

Philcon 2005
A convention report by Evelyn C. Leeper
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Table of Contents:

- | [Frivolous Literary Theory as an Artform](#)
- | [Trends of Science Fiction and Fantasy in the Media](#)
- | [Livin' La Vida Dorka: How to Live a Fannish Life](#)
- | [Art Show Reception](#)
- | [Creative Book Collecting . . . Knowing When to Let Them Go \(for a price\)](#)
- | [Real Places as Settings](#)
- | [Does the Hugo Still Mean Anything?](#)
- | [Alternate Histories That Are Not about War](#)
- | [The Great Summer Slump of 2005](#)
- | [The Past and Future of Philip K. Dick Adaptations](#)
- | [The Controversy of Director's Cuts: Rewriting the Past](#)
- | [Masquerade](#)
- | [The Call of Cthulhu](#)
- | [Hot New Writers \(you have not heard of yet\)](#)
- | [Alternate Historical Vampire Cat Detectives](#)
- | [Outer Limits vs. Twilight Zone](#)
- | [Miscellaneous](#)

Philcon was held once again (though for the last time) at the Marriott in Philadelphia December 9 through 12. (Next year it moves to the Wyndham a few blocks away. I have no idea if John Wyndham will be a featured author in honor of this.) Attendance was supposedly up from last year, though no one had any figures. However, one person said that the increase was due to a lot of students who got in for a student rate and then spent all their time in gaming or anime. The hope is that next year they may try out other parts of the convention, but I'm skeptical.

As is becoming all too common, our hotel room was not ready when we arrived about 4PM. (We had arrived in Philadelphia earlier, but took the self-guiding tour of the Mint first.) So we killed about an hour registering for the convention and so on, and then got our room. (This is better than Noreascon 4 a couple of years ago, where we didn't get our room until 9 PM!)

The Dealers Room seemed even skimpier than last year, and a lot of the art show panels were empty. (The storm Friday morning may have had something to do with this, though I also heard that a lot of people did not like the December date. Next year Philcon is moving back to November.)

The Green Room had no clock. Also, because of the high cost of hotel coffee, there was coffee only in the morning. The rest of the time soda (not from the hotel) was available--a reasonable way to save money.

There was only one table for each of the panels, which was fine for three people or even four, but a five-person panel did not have enough room. Someone said it was because of another convention being held there (displaced from New Orleans), but I would expect the hotel to get extra tables if they need them.

As was true last year, panelists got one name card which they were supposed to carry with them the entire convention. Unfortunately, these cards were fourteen inches long, making it difficult to carry them without getting them mangled. (The excuse for the length was that they could print the long names large enough to be read easily, but the fact that people stopped carrying the cards meant that ultimately it was harder to tell who the panelists were.)

I would like to see a rule that authors, literary agents, publishers, etc., may plug only one book when they introduce themselves. One literary agent was particularly egregious, showing jackets for eight or ten different books that had nothing to do with the panel topic in his introduction.

Frivolous Literary Theory as an Artform

Friday, 7:00 PM

Andrew Wheeler (mod), "Scratch" Bacharach, Ken Gallagher, Darrell Schweitzer

Description: "On the spot literary theories . . . as funny as deconstructionism, or as unlikely as Swinburne wrote Kipling -- can we with a straight face discuss hamster ((?)) theory in THE MOTE IN GOD'S EYE?"

Estimated attendance: 14 people

Schweitzer said that his book *WINDOWS OF THE IMAGINATION* had a chapter on how to create a frivolous literary theory. He also said that supposedly literary theories could be complete nonsense as long as they worked. (It was not clear to me what "working" means in this context.)

For example, he proposed the theory that Matthew G. ("Monk") Lewis wrote all the works of Edgar Allan Poe. Lewis had a brief career before Poe, but then died at sea. When they pushed the coffin overboard, it did not sink. Schweitzer proposes that Poe found the coffin and when he opened it, he discovered it contained all of Lewis's unpublished manuscripts. He then gradually published them as his own, and the reason that Poe's writing "came apart" at the end (according to this theory) is because Lewis's manuscripts ran out.

Bacharach asked about applying frivolous theories to other media. Schweitzer said of course you could do that, interpreting "Gilligan's Island" as "The Tempest", or applying Aristotle to "Buffy, the Vampire Slayer" and seeing what comes out (although he called this "the train wreck of imagination").

Wheeler said, "After a couple of decades of deconstructionism, the world is ripe for reconstructionism." He described reconstructionism as taking all sorts of bits and pieces and combining them. Schweitzer said that "the basic premise [of deconstructionism] is that nothing means anything." Wheeler said that a better definition was that no one reading is more correct than another. Schweitzer said that the triumph of deconstructionism would be when "the Mafia makes you an offer you can't understand." But Bacharach insisted, "Where the planet is going today demands reconstructionism." And Wheeler said the movement called the "New Weird" is in fact pushing reconstructionism.

Schweitzer said that these days the mainstream (or perhaps slipstream) is really "Fantasy Lite". He explained the difference between the various genres by saying, "If the voice in the vagina is caused by demonic possession, that is fantasy. If the voice in the vagina is caused by aliens, that is science fiction. If no one cares, that is magical realism."

Schweitzer proposed another theory: that Robert E. Howard faked his suicide and became L. Ron Hubbard. Schweitzer also said that we know that Hubbard is dead because when he was alive he had enough power to make the Church of Scientology promote his science fiction, which was not to their benefit. So if he were still alive, it would be in the interest of the Church to kill him.

Gallagher mentioned Michael Rosenberg's *NAKED IS THE BEST DISGUISE* as having "really preserved the ambiguity" of whether it is a frivolous literary theory or not. Schweitzer mentioned Philip Jose Farmer's fictional genealogy tree, which includes everyone -- Tarzan, Sherlock Holmes,

and just about every other famous fictional character.

Schweitzer then proposed another theory: not that Christopher Marlowe had written William Shakespeare's works, but that Shakespeare wrote Marlowe's works as Marlowe's cover, while Marlowe was busy spying. He pointed out that works of Shakespeare and Marlowe that appeared simultaneously are at similar stages of development.

Returning to deconstructionism, Bacharach claimed that Sam Clemens was a deconstructionist, to which Schweitzer replied, "He was more a demolitionist." But deconstructionism, Schweitzer noted, was more about methods of reading, not writing.

Wheeler proposed a theory that Isaac Asimov's "Robot" stories are a coded defense of necrophilia. An audience member said that we "need to throw in some consideration" of the golem into this theory.

Gallagher said that it is sometimes hard to distinguish frivolous literary theories from real ones. He said that he had read a real article on "The Arthurian Element in M. Night Shyamalan's 'The Sixth Sense'".

Someone in the audience commented that it made more sense to have a theory that some higher-ranked person wrote Shakespeare's works, because Shakespeare was uneducated. But Schweitzer said this lack of education actually supports Shakespeare as the author, observing that Philip Sydney and Lord Dunsany were the only English peers who wrote well. On the other hand, Frederick Pohl never finished high school. So Schweitzer suggested the theory that Henry Wallace and Ted Kennedy wrote all of Pohl's material.

