shill." Mann is a longtime fan, who began by encouraging people to nominate: "You should nominate even without knowing the whole field, but voting should be more informed."

Discussion proceeded by categories.

For novels, Douglas recommended Stephen Baxter's *Voyage* (not eligible; it was from 1996) and *Titan*, Greg Egan's *Distress* (also not eligible) and *Diaspora* (not yet released in the United States), Jack McDevitt's *Eternity Road*, and Walter Jon Williams's *City on Fire*. Just coincidentally, these were all published by HarperPrism. I have a feeling that Douglas didn't have a very good idea of what was expected. It understandable that he would think the novels he published good, but he should at least have known which were eligible. (He also later added Joe Haldeman's *Forever Peace*, not published by Harper Prism.)

D'Amassa also recommended Baxter's *Titan* and McDevitt's *Eternity Road*, as well as Elizabeth Hand's *The Glimmering*, Walter M. Miller's *Saint Leibowitz* and the *Wild Horse Woman*, Dan

Simmons's *The Rise of Endymion*, Brian Stableford's *Chimera's Cradle* (available only in a British edition), and Bentley Little's *The Ignored*.

Kimmel echoed Simmons's *The Rise of Endymion*, and added Joshua Dann's *Timeshare*. Mann said some of his were also already mentioned, but added Tim Powers's *Earthquake Weather* (a sequel to both *Last Call* and *Expiration Date*, two heretofore unrelated novels).

Someone in the audience recommended Charles Sheffield's *Tomorrow and Tomorrow*, I added John Kessel's *Corrupting Dr. Nice*, Robert J. Sawyer's *Frameshift*, and Michael Swanwick's *Jack Faust*.

Connie Willis's *To Say Nothing of the Dog* is apparently not eligible until next year. *Antarctica* by Kim Stanley Robinson is eligible this year, but hardly any Americans have read it. The same is true of Greg Egan's *Diaspora*. This led to a bit of a discussion of why these books appear in Britain first. Apparently British sales basically require selling the rights there first. If they're sold in the United States first, (illegal) imports completely undercut the British publishers' market.

For short fiction there were fewer recommendations. D'Amassa mentioned "Dust Motes" by Ian Van Belkom and David Nichol (in *On Spec*). Kimmel named Michael Burstein's "Broken Symmetry" (from *Analog*). I would recommend "Reasons to Be Cheerful" by Greg Egan (*March Interzone*), "The Adventure of the Inertial Adjustor" by Stephen Baxter (*The Mammoth Book of New Sherlock Holmes Adventures*), and "Fortune and Misfortune" by Lisa Goldstein (*May Asimov's*).

Non-Fiction books named included Vincent DiFate's *Infinite Worlds* (Mann), John Clute & John Grant's *Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (Douglas), *The St. James Guide to Fantasy Writers* (D'Amassa), and Melissa Scott's *Conceiving the Heavens* (audience).

The dramatic presentation category generated more discussion. Kimmel said that he is a *Babylon 5* fan, but "I think this is the year to give the show a rest." He felt that 1997 was a very good year for science fiction movies, with *Contact*, *Gattaca*, *Men in Black*, *Alien Resurrection*, and "The Invisible Girl" (on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*) the stand-outs. D'Amassa also liked *Buffy*, mentioned *Titanic* (not seriously, I hope--he claimed it was science fiction without the science fiction), and also suggested *Alien Resurrection*. Douglas liked *Alien Resurrection*, *Third Rock from the Sun* (but couldn't pick an episode), and *Millennium* (same). Mann said he hadn't seen *Gattaca* or *Buffy*, but recommended "The Postmodern Prometheus" (*The X-Files*) and "Rocks and Shoals" (*Star Trek: Deep Space 9*). I would recommend *Gattaca* and *Men in Black*.

Noticeably absent were *Starship Troopers* and *The Postman*.

Kimmel said he would like to see "The Lurker's Guide to *Babylon 5*" (from the Web) nominated, but no one could agree on a category. This is a real can of worms, yada, yada, yada.

For the John W. Campbell Award, Mann pointed out that Mary Doria Russell (*The Sparrow*) is eligible. D'Amassa added Kirsten Bakis's name (*Lives of the Monster Dogs*).

Finally, I will note that Kimmel named both Mark Leeper and myself as possibilities for Fan Writer.