Wheeler said that the aristocracy needs to prove themselves. Bacharach said, "Asimov was so educated, he couldn't have written what he wrote." He then asked if there was theory in Soviet science fiction. Many people responded that of course there was: socialist realism.

Wheeler suggested, "Any literary theory is frivolous," because it is trying to shoe-horn many works into one mold. Schweitzer said that literary theories are retrospective and usually apply to the theorist's own work. They are, he said, "historical and descriptive, not predictive."

Wheeler noted that this year's manifesto is "mundane science fiction."

Schweitzer said that in academia, over time professors are replaced by their students. His professors thought that serious literature was about poor people, although fantasy before 1900 was allowed. But, he noted, "Philip K. Dick is now literature." Also, he added, "No professor would ever have imagined that H. P. Lovecraft would be in Library of America." And J. R. R. Tolkien has overturned English literature criticism. Wheeler said it is still the case that while pop culture programs take science fiction seriously, English departments do not. Bacharach said that science fiction is taken seriously in high schools, probably because it is a way to get kids to read. This may be a frivolous literary theory, but it works.

On the other hand, Schweitzer said that popular books speak to their time, and may not age well. Wheeler said that 19th century writers were more verbose. Ironically, because of this they tend to explain everything and so are more readable than many 20th century writers. Bacharach observed that Charles Dickens and William Thackeray also concentrated on plot, which helps the readers as well. Schweitzer pointed out that Henry James and Arthur Conan Doyle wrote for the same magazines as each other and had the same audience.

Trends of Science Fiction and Fantasy in the Media
Friday, 8:00 PM
Mark Leeper (mod), Myke Cole, Robert Jeschonek, Ray Ridenour

Description: "The first 6 chapters of the 'Star Wars' story have been told. The proper king of Gondor now sits on the throne. The world of 'Star Trek' is on hold for now. Is LOST, DR. WHO, and STAR GATE the future of Science Fiction? Panelists will discuss the future of science fiction on TV and in the movies and what influences are shaping the genre. Is retro SF like SKY CAPTAIN AND THE WORLD OF TOMORROW next? What trends are we seeing overseas?"

Estimated attendance: 20 people

("Jeschonek" is pronounced "je-SHON-ek" and "Ridenour" is pronounced "RIDE-en-hour".)

Leeper pointed out that in addition to "Lord of the Rings", "Star Wars", and "Star Trek", the "Godzilla" movies have also come to a conclusion. On the other hand, a new "Dr. Who" has just started.

Jeschonek said he is hoping to see lots of suspense that keeps you guessing. This is a new trend, coming from movies like THE SIXTH SENSE, MEMENTO, and others. Leeper said that the mystery in "Babylon 5" was what kept him coming back every week.

Ridenour saw a growing emphasis on interpersonal relationships. Then again, he notes that a lot of this is really soap opera, which needs interpersonal relationships.

(I wonder if the widening range of styles and structures is affecting all media?)

Jeschonek said that everything was darker and grittier overall, and there is more realism. What you see is "not the perfect Boy Scout man of the future like you see in 'Star Trek'."

Ridenour said he expects more film noir and more splatter punk. Leeper expects more emphasis on "the arc" in television series. The arc is not new: "Colditz" and other British series had arcs a long time ago. Ridenour said that a lot of shows had references to a back-story. Leeper added that there was an arc in "Dark Shadows" (but of course that was a soap opera). Someone in the audience mentioned "Hill Street Blues" and "L. A. Law" as some of the first prime-time shows that had arcs, and said that VCRs made arcs possible because people no longer missed episodes.

Someone distinguished between arcs and story lines in soap operas, saying that arcs have a planned start and end, whereas soap operas just go. Someone else said that Chris Carter had no "bible" for "The X-Files", which is why that story "arc" went so badly.

Leeper pointed out that there is no longer the strong teenage audience for movies that there has been for many years, but we will continue to have super-hero films. Ridenour said that the movies are embracing more fantasy, and there is also a breakdown of categories. (This was always true to a small extent, with THE NATURAL and COCOON being accepted as mainstream films rather than fantasy or science fiction.) Ridenour suggested that this might be because "geek culture is mainstream culture."

Ridenour said that these days "the McGuffin is supreme," citing shows such as "Lost" and "Kolchak". (To me, this seems like the tail is wagging the dog.)

Leeper said that hard times lead to escapism, such as the Universal horror cycle that started during the Depression.

Someone in the audience said that everyone in Hollywood is rushing to be the second person to do something.

I observed that one trend seemed to be that all the leads are all young. In the original "Kolchak", Darren McGavin seemed to be in his late thirties, while in the new show there are a bunch of young twerps.

Someone said that the show "Supernatural" seemed like the old "Kolchak", while the new "Kolchak" seemed more like "The X-Files". (Someone in the audience said that the old "Kolchak" had a Chandler-esque feel with the voice-overs and such.)

One trend someone else in the audience mentioned was that movies are more based on existing works than on original scripts.

Livin' La Vida Dorka: How to Live a Fannish Life
Friday, 9:00 PM

Trina E. King (mod), Rob Balder, Evelyn Leeper, Kristen Nelson

Description: "Your co-workers invite you for a drink after work, but you want to head home to catch the new 'SciFi Friday' episodes. Your new girlfriend's family asks you about your recent vacation . . . how do you tell them it was to Dragon*Con? And how do you explain it to them without frightening them? How do you balance your 'fan life' with your 'real life'? We'll try to come up with a few suggestions for you."

Estimated attendance: 22 people

As usual, I did not take very good notes, and since I am writing this a month later, I cannot remember much. It did seem as though the rest of the people on the panel were connected in some professional capacity to science fiction et al: Nelson did anime voice-overs and Balder worked on web comics, filk, and zines. I seemed to be the only "pure" fan there, but since I worked for Bell Laboratories, being a fan (or a geek, or a dork, or a nerd) was not a major problem.

Art Show Reception

Has anyone ever figured out how to eat and drink at a reception where there are no tables to sit down at? In one's left hand, one holds the plate, in one's right hand one holds the glass, and in one's gripping hand . . . well, even though it *is* a science fiction convention, I do not think that will work.

(Actually, I mentioned this on a mailing list and was sent the following URLs, which has a product to solve this: <http://tinyurl.com/eeaq8> and <http://www.imageryproducts.com/buffet.shtml>. For those who don't want to go check, they are for plates with a cut-out that allows your wine glass to hang from it. I don't expect to see convention hotels start stocking them, but if I saw one in a dollar store, I'd pick it up to bring when I expect the occasion to arise.)

Creative Book Collecting . . . Knowing When to Let Them Go (for a price)
Saturday, 10:00 AM

Michael J. Walsh (mod), Lawrence M. Schoen

Description: "Going 'public' with well-loved but possibly expensive editions."

Estimated attendance: 4 people

With three of the scheduled five panelists missing and only four people in the audience, there was more interaction between the panelists and the audience than there might otherwise be.

Schoen started by saying that contrary to usual descriptions, the Klingon Language Institute is not a fan club, it is an academic society. Walsh, however, saw a certain level of OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder) in publishing "Hamlet" in Klingon.

Schoen said that he buys only first edition hardbacks. I asked what he does if he wants to read something that is not available in hardback (or presumably too expensive, such as Edgar Allan Poe would be). He does actually buy paperbacks or other non-first editions, but he does not collect them. He also said that Easton Press books are way too expensive new, but can be found on ebay for \$30 instead of \$75. He says that he keeps books because it gives him pleasure to see them on his shelves.

Walsh said he keeps books for their emotional connections to the past.

In talking about autographed copies, Walsh said that Bob Shaw got tired of seeing books he had signed for friends showing up in used book shops, so he started signing them (e.g.) "To Lawrence, in memory of that night of passion--Bob Shaw."

He also said that when it came to signing, Neil Gaiman, Terry Pratchett, and Brian Lumley seem to have incredible endurance. (I was just reading in BOOKNOTES that Colin Powell said that he uses a "Sharpie" to sign because it does not require a lot of effort to write a bold, clear signature.)

In terms of recommendations, there was not much new. Use , , and to get an idea of a book's value. If you cannot find your book listed this tells you something--it is either rare, or you are typing wrong. Sell on ebay. (Although I have been reading that the sell-through rates for books is about 40%, and even that requires re-listings.)

Schoen mentioned a web site, , which has instructions for how to ship books at no charge to you to personnel in the Iraq.

Real Places as Settings Saturday, 11:00 AM

Judith Moffett (mod), Rob Balder, Marilyn "Mattie" Brahen, Esther M. Friesner, Robert Jeschonek

Description: "How do you fictionalize real locations? How much can you or should you change?"

Estimated attendance: 14 people

Moffett said that earlier eras used imaginary places, but with the lack of unexplored regions, this is harder to do now. She said that Kim Stanley Robinson's Mars is much more real than Edgar Rice Burroughs, and J. R. R. Tolkien's Middle Earth is not real at all. "The trend now," she said, "is to locate the action in a real place." You can have a familiar setting with extraordinary events, or have a setting changed by weather, or war, or so on, or you can have a setting in the future.

Friesner gave another possibility, pointing out that S. M. Stirling's "Island in the Sea of Time" series goes backward in time. She first noticed the trend for familiar locations in Stephen King, though it seemed like more like product placement at first. People had a Coke, not "a soda"; they ate a Twinkie, not "a snack"; they went to a Wal-Mart, not "a store." Things were explicit, grounded in

reality.

Brahen said that John Varley's MAMMOTH had real places, then spent time talking about putting real people and events in her books, but she did not talk about putting real places in it.

Talking about science fiction, Balder said, "It used to be about world creation." Historical fiction always did research and included the research; now science fiction does this also. John Ringo researched the area around Richmond with a Civil War expert before writing his "Posleen" series (a.k.a. "Legacy of the Aldenata"). Places like Arlington carry a lot of meaning that made-up places cannot.

Friesner said that after a Worldcon, a World Fantasy Convention, or a Nebula Banquet, a spate of stories would appear set in the location where it was held. She decried turning everything into a story, but this seemed to apply more to taking a location and putting an elf in, rather than something that actually evokes the spirit or history of the place (such as, for example, Neil Gaiman's AMERICAN GODS).

Balder talked about taking parts of various mythologies for the world in her book, but Moffett clarified that when one said "world-building" in science fiction, one meant "planet-building." Friesner said there was also "ecology-building," which he how she described what she did in THE PSALMS OF HEROD and THE SWORD OF MARY. Moffett said that any post-catastrophe novel has to do this. Hal Clement, Ursula K. LeGuin, and Vernor Vinge all do or did world-building, but the science is hard, and it takes so long to do.

Moffett said that the hard part is doing it well enough to convince science fiction readers, which is why people do not do it any more. She said that she did this in PENNTERRA. Friesner said one danger is that you do so much work that you want to include everything. What she wants to use is what she called "the ethos of the place."

Balder pointed out that research is a lot easier now that every town in the census is also in Wikipedia, and so a lot of information is available without requiring an actual visit. (I was reminded that H. R. Keating, the author of the "Inspector Ghote" series, did not visit India until he had already written several books set there.) Jeschonek insisted that nothing can substitute for going there. Moffett said there was a difference between veracity and authenticity.

(They also could have made a distinction between choosing a setting objectively and choosing one subjectively, or for that matter, picking a setting or having a setting pick you.)

Someone in the audience suggested that an author should pick what he or she knows rather than pick some random place that has no relevance. (I was reminded of the back cover of GALAXY where H. L. Gold transposed a Western into space by changing just a few words. You can find the parallel texts at .) Friesner noted that another way to do research was to read authors from the place you want to write about.

What surprised me most about this panel was the level of inaccuracy. One person seemed to think that when Verne referred to "20,000 leagues under the sea," he meant a depth. No, that would be through the earth, out the other side, and well towards the moon. It refers to a distance reading, as if the Nautilus had an odometer. And another pronounced "Pleistocene" as "plee-o-steen".

Does the Hugo Still Mean Anything?

Saturday, 12:00 PM

Michael J. Walsh (mod), Joshua Bilmes, James Patrick Kelly, Gordon Van Gelder

Description: "Is the Hugo still a good indication of literary merit? Was it ever?"

Estimated attendance: (unknown)

Van Gelder said that he worries more about the strength of the whole ballot than the actual winner. He also said he has come to like the Hugo better than the Nebula.

Walsh said that there are two ways to get a Hugo rocket. One is to sweat blood to write a story. The other is to chair a Worldcon and get a left-over one. "Sweat," he added, "is easier." More seriously, he said, "The Hugos are, broadly speaking, a fairly decent indicator of quality." Are they a popularity contest? All awards are (even juried awards, though the population is smaller).

Walsh pointed out that novels need a few hundred nominations to get on the ballot, while some of the short fiction categories require only twenty or sometimes even fewer.

Kelly said that while the Hugos are a popularity contest, one has to consider the demographic of the readership, while is one that appreciates literary quality. For example, his story "10^16" appealed to the older audience, but those were precisely the people who joined the Worldcon and voted for the Hugos. Van Gelder asked if this meant that it was harder for "twenty-something" fiction to win. Bilmes pointed out that geography also plays more of a role in the Hugo awards than in the others. (Awards given at a Worldcon in Europe will be weighted towards European and East Coast North American fans, for example.)

There was a brief discussion of the demise of scifiction.com. It was mentioned that Kelly's story ("10^16") was the first story to be nominated for a Hugo from on-line publication, and something by Greg Van Ecout was the first on-line Nebula nomination.

Kelly said it is easier to get on the Nebula ballot than on the Hugo ballot. (This is mathematically true only if there are more finalists on the Nebula ballot, which there are.) And all of these selections are somewhat parochial--there is fairly little overlap among the various "Year's Best" anthologies.

Van Gelder thought that in the last ten years, the Hugo has become more literary than the Nebula. Bilmes said it was because, while the Hugo voters are pretty much the same as ten years ago, their tastes have matured.

Walsh said that at least the Hugo process is clear. The Nebula process is a lot more convoluted, but it does allow every book at least twelve months of eligibility.