Dinner was at the Bangkok Oriental Thai Restaurant, for which we had made reservations ahead of time. It was good, but had very slow service.

## **More Lies With Statistics**

**Saturday, 10:00 PM**  
**Michael F. Flynn (m)**

Description: [no description provided]

It's Saturday night at a convention, and there are at least a half dozen parties going. So where are we? At a statistics lecture. And there's at least two dozen more people with us.

Flynn is a professional consultant statistician, but he probably should be a teacher (though that would probably be a pay cut). His presentation is wonderful. His training comes through in his work as well, notably his Prometheus Award-winning *In the Country of the Blind*. His most recent novel is *Rogue Star*, and he has a story, "Rules of Engagement," in the *March Analog*.

This will be a somewhat spotty report: I'm not going to try to reproduce the whole talk, just some highlights.

He started by talking about an article on Memphis he saw in the *Wall Street Journal* that had a picture of the statue of Rameses II they have, alongside a picture of Elvis and one of Martin Luther King, Jr., with the whole thing labeled "Memphis--City of Kings."

He ran across this while he was looking for an article which reported a recent change in Texas. If you graduate in the top 10% of your high school class, you are eligible for college there. In some schools, 25% of students are in the top 10% of their class. Flynn said this was even stranger than Lake Wobegon (in which all the children are above average). Flynn said in educational statistics, all states report they are above average.

He talked about reading magazines such as *Machine Design* in his clients' waiting rooms: "You think *Analog* has rivets?"

He recapped his presentation on imported automobiles from last year, where contrary to the belief that their numbers rose sharply in 1973-1974 because of the gas crisis, their increase has been fairly steady since the 1950s.

"Where do these numbers come from?" The *Historical Statistics of the United States*, in particular the *Statistical Abstracts*. "Reading this proves several things. One, I don't have a life." Also, "like an *Analog* story, it doesn't have much plot or characterization, but the details are fascinating."

He defined regression analysis: "Can I draw a straight line through these points without laughing?"

"In the world of statistics, facts trump theories." Our impression of imports doesn't fit the data. This is also true for the data on women in the work force from 1880 on. Rosie the Riveter was a blip off the trend line (with an "assignable cause").

On the other hand, the correlation between working women and imported cars is 98%. This is a better correlation than between breast implants and cancer. Obviously to cut the number of imports, he said, we have to get the women back into the kitchen, barefoot and pregnant.

Moving on to current topics, Flynn noted that plotting the locations of announced icebergs near Titanic would have told them something. (He also mentioned that the second half of movie was in real time.) "Very few statisticians will play the lottery."

Flynn gave us a new "word wealth" word: quincunx. This is the way seats in movie theaters should be arranged. Quincunx is Latin for 5/12, and is how Roman legions lined up. (Flynn has no idea why 5/12 has anything to do with this.) The Greeks, on the other hand, used the phalanx ("a phalanx was a tank with a couple hundred legs"). The phalanx had to move crab-wise, and the spear throwers in the back rows were completely blocked by the people in front of them.

Anyway, returning to statistics, Flynn dropped some balls through a quincunx of pins, "aiming" for the center slot. Naturally, some missed. He asked the audience why. One man answered that it was caused by "a concatenation of small random factors." "What do you do for a living, sir?" Flynn asked. "I'm an economist." "Couldn't find honest work?"

Flynn described Corrective Action Report Forms that if you have to fill out when various processes occasionally fall outside the specifications, for a while you answer such questions as "What is the non-conformance?" (say, rolling more than 11 on a pair of dice), "What is the cause of the non-conformance?" (threw too hard), and "What is the corrective action?" (throw softer), followed by "engineering qualification tests." But eventually you lie, because "your momma didn't raise no stupid kids."

"Life is a tug-of-war between Munchkins." It only stops being random if you add Arnold Schwarzenegger to one side.

"Bell curves go to infinity, and no real life process goes that long except waiting for an editor."

There are other distribution patterns: Poisson distribution, bathtub curve, log-normal curve.

Godel's proof implies "if a religion is any body of statements that relies on an act of faith, arithmetic is the only religion with a rigorous proof that it is a religion." In a random process, trying to compensate creates even more variation (positive feedback).

Every process has built into it an inherent degree of variation. When you see variation in excess of the natural variation, you know that "Flynn was fiddling with the funnel." Only assignable causes are subject to a solution.

Regarding Federal spending, Flynn noted that all measures are tied to standards except the dollar, and digressed into the old German system which said his grandmother was "5 shoe, 2 thumb" (5 feet, 2 inches).

The Budget Reform Act of 1974 forced the President to spend allocated moneys, and this opened up the budget gap. A graph shows current balanced budget is just the result of the trends, not anything being done to achieve it.

In graphs, watch out for the scale of the graph.

"A thousand theories wither before a single fact"

At 11 PM, the next group came in, but we didn't want to leave. One person said, "I'm from Minneapolis, it's only 10, keep going." And someone else attempted to gather data: "Who really thinks it's 11?"

But we did have to leave. I went to the Orlando in 2001 party, where I ended up in a discussion of who would make good Guests of Honor for upcoming Worldcons.

Reviewer vs. Writer: The Reviewer Strikes Back Sunday, 12:00 N - Don D'Amassa, Thomas A. Easton (m), Joe Mayhew

Description: "So many panels involve writers getting a chance to talk about critics. This panel takes the other side, and the reviewers get their turn."

This was a series of questions for the panelists.

"When was the last time someone tried to bribe you with body or boodle?"

Mayhew said it was more that people come up and try to be your buddy ("suck up"), and the others pretty much agreed.

"When was the last time somebody threatened you with mayhem?"

D'Ammassa said it did happen. And he had even given a good review but mentioned the high level of sexual content. He got a letter (saying "how dare you express your personal opinions in a review?") which threatened physical mayhem if he ever reviewed another of the author's books.

Mayhew said he hadn't had physical threats, but he did get strong language (especially from Gregory Feeley). He tends to not review books he doesn't like, so that may skew the sample.

Easton said he was threatened with tar-and-feathering by Robert Adams (who, like Norman, wrote as a displacement mechanism, according to Easton). Easton says some authors do say, "I'm going to tell my publisher never to send you another book."

Mayhew says sometimes it's the opposite; people say, "Why didn't you review my book? I gave you a copy." D'Ammassa said that Harlan Ellison once demanded all his review copies back from Don. (He didn't get them.) According to Easton, one problem is that "we forget we trashed X's book and wonder why he is mean to us."

"Who is the most difficult to review?"

D'Ammassa said Ursula K. LeGuin. Mayhew said Gene Wolfe (too close a friend) and Jack Chalker (too close a friend and Mayhew doesn't like the category Chalker writes in). D'Ammassa said that he does give bad reviews to friends (such as Paul DiFilippo and Michael Bishop).

"Is there anyone you won't review?" and "How do we choose what we review?"

Mayhew won't review highly technical science fiction, and also there are some people he doesn't want to get mixed up with.

Easton won't refuse a book based on the author, but will sometimes based on the book. D'Ammassa agreed, but made an exception for Shatner, refusing to review his books because of "the inherent dishonesty of it." Mayhew selects by word-of-mouth.

"Has an editor or publisher ever tried to get you fired by threatening to yank ads?"

Mayhew said yes: Bridge Publications pulled ads over his review of Battlefield Earth. Easton said Baen had pulled ads for a while based on a review. D'Ammassa didn't know of any cases with his reviews, but said that Baen had sent him books that were already out of print when they sent them.

Speaking of other reviewers and critics, Mayhew said, "I really respect John Clute even if I don't understand him." He said that critics write about books you've read, and made the distinction that reviewers say how books will fit in your mind, but critics will say how they fit into literature.

>From the audience, Lilly asked about showing the author a bad review so he can respond. The panelists recommended against this, though they felt running a response from the author in the next issue not unreasonable.

"Have you ever aroused religious or political ire?" D'Ammassa and Easton both mentioned Bridge Publications, but what they described seemed more publisher's ire than any sort of religious or

political pressure/fall-out. Mayhew said he generated political ire over Gingrich's and Fortschen's 1945. (He jokingly--I think--said that having the villain named Mayhew didn't help his attitude any.)

Miscellaneous discussion followed. D'Ammassa said that he reviewed Alexei Panshin's Earthlords based on the magazine serial, but the book had totally different ending. Mayhew admitted that he will engage in hyperbole to get you to read books he likes. And the panelists agreed that if you're given a book by the author, you have some obligation to at least try it.