Walsh also talked about the "backlash" against Rowling winning in 2001 for HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE. In every case when he asked the person complaining about Rowling's win, it turned out that the person had not voted for the Hugos.

The availability of books has improved, Walsh said, which makes voting easier.

Van Gelder says that while the availability of books has improved (and perhaps because of it), it is harder to find what you like these days. So readers are of necessity more educated.

Kelly says that some sources for recommendations are the NESFA website, "Tangent On-Line", and the "Internet Review of Science Fiction".

Walsh and Van Gelder agreed that the awards themselves do a good job of pointing out the good stuff. Bilmes said that Elizabeth Moon had trouble getting her books into bookstores, but this changed when she got a Hugo nomination (and a Nebula Award). Van Gelder said that in general a Hugo award will make a difference, but not a Nebula. It also seems that it does not help directly with

sales, but it does increase distribution to the stores, which does help.

Van Gelder talked about a category I understand well: "Stories I'd Like to Read Again But I Can't Reach Them in My Collection".

Walsh and Van Gelder also pointed out that in the 1960s even the nominees that did not win were very strong.

Alternate Histories That Are Not about War
Saturday, 2:00 PM
John Ashmead (mod), Robert Kauffmann, Eric Kotani

Description: "What else could change history (and produce a good story) other than someone else winning the Battle of Gettysburg?"

Estimated attendance: 22 people

Ashmead said that when he started researching this topic he found huge spikes in the number of stories at all wars and the JFK assassination. The rest, he said, was background noise--and this panel is about background noise.

His research, by the way was at (which brought applause from the audience, and cries of "Brilliant!") and (a build-your-own-alternate-history-type place). He then asked for the panelists' favorite non-military alternate histories.

Kotani liked John Maddox Roberts's "Hannibal" series (HANNIBAL'S CHILDREN and SEVEN HILLS so far), and one of France not selling Louisiana to the United States (but he did not give a name).

Ashmead named L. Sprague De Camp's "Aristotle and the Gun" and LEST DARKNESS FALL (in which a time traveler teaches double-entry book-keeping to the Romans). Ashmead added that there are various types of non-military alternate histories: scientific, medical, and cultural.

Someone in the audience suggested Harry Turtledove and Richard Dreyfuss's THE TWO GEORGES, but Ashmead said that was really on "the edge of war." TWO OF US (the alternate John Lennon movie that aired on cable station VH1) was also suggested, and another person brought up "The Pierce Arrow Stalled, and..." (the Kim Newman alternate "Fatty Arbuckle" story).

Kotani suggested a story in which Queen Isabella had a competent astronomer. (I am not sure exactly what he had in mind here.) This reminded Ashmead of Harry Turtledove's "Report on the Special Committee on the Quality of Life", another Queen Isabella story.

Ashmead also talked about the two views of history, which he described as "the butterfly effect" and "self-healing". These are really just variations on the "The Great Man" and "The Tide of History".

Kotani talked a bit about the economics of the circumnavigation of Africa. Ashmead said if one wants to look at economics, one should consider the invention of the corporation. Kauffmann said that this could be expanded to consider the development of various methodologies in general.

Someone suggested that if the Titanic had not sunk, we would not have had a loss of innocence and confidence. (Someone mentioned Jack Finney's FROM TIME TO TIME, where the main character time-travels back to prevent World War I and ends up on the Titanic.) Kotani said that the

unconditional belief in technology was a disaster waiting to happen, and would have happened eventually. (I have this feeling that World War I would have destroyed any remaining innocence and confidence.) Someone in the audience mentioned the Challenger and Columbia disasters having a similar effect in changing the nation's mood.

Someone asked about divergences centering around Charles Babbage. Ashmead said that Babbage "suffered from excessive perfectionism." Another example, he said, would be Mark Twain's championing of the page typesetter, which was very advanced but broke down a lot. The linotype was less advanced but more reliable.

Someone said that the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., added the lines about "I have a dream" to his speech at the last minute, showing that small things can have major effects.

Other suggestions included "what if there were no oil in the Middle East?" and "what if direct current won out over alternating current?"

Ashmead concluded by reminding us, "The future doesn't happen one thing at a time."

I would recommend Poul Anderson's "In the House of Sorrows", Kim Newman and Edward Byrne's "The Wandering Christian", and the anthology "ReVisions" edited by Julia Czerneda and Isaac Szpindel as good exemplars of non-military alternate histories.

The Great Summer Slump of 2005

Saturday, 3:00 PM

Christopher Stout (mod), Joshua Bilmes, Mike Enright, Eve Okupniak, Richard Stout

Description: "A well respected film executive was interviewed about this summer's poor box office sales. When asked what his company was going to do about it, he replied, '. . . I guess we'll just have to start making good movies.' Discussion on recent sci-fi films. What films fall into this category and which are the exception to the rule?"

Estimated attendance: 15 people

C. Stout said that so far in 2005, Hollywood had taken in \$500 million less than in 2004 at this time. (Now, is that "Hollywood" or all movies?)

Coming into this panel, I had my own list of why there was a slump:

1. bad movies
2. high ticket (and concession) prices
3. bad theater-going experience (sticky floors, rowdy audiences, bad projection, etc.)
4. DVDs (providing an alternative)
5. other media (providing competition)

Okupniak said that the movies are worse because they are now mostly made by committee. She gave as an example HOSTEL, made (supposedly) by Eli Wood, who did CABIN FEVER, but in fact made by him, the studio, the distributor, and a lot of other people. R. Stout responded, "Films have always been made by committee." The real problem, he said, was that today movies are "written by people who don't care about movies." Bilmes said that when one sees a film like FANTASTIC FOUR, one asks, "Why does this film exist?" The answer is that it is a superhero film, superhero films have made money, and everything goes on until it stops making money.

(Actually, another problem is that all the action films are now crammed into the summer, when they compete with each other. Of course, this affects the total box office but not the actual quality of the films.)

C. Stout said that there was a similar slump in 1983 and 1984, and Enright pointed out that this was when the VCR took off. Enright said that now most people who are going to the movies are doing it to get out of the house, not because they are film fans (or science fiction fans). R. Stout agreed, saying he sees a lot of people finding out at the theater that their first choice is sold out, so just picking something else.

>From the audience, Mark Leeper pointed out that the Internet is making communication better and faster and so people are hearing sooner if a film is bad. (People also use cell phones for this. I recall reading that for one particularly bad film--which one escapes me--there was a noticeable drop-off between Friday and Saturday nights, or possibly even between first and second shows on Friday night.)

Bilmes noted that this can work the other way, and that CRASH (the 2005 film, not the Ballard one) succeeded by word of mouth. C. Stout said that it took in \$50 million, which for a lot of films would be considered a failure. (Now that it has won the Os car, it may get a second run in theaters.)

Someone in the audience said that all the trailers (and commercials) in the theater turn people off. Bilmes added that the television commercial for DVD for THE FANTASTIC FOUR is better than the theatrical trailer.

Enright said that one is also starting to see films on-line, and recommended TARNATION, made on Imation (?). R. Stout thought this a double-edged sword, saying, "The most idiotic visions can be realized." He added, "That willing suspension of disbelief is just diminishing for me at a rapid rate."