## **The Single Book Series: Are There Still Stand-Alone Novels?**

**Sunday, 1:00 PM**

**Michael L. Moscoe, Steven Sawicki, Melissa Scott**

Description: [no description provided]

Sawicki is a reviewer. Scott said she wrote a series by mistake. Moscoe wrote the "Lost Millennium" series (trilogy), and there will be another trilogy after this.

Moscoe said that he was a Navy brat, and transient, so he wants to hold on to friends and his books are his friends. (I would note that there is a term for the psychological state of constantly working on something and not being able to declare it finished, but I can't remember what it is.)

Scott said that her series came about because she "couldn't finish the story in the space of a novel." She wished it were otherwise, because she said she had made choices in first book that were excruciating by the third novel. Her novel Dreamships was a stand-alone novel, but the social problem in it was not resolved so another novel (Dreaming Metal) was written about that.

Moscoe said that he had been told you couldn't sell more than a 400-page first manuscript (100,000 words), so he didn't want to write one very long novel. He also had 160 pages of recruiting and training chopped out of the first book. (It shows--lots of references remain that appear to refer back to this.) He also said his questions ("Who deserves to be helped? How do you help people?") needed more than one book.

Sawicki noted there were differences between "incidental series" and "planned series." Scott added that there is also another kind of series with a single protagonist who is not the emotional center; there are many mystery series like this, with a continuing character as the detective, but she couldn't think of any science fiction series that did this other than short stories. People in the audience named E. C. Tubb's "Dumarest" series, Harry Harrison's "Stainless Steel Rat" series, and Keith Laumer's "Retief" series.

There was some discussion of how books are labeled. For example, Moscoe's books don't say they are a trilogy: they just say "Book X of the Lost Millennium." To me (and others) this implied that order mattered, but we had no idea when the series was finished.

Scott said, "On a personal esthetic level I prefer single books, and [because of that] it's what I'd rather be writing."

One problem in a series is how you give the new reader information without alienating the return reader with repetition? Moscoe said that one thing he did was to change the point of view for the various novels.

There was a lot of discussion of the whole marketing problem. Many people don't want to read a series until all the books are out, but by the time the last comes out, the first has vanished. Other people don't want to commit to buying some unspecified (or even specified) number of books for a



single story.

Some publishers will take a long novel and just chop it into pieces. Scott said that Baen probably won't let you write a transition paragraph, but some publishers will.

The panelists agreed that readers need to let the publishers know why they aren't buying the books, not just to stop buying them.

Someone in the audience referred about "the question of Jordanitis" (excess verbiage).

The panelists were asked if publishers pressure people to do series? Some do, but agents will do this more often than publishers.

## **Do They Keep Kosher on Mars? Does SF Handle Religious Traditions Well?**

**Sunday, 2:00 PM**

**Michael A. Burstein (m), Nomi Burstein, Elisabeth Carey, Josepha Sherman**

Description: [no description provided]

This was in one of the smaller rooms, probably because it was towards the end of the convention and people figured the attendance was winding down. Wrong--it was mobbed, standing room only.

N. Burstein figured she was on the panel because someone in Programming said, "Well, Nomi keeps kosher." Sherman wrote Vulcan's Forge, which had two Jewish starship captains. Carey said she was the token Christian.

The first question the panelists asked was, "Which religious traditions?"

Carey said that she would start with a great broad generality: science fiction does terribly with religious traditions. This is reflected in how religion is portrayed as illogical and bad, Carey said, and its leaders as frauds and its followers dupes. For example, in John Brunner's Maze of Stars "every colony has a religious establishment that is utterly destructive to the sustaining of human life on that planet." And there was one where every person enters into a contract with their various organs. (M. Burstein asked, "What about their pianos and guitars?" Sherman added, "Hello, spleen?")

Sherman thought the answer to whether science fiction treated religious traditions fairly was "Yes and no; it depends." There is some fair treatment in fantasy, perhaps more than science fiction.

N. Burstein echoed, "Yes and no; it depends. No, in that from the Jewish perspective since we have funny names for things, they become joke names for people. On the other side, we have people who actually care." She said she also tends to get really hyper about how Judaism is handled in print. People often get it wrong. Frameshift did it well, because Robert Sawyer asked the Bursteins to go over the manuscript. The recent story "Jew on a Chip" cuts major corners on how and why things are done (e.g., one rabbi gets a power of attorney from other two rabbis for a conversion, which would never happen). While she understands why the author did this, it was a dangerous subject to touch in a short story. Sherman advised, "If you're going to play in someone else's culture, you have to show respect for their culture" and ask about it.

M. Burstein said that he "want[s] to say the answer is yes, but it really depends." Science fiction is very skittish when it comes to religious traditions. Fantasy is less so. In science fiction, people look at science as the main religion. There are some exceptions. For example, Harry Turtledove in "The

R-Strain" in Analog a while ago wrote about a kosher pig. Steven Burns (in "Leap") had a Catholic priest. In general, the more religious the writer, the more respect you'll see. M. Burstein mentioned that he was working on a novel with the main character a scientist who is also an Orthodox Jew.

Panelists agreed that there is a problem with having to explain things to the reader. M. Burstein said that you can't footnote "except for Analog." N. Burstein said, "It's the people who think they know who are the problem."

Carey gave an example from another tradition: Christopher Stasheff has the Catholic Church accepting evolution in the 21st Century, but they already have, even back as long ago as to 1912.

Not everyone knows about what we think of as the major religious traditions, especially in the global market. For example, N. Burstein said that she has had Japanese ask her how Jews celebrate Easter.

The panelists talked about having "religious characters" just in passing rather than as the main focus. Someone once asked Isaac Asimov, "Why are there no Jewish characters in your stories?" Asimov thought a moment and replied, "They all are."

I suggested that if we no longer ask why a character is black or Chinese, why do we ask why he is Jewish?

Some science fiction novels deal with artificial religions. For example, there was Robert A. Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land* with its Fosterite Church and the Church of All Worlds. N. Burstein explained this by saying, "If you make it up, you don't have to worry about offending anyone."

Carey said, "I find a complete absence of religion more disturbing in a fantasy world [than in a science fiction world]." (Perhaps this reflects the idea that science is a sort of religion-surrogate.)

I asked about Harry Turtledove's *Case of the Toxic Spell Dump*. Only Sherman had read it, and she remembered only the puns. Someone else mentioned *Contact*, and one of the panelists said that Orson Scott Card had disliked the portrayal of faith in the film version.

Distinctions were made between "religious" versus "spiritual," and "religious" versus "observant." N. Burstein said that non-observant Jews are still Jews: "We'll let in but we won't let you out." In reference to this, Sherman said (jokingly), "Jews never argue with each other." N. Burstein jumped in, "Yes, we do," to which Sherman countered, "No, we don't."

There are things in science fiction that have a religious feel to them, e.g., science, or the American patriotism in *The Postman*. (This leads into the concept that we in the United States have a civil religion; Mordecai Kaplan, the founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, thought so.)

Someone mentioned the "Wandering Stars" anthologies, though Fred Lerner (in the audience) expressed the thought that these are more in the nature of Jewish ethnic jokes than serious extrapolations of religious belief. There is rumored to be a third one in the works. Other "religious" anthologies of note include *Tales of the Wandering Jew* edited by Brian M. Stableford and *Perpetual Light* edited by Alan Ryan.

The question was asked, "Does religion start from a lack of understanding or from a need?" but the panelists couldn't agree on an answer. They did agree that science and religion were not incompatible. Carey said she liked *Hyperion* and *Fall Of Hyperion*, with a reference to Saint Teilhard which foreshadowed the end of the latter book. And Sherman said that the Pope's astronomer lives in Tucson and goes to science fiction conventions.

N. Burstein said that she "would hope that a trend of well-thought-out religious characters would emerge" and referred back to my comment about characters being black or Chinese without that being a big deal.

Strangely, on a panel on the treatment of religious traditions in science fiction, no one mentioned Mary Doria Russell's Sparrow, James Blish's Case of Conscience, Walter M. Miller, Jr.'s Canticle for Leibowitz, or anything by James Morrow.

## **Australian and New Zealand Science Fiction and Fantasy**

**Comments by Evelyn C. Leeper  
(revised for Boskone 35)**

### **State of the Genre: Australian and Far East SF/F**

**LoneStarCon 2, Friday, August 29, 1997, 2 PM  
Russell Blackford, Jim Frenkel, Yoshio Kobayashi (moderator)**

[I have edited out the comments about Japanese and Chinese science fiction, but left in those about New Zealand, since--for better or worse--that is usually implied when Australian science fiction is mentioned. It's sort of like Canadian science fiction being often considered a branch of United States science fiction, as distinguished from British or Australian.]

Blackford is writing a history of Australian science fiction with Sean McMullen and someone else to be published here in 1999.