Okupniak said that THE MACHINIST was an example of a film that could have been done using a lot of expensive techniques, but was not.

Bilmes summed it up by saying, "The box office is reflective of what is out there."

The Past and Future of Philip K. Dick Adaptations
Saturday, 5:00 PM
Rock Robertson (mod), David G. Hartwell, Eric M. Van, Mark Wolverton

Description: "Which movies based on PKD's works have best captured the spirit and flavor of his writings? What are our hopes for Richard Linklater's A SCANNER DARKLY? Which PKD novels or stories should be adapted next?"

Estimated attendance: 12 people

A list was provided, very similar to that from the same panel at ConJose in 2002, so let me start with that:

- | 1982 "Blade Runner" (based on "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?")
- | 1990 "Total Recall" (based on "We Can Remember It for You Wholesale")
- | 1992 "Confessions d'un Barjo" (based on "Confessions of a Crap Artist" and often called just "Barjo")
- | 1995 "Screamers" (based on "Second Variety")
- | 2002 "Impostor"

- | 2002 "Minority Report"
- | 2003 "Paycheck"
- | 2006 "A Scanner Darkly"
- | 2007 "Next" (based on "The Golden Man")
- | (The 1962 television series 1962 "Out of This World" [based on "The Imposter" and the 1999 television series "Total Recall 2070" were not covered.]

A list of "PKD'S Android Simulacra at the Movies" was also provided. This was a list of films that were Dickian in nature even though not based on his works, and included:

- | "Dark Star" (1974)
- | "Videodrome" (1983)
- | "Brazil" (1985)
- | "Man Facing Southeast" (1986)
- | "The Trouble with Dick" (1988)
- | "Twelve Monkeys" (1995)
- | "Open Your Eyes" (1997)
- | "The Truman Show" (1998)
- | "eXistenZ" (1999)
- | "Being John Malkovich" (1999)
- | "Waking Life" (2001)
- | "Donnie Darko" (2001)
- | "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" (2004)

Van pointed out that the majority of the PKD adaptations were of 1950s short stories, and that Dick was on drugs even then. Robertson said that reading one Dick story is more effective and more lasting than taking drugs. Dick himself was quoted as having said that much of what appears to be the results of taking hallucinogenic drugs is in reality the effect of taking A. E. Van Vogt too seriously.

Van reminded the audience that BLADE RUNNER was initially a flop, but ultimately became a major influence on movies. Someone in the audience said that the biggest problem is that it is not accurate to its source, though some thought that was the reason for its success. Hartwell also said that BLADE RUNNER at least has the spirit of Dick, which TOTAL RECALL does not. For one thing, in the story, the main character is just an average guy, not Arnold Schwarzenegger. Wolverton said that he was glad Dick did not live to see what they had done to his story. Hartwell observed that people complained about the violence in FULL METAL JACKET; TOTAL RECALL had more violence, but it was fake, and in FULL METAL JACKET it is real.

Hartwell said that David Cronenberg's THE NAKED LUNCH is also Dickian. However, Cronenberg cannot get any backing to do an actual PKD movie, in part because making money is not his primary goal.

Van mentioned CONFESSIONS D'UN BARJO, and he and Hartwell agreed that CONFESSIONS OF A CRAP ARTIST was Dick's best mainstream novel. In it, Jack Isidore of Sevilla, California, is a parody of the medieval writer Isidore of Seville. The movie, however, moved everything to a suburban France setting, and Van said that Fan-Fan in the movie is a toned-down version of Fay in the book. Wolverton said that Isidore is a complete believer in whatever belief system is presented. Hartwell said that Dick said that every character in his books is based on a real person, and CONFESSIONS OF A CRAP ARTIST was written at a time when Dick was very impressed with Kurt Vonnegut. The movie is available on both DVD and VHS, though possibly not in North America.

Moving on, Robertson said that SCREAMERS has a lot of "what is human and how can you tell?"

The problem, he said, is that you keep on hoping it will get better, and then it ends.

Van said that he thought the feature film IMPOSTER was better than the original short, but I disagree. Robertson thought the film catches the look of PKD. Van said it asks the question, "Can we trust that we are whom we think we are?" Wolverton thought that the casting was good--Gary Sinise looks like an average guy.

Hartwell admitted he had not seen MINORITY REPORT. Van said that the first time he saw it he thought it had a chance to be the best ever, but it has come down in his estimation since then. As he said, "Like all Steven Spielberg movies of this time, the first two-thirds to three-quarters are way better than the rest of the movie." Robertson disliked Tom Cruise as a PKD protagonist because he was too attractive, and "even the hydrocephalic pre-cogs are supermodels." From the audience, Mark Leeper noted that the movie violates the title in that there is no minority report. Robertson hates the happy ending. Wolverton said he was between the two extremes of Van and Robertson (though Van was hardly over-enthusiastic).

Regarding PAYCHECK, Van asked, "How could a movie directed by John Woo and based on a Philip K. Dick story be so thuddingly not quite mediocre? Two words: Ben Affleck." Again, Hartwell had not seen this (a new family will dent your free time a lot). Robertson agreed with Van and added, "One thing that strikes me is how little of Phillip K. Dick you need to make a great movie." He liked the idea of the "time scoop" (in the story) rather than the "time view-a-tron" (in the movie).

Regarding recent Dickian films, Van mentioned PRIMER and said that its entire budget was less than the cost of one second of THE MATRIX. When discussing Richard Linklater's upcoming A SCANNER DARKLY, Hartwell said he would prefer a noir-ish 1970s look rather than the look of Linklater's WAKING LIFE, and Robertson echoed that sentiment. Wolverton said when people saw A SCANNER DARKLY, they would probably end up saying, "This isn't THE MATRIX; what is this crap?" Hartwell said that he saw THE MATRIX itself and said, "What is this crap?" Later he said (in what I consider a vast understatement) that THE MATRIX has pretensions.

Asked what their favorite non-PKD Dickian film was, the panelists had various answers. Hartwell said THE STUNT MAN (a film not on the hand-out). Van could not decide among VIDEODROME, ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND, MAN FACING SOUTHEAST, OPEN YOUR EYES, or DONNIE DARKO. (He was sure that no one in the audience had seen MAN FACING SOUTHEAST, but in fact Mark and I had seen it during its New York release in 1986 or so.) Hartwell said that he has watched ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND and it has gotten better each time, and that "the characters are uniquely disturbed and uniquely human individuals. He also suggested that the 1953 movie THE FOUR-SIDED TRIANGLE has a kernel of the same ideas. Robertson said his favorite was either TWELVE MONKEYS or ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND. Wolverton said his was BRAZIL. (No one mentioned DARK CITY, THE THIRTEENTH FLOOR, or CYPHER.)

Someone in the audience asked if anyone remembered a television episode about selling one's memories, but no one did.

Someone else said that Dick was popular because he "speaks more to impairment than to achievement."