In the 1980s there were a few successful writers and a few small presses, but nothing conspicuous. The major writers were Damien Broderick, Lee Harding, and George Turner. Turner died earlier this year, Harding has pretty much left the field, and Broderick recently wrote *The White Abacus*, and a non-fiction work, *The Spike* (from Reed Publishing in Australia).

New major writers include Greg Egan, Terry Dowling, Sean McMullen. (I would recommend Peter McNamara's collection of Australian short science fiction, *Alien Shores*.) And HarperCollins Australia and other major publishers are publishing science fiction and fantasy. But not all authors have "crossed the water." For example, one big author there not heard of here is Martin Middleton.

Frenkel added Stephen Dedman as a major Australian writer. Lucy Sussex is another writer who has talked about the problems of publishers and distributors. Paul Collins, Leanne Frahm, Tess Williams (*The Map of Power*, which Frenkel heard as *The Mop of Power*, leading him to say, "I see visions of Mickey Mouse"), Rosaleen Love, and her daughter Penelope Love. He spoke more about Terry Dowling, who "is known in the United States as the great unknown Australian science fiction writer." And A. Bertram Chandler was one of the early forebears.

Frenkel added that we need to talk about "the kiwis": Philip Mann, Cherry Wilder, Lynn McConachie and others. There was an anthology of New Zealand science fiction recently called *Rutherford's Dreams*. *Tales Of The Antipodes* is another good "Down Under" anthology. *Dreaming Down Under* edited by Jack Dann will be coming out soon.

Blackford added Sean Williams and Sara Douglass as Australian authors. *Aurealis* and *Eidolon* are the two major magazines. He thought there is a disproportionate emphasis on heroic fantasy in Australia, and said that Egan has said (in an article in *Eidolon*), "We've got to stop searching for this mystical quality of Australianism in our writing."

Frenkel said that the big news of the next few years will be the struggle of publishers and distributors in Australia.

Additional note: The recent publication of *The Year's Best Australian Science Fiction and Fantasy, Volume 1* edited by Jonathan Strahan and Jeremy G. Byrne gives readers a chance to see what's new and exciting from "Down Under." It includes stories by Russell Blackford, Damien Broderick, Simon Brown, Isobelle Carmody, Jack Dann, Marele Day, Stephen Dedman, Sara Douglass, Terry Dowling, Greg Egan, Beverley MacDonald, Lucy Sussex, Andrew Whitmore, Cherry Wilder and Sean Williams and is available from <http://www.bookworm.com.au> for A\$22.95 plus \$A11.50 for economy air, or about US\$22.50 total for a trade paperback--cheaper if you open an account or order other books to spread out the postage costs

## **ALIEN SHORES edited by Peter McNamara and Margaret Winch**

**Aphelion, ISBN 1-875346-09-0, 1994, 603pp, A\$19.95**  
**A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper**

Five years ago, I asked, "What country has as many English speakers as Canada, has hosted two World Science Fiction Conventions, has produced one of the definitive reference works on science fiction, and still gets forgotten when people talk about science fiction authors?" The answer? Australia. (Except now it's two of the definitive reference works.)

*Alien Shores* is the tenth book from Aphelion Press, which is (as far as I can tell) the leading Australian publisher of science fiction. This anthology of twenty-nine stories, twenty-two of them original to this volume, is an overview of Australian science fiction today, and a varied and fascinating field it is.

I will not attempt to review every story, but will comment on the ones I found most memorable. "First contact" is a popular theme, perhaps because of all the English-speaking countries, Australia has gone through its own "first contact" period the most recently. George Turner, certainly one of the major lights of the Southern hemisphere, has a new variation on the theme in "Flowering Mandrake," and "The Miocene Arrow" by Sean McMullen is another variation, albeit less obviously so, and several other stories deal either with first contact, or other alien contact. (I was going to say "interracial" contact, but that term has been hijacked. For that matter, even talking about aliens is not always clear.)

Australia may be far away from the United Kingdom and the United States, but it's not isolated. "The Soap Bubble" by Sean Williams tells me that "Star Trek" has reached Australia and influenced at least one writer. "Crash Jordan in the Art World of Drongo" by Jeff Harris likewise testifies to the presence of Flash Gordon stories. Leanne Frahm's "Land's End" seems to follow in the tradition of disaster stories such as those written by J. G. Ballard and then George Turner, having the indescribably Australian feel of the latter. Sue Isle's "Kill Me Once" also follows a long tradition, then one going back to a certain Irish author.

Bill Dodds's "Mnemonic Plague" is a science fiction murder mystery of the sort one would have found in *Analog* in the 1950s--or even today. Simon Brown's "Rain from the New God" is another story that echoes the 1950s, but more stories of alien contact than of the future as here; "The Magi" by Damien Broderick is another religiously-themed story that does involve alien contact.

For alternate histories fans (like me), Lucy Sussex's "Kay & Phil" is a real treat: an alternate history within an alternate history about alternate histories. Sound complicated? Just read it.

"The Caress" by Greg Egan deals with the lengths some people will go to in their appreciation of art, and shows why Egan is one of the rising stars on today's science fiction scene. Stephen Dedman also looks at the demands of art (along with first contact) in "The Desired Dragons." And "The Last Lion in Africa" by Geoffrey Maloney looks at the whole idea of "sense of wonder" from the other side.

While I'm not going to nominate any of the stories for Hugos, it's primarily because most of the ones I rated very highly are in the subset that have appeared previously. There are certainly several stories that I would not be distressed to see on the ballot, though given the relative unavailability of Alien Shores to the general reader in the United States (and one suspects in the United Kingdom as well) I would be surprised. Nevertheless, for once the back blurb on a book is accurate: "A Landmark Collection of Australian Science Fiction." I highly recommend it.

(In the United States, Alien Shores and other Aphelion books could be ordered from Mark V. Zeising, P. O. Box 76, Singletown CA 96088, at the time I wrote this review [1995]. Now you should write first, or try <http://www.bookworm.com.au>.)

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## Japanese Non-Kaiju Science Fiction and Fantasy

List compiled by Mark Leeper  
for Boskone 35

Vocabulary note: Kaiju is the name given to the genre of monster movies.

Kaiju is Japanese for "monster." The films listed here have no giant monsters or in a few cases have only a minor appearance of one. I include The Mysterians and Gorath, but do not include Majin films, all of which have only a brief appearance of a golem-like avenging giant statue. Majin is the point of a Majin film where the monsters in the other two are only minor plot complication.

Horror:

- | Ghost Stories [ghosts are generally just figures demanding justice):
- | Rashomon [1950], (non-horror)
- | Ugetsu [1953], (non-horror)
- | Throne Of Blood [1957] (Macbeth)
- | Ghost Of Yotsuya [1959, etc.]
- | Kwaidan [1964]
- | Onibaba [1964]
- | Miscellaneous:
- | Matango/Attack of the Mushroom People [1963]
- | Lake of Dracula [1971]
- | Evil of Dracula [1975]

Science Fiction:

Space Threat:

- | The Mysterians [1957] (invaders, kaiju: mechanized Godzilla complete with fins and heavy legs)
- | Battle In Outer Space [1959] (invaders)
- | Gorath [1962] (colliding worlds, kaiju: giant walrus in domestic version)
- | The Green Slime [1968]
- | The War In Space [1977]

- | Solar Crisis [1990] (earth in chaos as nova approaches, final sequence a genuine jaw- dropper)
- | Transformed humans:
- | The H-Man [1958] (liquid)
- | Human Vapor [1960] (gas)
- | The Secret of the Telegian [1960] (TV signal)
- | World Situation Warnings
- | The Final War [1960]
- | The Last War [1961]
- | Goke, Body Snatcher from Hell [1968] (weird, weird, weird, with alien invaders, vampires)

Superhero:

- | Starman [1957] (serial edited into four films):
- | Attack from Space [1957]
- | Prince of Space/Invaders From Space [1959]
- | Evil Brain from Outer Space [1964]
- | Atomic Rulers [1964]
- | Miscellaneous:
- | The Manster [1961] (man fissions)
- | Terror Beneath the Sea [1966] (underwater cyborgs)
- | Black Lizard [1968] (crime with horror touches)
- | Submersion of Japan/Tidal Wave [1973] (disaster and homeland love)
- | The Last Days of Planet Earth [1974] (Nostradamus prophecies come true)
- | Time of the Apes [1975] (imitation of Planet of the Apes)
- | Message from Space [1978] (space fantasy with ship-like spaceship)
- | The Ivory Ape [1980]
- | Virus [1980]
- | The Guyver [1991]

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