**The Controversy of Director's Cuts: Rewriting the Past
Saturday, 6:00 PM**

Andrew C. Ely (mod), Kimberly Ann Kindya, Jay Smith, Christopher Stout

Description: "Panelists will discuss how the directors mess with our memories as they rewrite the classics, such as BLADE RUNNER and STAR WARS and make the originals unobtainable."

Estimated attendance: 20 people

One comment I would make is that people like "director's cuts" when they are longer than the theatrical version, but dislike them when the director decides to cut things out instead.

Ely started by talking about the "Special Edition" of CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND (not a "director's cut" per se), which dropped some of the interactions of Richard Dreyfuss and Terri Garr and added more shots of the ship.

Kindya decried some of the changes directors (or producers) want to make, saying "Hayden Christiansen doesn't belong in RETURN OF THE JEDI" (referring to the replacement of the face on Anakin's "ghost" at the end with that of Christiansen). Smith thought that this was all part of the "evolution of George Lucas from independent filmmaker to special effects producer." Ely said there are two schools of thought. One is that "if it's his property to begin with, he can go back and change them as he wants." The other is the fact that two of the first three films (including RETURN OF THE JEDI) had other directors and they presumably should have some control over changes made to their work. Smith noted as an aside that Lucas is the most tolerant of Hollywood people when it comes to fan films (such as "George Lucas in Love" and many other take-offs on STAR WARS).

Stout said that Steven Spielberg was the first director powerful enough to be able to force a director's edition. But Ely pointed out that after the uproar from fans, Spielberg did put both versions of E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL on the DVD release.

Someone in the audience asked about why sometimes one sees an "extended cut" on the DVD, and why sometimes one gets "deleted scenes" as a separate extra instead. The panel agreed that it depends on the film. In general, if the director agrees that the film is better with these scenes missing, then they appear as deleted scenes, but if they were removed for reasons he or she did not agree with (e.g. to get a specific rating), then they may well be incorporated into a director's cut. Ely, for example, said that on the DVD of DONNIE DARKO, there are deleted scenes and the director provides commentary on each one explaining why it was cut from the final version.

Ely also said that with THE LORD OF THE RINGS, there were two versions: a short version "for the masses," and a long version for those who have read the book(s). There are also three versions of BLADE RUNNER, he added. The first had film noir-style voice-overs. The second had more of the snake dancer and the origami. And the third has no voice-overs and cut other scenes as well. Stout pointed out that the ending was also changed. Later, Ely talked about BRAZIL, which had a *completely* changed ending.

Kindya said that STAR WARS was unique because we had memorized it and it was part of us. Smith said in addition, most films are changed to improve artistic values, but with STAR WARS the changes were "just to add bells and whistles."

Someone in the audience noted that re-editing films is not new--the 1925 version of THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA was re-edited in 1929 to be able to incorporate sound. There are also multiple versions of METROPOLIS and the 1925 version of THE LOST WORLD. (With METROPOLIS, the major alteration was in Georgio Moroder's version with a rock soundtrack. But with both of them, the number of versions is due more to things like theater owners deciding to drop scenes to shorten the film, or other occurrences not related to the director deciding to change the film.) Of course, we also had that spate of colorization a while back.

The panel talked about how other entertainment media are changed, in particular how Disneyworld

and Disneyland are constantly being changed and updated.

Someone in the audience added to the list the notion of European versus American cuts, giving as an example the film HIGHLANDER. Sometimes it is just the soundtrack that is different, as with LEGEND and WITCHFINDER GENERAL. Ely observed that THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY has been through a variety of versions and editions: radio, record, CD, television, movie, and book.

Kindya said that the director's cut of TERMINATOR 2 had a different ending from the theatrical version, and someone said that STAR WARS also had substantive changes, not just bells and whistles, and not just adds and deletes either. Kindya said that she really hates the revisions of episodes four through six to accommodate episodes one through three.

>From the audience, Sol Berger-Berraro said that there are also a lot of films with special television versions. Later someone said that the scenes that appeared as deleted scenes on the DVD of HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCEROR'S STONE were included in the television version. Stout said that it is more profitable to say "we have new scenes" and it also makes the film longer, so they can put it in a longer slot and sell more commercials. Someone in the audience pointed out that SUPERMAN was padded out for television quite a while ago.

Mark Leeper said that JACK THE GIANT KILLER was changed into a musical--and badly, with scenes where the same couple of seconds of visuals was played forward, then backward, then forward, then backward, and so on, to accommodate the time needed for the songs! (The DVD release was of the original version.)

Ely said that "Star Trek" (the television series) did not have "directors' cuts" but did keep re-inventing its history, particularly in the DEEP SPACE 9 episode "Trials and Tribble-ations". In terms of re-inventing histories, someone mentioned THE EXORCIST, which recently had *two* prequels made from it. (And THE EXORCIST II is a film that was re-cut a couple of weeks *after* release, meaning that the version we saw the opening day no longer exists. (THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE was another film changed after release, though this was in response to a lawsuit regarding how the filmmakers had changed someone's sculpture without their permission.)

Someone in the audience said that the original cut of FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLFMAN originally had Lugosi dialogue explaining the Monster's muteness, but that was cut. Other older films with missing scenes which were eventually restored include FRANKENSTEIN and KING KONG.

Kindya thought that the best "directors' cuts" might be the television version of David Lynch's DUNE (not to be confused with the television mini-series), and the European version of HIGHLANDER (although my impression is that the European version came first, and so is not truly a "director's cut"). Stout and Ely both thought BLADE RUNNER to be the best director's cut, while Smith thought that THE LORD OF THE RINGS was the best.

Masquerade
Saturday, 8:00 PM

There was a masquerade, but since it was dark in the room I did not take notes.

The Call of Cthulhu
Saturday, 9:00 PM

They are still making silent films! This is a wonderful silent 47-minute film based on H. P. Lovecraft's "Cthulhu Mythos", and it is now available on DVD. I highly recommend it--it is on my Hugo nomination ballot. (Yeah, I know, another wasted nominati on. So be it.)

Hot New Writers (you have not heard of yet)

Sunday, 11:00 AM

Marilyn "Mattie" Brahen (mod), Gardner Dozois, David G. Hartwell, Gordon Van Gelder

Description: "Bring your notebook!"

Estimated attendance: 15 people

First I will jot down the comments people made, then I will give the list of recommended authors (and who recommended them). I hope I get all the names right, but when you get a lot of rapid-fire unfamiliar names in a room with bad acoustics, it's a chal lenge. Also, someone was added to the panel whose name I did not catch, who did not have a name card, and whose name did not appear in the newsletter updates, so they will be referred to below as "Panelist X".

Hartwell talked about how the "zine movement" (meaning "little magazines" rather than fanzines) was bringing in a lot of new authors. He said that the mainstream is also moving into genre, such as the various McSweeney's anthologies. Brahen pointed out that Audrey Niffenegger's *THE TIME TRAVELER'S WIFE* was marketed as mainstream. Panelist X talked about the "explosion of the young adult category of marketing" with books such as the "Harry Potter" books and *THE SISTERHOOD OF THE TRAVELING PANTS*.

Dozois said that one problem is that there is no agreement on who is a new writer. Charles Stross and William Gibson suddenly became "new" writers years after they started writing; the same is true now of China Mieville and Kelly Link. And when Brahen m entioned Shirley Rosseau Murphy as a new author, Hartwell pointed out that she has been writing for thirty years.

Van Gelder says the latest trend seems to be the paranormal romance detective story. Panelist X said it seemed to be chick lit crossed with mystery or science fiction and given new packaging. Dozois thought this might be because romances get \$250,000 ad vances while science fiction gets \$3000.

Dozois says that the slipstream crowd gets most of the press, but hard science fiction and space opera are still being written.

The panelists were asked for their recommendations for the John W. Campbell Award, Hartwell listed Lauren McLaughlin, Hannu Reginimi, and Richard Lovett (maybe). Van Gelder named Mike Schultz, Ted Komatska, Darrell Gregory, and R. R. Angel. Dozois named David Moles and Paul Melkow. Brahen suggested a couple of people who had been writing for several years; she apparently did not know what the rules for the John W. Campbell Award are.

And the list:

Alma Alexander (VG)
Neal Asher (H)
Paolo Bacigalupi (H) (1999)
Iain Banks (H) (1984))
Laird Barron (horror) (VG)
Elizabeth Bear (VG)
Judith Berman (B) (1995)

M. M. Buckner (VG) (2003)
Ramsey Campbell (in the UK) (H) (1976)
Albert E. Cowdry (horror) (VG) (2004)
Cory Doctorow (H) (2003)
Peter Doctorow (H) (although he seems to write only games)
Peter Friend (H) (1992)
Joe Hill (horror) (VG)
Glen Hirshberg (horror) (VG)
Gerard Houarner (horror) (B)
Matt Hughes (H) (1994) (or is this Matthew Hughes (2001)?)
Walter Jay Hunt (B) (is this Walter H. Hunt (2001)? or Walter Hunt (1998)?)
Gwyneth Jones (H) (1977)
Jay Lake (H) (2001)
David Levine (H) (1996)
Kelly Link (H) (2000)
David Marusek (COUNTING HEADS) (D) (2005)
Ian McDonald (H) (1988)
Sarah Micklem (VG)
China Mieville (H) (1998)
Judith Moffett (H) (1976)
David Moles (H)
Haruki Murakami (H) (1989)
Tim Pratt (H) (2005)
Hannu Rajaniemi (D)
Alastair Reynolds (H) (2002)
M. Rickert (H) (1999)
Benjamin Rosenbaum (H) (2001)
Mary Rosenblum (H) (1993)
Christopher Rowe (H) (1998)
Kris Saknussemm (VG) (2006)
Jose Saramago (BLINDNESS, 1997) (1987) (given that he won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1998, he could hardly be called a new author)
Lawrence Schoen (X) (1997)
Vandana Singh (D) (2006)
Jason Stoddard (H) (2003)
Charles Stross (H) (2001)
Greg Van Eekout (H) (2002)
Sarah Monette (VG)
Scott Westerfeld (YA) (H) (1997)
Kim Wilkins (H) (GIANTS OF THE FROST, 2006) (B) (1997)
Carrie Vaughn (KITTY AND THE MIDNIGHT HOUR) (VG)
"Polyphony" series (X)
? (PRINCESS OF BAGDAD) (B) (?)

(Thanks to Keith Lynch, Robert Sneddon, and Ramsey Campbell for help on these names.)

Alternate Historical Vampire Cat Detectives
Sunday, 12:00 PM

Ellen Asher (mod), Joshua Bilmes, Gordon Linzner, Darrell Schweitzer

Description: "Gimmick anthologies--is this a dead end or can it produce classics?"

Estimated attendance: (unknown)

Regarding the title, Schweitzer said that he has such a story in Barnes & Noble's CRAFTY CAT CRIMES: 100 TINY CAT TALE MIRACLES, "The Adventure of the Hanoverian Vampires"). The best story he had ever seen in a theme anthology, though, was Nick DiChario's "Winterberry" (from ALTERNATE KENNEDYS edited by Mike Resnick). (The story behind that is interesting. It was not really an "open anthology"; Resnick had solicited stories from authors. And the deadline for submissions had passed. But somehow DiChario heard about it and sent "Winterberry" in anyway. And luckily Resnick read it and decided he had to include it. It turned out to be a pretty amazing anthology, with three Hugo nominees from it!)

Schweitzer said he had done an anthology of "Weird Trails" and was going to do "Spicy Oriental Zeppelin Stories" as his next anthology. (He said it would be sort of like I, LIBERTINE.) He added that one story in it, "Goulla of the Gas-Bags", is a reprint, so theme cross-overs are not new.)

Asher pointed out that the narrower one makes the scope of an anthology, the less interesting it will be. If the reader is not initially interested in a subject, then even a broad theme anthology will not work. For example, Asher talked about the anthology CATS! and said that even the "classic" in that, "Space-Time for Springers", bored her--it was "too much of a muchness." Schweitzer said, "The narrower [the theme] got, the sillier I wanted to get." So he ends up writing things like "Kvetchula" for an anthology of vampire conspiracy stories. And then it turns out that they had another one like it.

Bilmes said that the problem is that these days you need a sales hook for anthologies, such as vampire birthday stories (MANY BLOODY RETURNS). Asher said that the anthology DATES FROM HELL was promoted as a romance anthology. If the anthology is a few novellas rather than many short stories, at least one can avoid as much repetition.

Schweitzer said that he has VAMPIRES: A SECRET HISTORY in progress for early 2008, which will include Tanith Lee, Mike Resnick, Harry Turtledove, Greg Frost (in Homeric verse), Ian Watson, Ron Goulart, and Keith Taylor. (One might say that a lot of these are the usual suspects for theme anthologies.)

Bilmes suggested FANTASTIC FANTASTIC, fantasies about cleaning solutions. Schweitzer referred to something called THE GAY AND LESBIAN CAT BOOK, but this seems to be just a suggestion of a possibility, since I can find no reference to it on amazon.com or elsewhere. He also recommended LINCOLN'S DOCTOR'S DOG AND OTHER STORIES, a 1938 book. The title story was apparently written by someone who knew that that books about Lincoln are popular, and books about doctors are popular, and books about dogs are popular, so

Asher pointed out that it is also easier to get good writers for more general themes.

Schweitzer mentioned another older anthology, THE FAERIES RETURN, which was fairy tales updated to the 1930s. And something like James Thurber's "Macbeth Murder Mystery" could easily be the genesis of another theme anthology.

Linzer said that a shared world anthology is even more difficult than a narrow theme anthology. In both cases the writers are not writing from their own inspiration, but there is slightly more chance of this in a theme anthology. Someone in the audience said that he dislikes "tribute anthologies" (such as FOUNDATION'S FRIENDS [Isaac Asimov], THE ENCHANTER COMPLETED [L. Sprague De Camp], or AFTER THE KING [J. R. R. Tolkien]).

Schweitzer said another pitfall for theme anthologies is that you need to be careful whom you invite, and you need to force re-writes if necessary.

Asher said that most original anthologies are mass-market, but Schweitzer noted the various "Mammoth Books" that Mike Ashley edits, which are trade paperbacks and large enough to include short novels. (For some reason, he mentioned THE CASE AGAINST SATAN by Ray Russell as one that could be included, though I do not think he gave the topic for it.)

Asher said that there are also hardcover omnibus editions of some of these anthologies, and Schweitzer said that one also find theme anthologies as hardcover "instant remainders".

Asher thought that while in magazines you could get away with several very similar stories in an issue (because after all, people knew that next month there would be another, different issue), it is more difficult in a book. Linzer thought that boredom in an anthology can also be caused by poor ordering of the stories, which led to a discussion of the "right" ordering. Schweitzer said it was a strong story first, followed by a novelette, with a novella (if there is one) at the end. This, he said, was George Scithers's rule. Other people said what I had heard: strongest story first, second-strongest last, but never start or end with a very short story. Novellas are a buyer's market, since only original anthologies really have room for them (unless they are by very well-known authors).

Someone said that the three types of themed anthologies seemed to be serious, cute, and trendy.

Outer Limits vs. Twilight Zone

Sunday, 2:00 PM

Mark Leeper (mod), Andre Lieven, Eve Okupniak, Mark Wolverton

Description: "Panelists will discuss the effects both shows have had on science fiction and their fans since their inceptions, their favorite episodes and their likes and dislikes of each show. Has 'Outer Limits' reached its limit or are new writers and/or TV station needed to breathe it back to life? How does the "New Twilight Zone" compare to the others?"

Estimated attendance: 20 people

Wolverton started by saying that he was a fan of "The Outer Limits" *and* "The Twilight Zone", and it was not a question of "versus". Okupniak said she was on the panel because Wolverton forced her to be, and was much more familiar with "The Twilight Zone" than with "The Outer Limits". Lievan is a Canadian fan, and Leeper was (I think) the only one who watched the original shows when they were first broadcast. (Luckily, they did not run opposite each other, because that was way before VCRs.)

One question was which episode had changed the most in the panelists' estimation. Okupniak said that the Robert Redford episode of "The Twilight Zone" ("Nothing in the Night") seemed boring at first, but it seems much better now, and is in fact her favorite. On the flip side, Leeper said that "The Galaxy Being" (of "The Outer Limits") has dropped a lot because the science is so bad. However, the Jack Klugman episodes of "The Twilight Zone" ("Death Ship", "A Game of Pool", "In Praise of Pip", and "A Passage for Trumpet") seem much better now, perhaps because he is old enough to appreciate them. Lievan is more appreciative of "Time Enough at Last", but his favorite is "Eye of Newton" in "The New Twilight Zone" (the 1980s series, not the most recent one). Wolverton said that he appreciated "The Bellerophon Shield" more than when he first saw it.

Wolverton said that in general he appreciates "The Twilight Zone" more visually as film than he did at first, and also for the writing (especially the episodes written by Rod Serling). "The Outer Limits" was not that hot on science, but did have a strong moral or ethical sense. It had a rather dark philosophical view but with some hope. "The Twilight Zone", on the other hand, always had a humanistic view.

Regarding the relative impacts of the shows, Wolverton said that "The Twilight Zone" had a huge impact, and not just in spin-offs. Serling found it easier to deal with controversial issues in science fiction because people would say, "It's just science fiction." ("Star Trek" benefited from this as well.) Lievan said that because of this the shows had a lot of social allegory.

Leeper said that Serling was known as a serious writer, and he had said that he wanted to write good drama in the field of science fiction. He also brought in Richard Matheson, who Leeper said is one of the unsung and under-recognized heroes of science fiction.

Okupniak said that the first show she watched religiously was "Tales from the Crypt", which may have been inspired by "The Twilight Zone" and "The Outer Limits" (at least in the sense that those shows proved anthology science fiction shows could be popular). There had been (and still is) an emphasis on continuing series rather than anthologies, because they are more likely to get people returning regularly to them. Leeper noted that "Playhouse 90" was an anthology that pre-dated "The Twilight Zone". Lievan said that to some extent the various "movie of the week" shows were really anthology series.

Of course, as Wolverton noted, in the 1950s and 1960s, television was new, there were only three networks, and people would watch whatever was on. After "The Twilight Zone" and "Outer Limits", there were other "fantasy" anthology series: "Alfred Hitchcock Presents", "Thriller", and "One Step Beyond", among others. (Someone mentioned the latest anthology series, Showtime's "Masters of Horror".)

Leeper said that CARNIVAL OF SOULS is really three "Twilight Zone" ideas put together. And when one sees something like this, one says, "That's 'Twilight Zone' again," not "That's 'Outer Limits' again."

An audience member suggested that the difference was that "The Outer Limits" was about scientists and science, while "The Twilight Zone" was about average people in other times, places, or situations. The original "Outer Limits", he added, could be considered "science fiction noir", with its Conrad Hall cinematography. Leeper said that the new "Outer Limits" was more Gothic, getting away from science fiction into horror. Another audience member said that "The Outer Limits" had the monster, but "The Twilight Zone" had the human monster. (Wolverton said that the creature from "Wolf 359" on "The Outer Limits" induced nightmares for him.)

Addressing the differences between the original (two) series and the newer ones, Okupniak said that she cannot even stand to watch the newest "Twilight Zone" because of the technology used to shoot it. Someone suggested turning down the color on the television (assuming one has a television where one can do that), but Leeper pointed out, "Black-and-white is not the absence of color." Lievan thought that the 1980s "Twilight Zone" had the most interesting remakes, although Harlan Ellison left the show over his script of Donald Westlake's "Nackles" because "the network wanted nice." And Lievan brought up another "version" of "The Twilight Zone", TWILIGHT ZONE: THE MOVIE. He said that all one had to do was to compare the two versions of "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet" to see the differences.

Leeper noted that everyone is younger in the latest versions of the two series.

Someone suggested that "The Outer Limits" was a "Cold War" show. They also thought that "The Twilight Zone" is under-appreciated.

One point to be made is that both the original "Twilight Zone" and the original "Outer Limits" had a vision and a coherence that other series, and later versions of these two, lacked.

Someone in the audience seemed to think that the "Outer Limits" episode "Nightmare" (with Martin

Sheen) had references to homosexuality at a time when television did not mention it at all.

Leeper recommended two episodes from "The New Outer Limits": "Inconstant Moon" and "Trial by Fire".

Leeper said that another difference between the original and newer series (and with current television in general) is that pacing has changed a lot, so the original "Outer Limits" (in particular) seems slow. Okupniak responded, "Watching a slower-paced show these days is so refreshing to my mind and to my eyes."

Miscellaneous

Well, I managed to finish this before Lunacon. (These days, my deadline for my Worldcon and TIFF reports is Philcon, for Philcon is Lunacon, for Lunacon is Readercon (or whatever vacations are coming up), and for Readercon is Worldcon.)

Suggestion for a panel that occurred to me at the convention:

Early world-building (Dante, Bacon, More, etc.): Ideally one would get Robert Silverberg, Darrell Schweitzer, or other people well-versed in the classics.

Evelyn C. Leeper may be reached via [e-mail](#) or you may visit her [Homepage](#).

[Return to Index](#)

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