

L.A.con IV
A convention report by Evelyn C. Leeper
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L.A.con IV (the Worldcon with worst name, typographically speaking) was held August 23-27, 2006, in Anaheim, California. Attendance was approximately 6000.

(The previous three Los Angeles area conventions were LACon, LAcon II, and LAcon III, also written as L.A.Con, L.A.con II, and L.A.con III. Both sets of spellings/punctuation appear in the souvenir book. "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds.")

Registration for program participants (in the Green Room) was not ready when we arrived Tuesday afternoon, so we helped stuff packets until everything was ready. The Green Room itself had coffee intermittently, and food on and off. It did, however, have a clock.

The Convention Center is fairly large, so it was good that the schedule was for sixty-minute-long panels scheduled ninety minutes apart. (And some panels used all that time anyway.) Someone complained about the scheduling, saying that they wished the convention had scheduled panels for sixty minutes, but be able to run over. They did not seem to understand that that was exactly what the convention did do.

As has become standard, there was a large hall (Concourse) with the exhibits, the art show, the dealers room, and so on. There seemed to be a security gap, though--people could enter the Arena building, walk through the connecting corridor and enter the "Spaceport Lounge" and from there the Concourse, without ever having security check their badge. The art show did have its own security checkpoint, however. (The art show has stopped asking people to check bags and cameras, probably because they realize that now that so many people have cameras on their cell phones, that the rule is

basically either useless or unenforceable.

Speaking of cell phones, they are a major annoyance. It is almost a given that at least one will go off in any panel. I have no solution for this other than jamming the meeting rooms.

The exhibits included a lot of "Star Trek" costumes, props, etc., in celebration of its fortieth anniversary. There was even a full-scale mock-up of the bridge of the Enterprise, complete with life-like statues of the crew members. Anyone could take pictures of it, but if you wanted your picture taken while you were standing in the set, it cost you. I forget how much, but I noticed that there were not a lot of people doing that. (There were also not a lot of people paying for autographed pictures of the various "Star Trek" actors who were in the autograph area. Rumor has it that at least one was a bit peeved that he or she had no line of people, while David Gerrold has a couple of dozen people waiting for him. Then again, Gerrold was not charging for his autograph.)

Notable in the art show were William Mang's welded sculptures (e.g. "Slither", "Tax Collector"). He has a web site at <http://www.mangstainlessart.com>, which is the only way most of us can enjoy his work, since they sell for \$10,000 and up. I also liked Johnna Y. Klukos's wooden sculpture (e.g., "Long Haul"). Robert L. Allison's paintings were striking: cartoon-like, with bold colors, but all of them were from 2005 or before (for those trying to look at Hugo eligibility). Kurt Nakanishi had a series of paintings of giant robots (similar to the Iron Giant) with titles such as "Let's moving house together". And Mark Roland's etchings (e.g. "Aurora") were very good.

The Future of Journalism
Wednesday 4:00pm Room 201 C, ACC
Paul Fischer; Tom Galloway; William Shunn (mod); M. Christine Valada, Esq.

Description: "How we get the news is changing before our eyes. Newspaper circulation is down dramatically. Online blogs and podcasts have put reportage in the hands of average citizens -- for both good and ill. Advances in camera and satellite technology make it simple for reporters to bring the public stories from the most far-flung parts of the planet. What will the future bring? And how will we know what to believe?"

Estimated attendance: 25 people

Valada is a lawyer, so began with a legal disclaimer that anything she said should not be construed as legal advice. Before she became a lawyer she was a photographer for the media, which was the perspective from which she was speaking. Fischer is a podcaster of science fiction, comedy, and some news. Shunn described himself as an "interested amateur." He said he had been a Mormon missionary, and also said he was an "accidental terrorist" who was not allowed into Canada. (He gave no explanation of what he was referring to.) Galloway works for Google.

Valada gave her opinion: "The present of journalism really sucks." She gave as the example the journalist in Lebanon who was recently caught doctoring photographs of the bombing there. This is just the latest in a long string of scandals, including Stephen Glass's making up news stories at "The New Republic", as Valada noted when she said that the Spanish-American War was also due to faulty journalism, but said that such journalism is more common and easier now.

Fischer cited the issues of Dan Rather and a variety of doctored photographs, but said the biggest problem is that "there aren't people who are going after stories." They are only reprinting other people's stuff. He said, "That's where the bloggers and podcasters come in--they don't have a stake in it." (Galloway later admitted that one problem with the blogging model is that you cannot have five thousand bloggers at a Presidential press conference.) Galloway said that another problem is that some newspapers pick up satire and present it as real. He referred to something in Ken Jennings's

blog, but the most well-known might be when the newspapers in China picked up a story from "The Onion" and ran it as real.

Shunn said that real journalism costs money; it costs the "Wall Street Journal" \$150,000 a month to maintain a reporter in Iraq. Valada said a lot of media do not want to spend the money and so rely on press releases. Whenever you read "according to sources," she said, it almost definitely means it is from a press release. Nelly Bly, she added, covered stories herself. But there is also the problem that journalists are being targeted (in war zones), which makes it harder to cover wars.

From the audience, James A. Wolf (of CAMERA) said that reporters take press releases from Hezbollah without analyzing them.

Galloway said that another problem is that journalists are trained in journalism, not in science or politics or whatever. But today's stories require some knowledge in those fields.

Someone said, "The real question is, how do you know who to trust on the Internet?" Fischer said that one set are people who are willing to post corrections--and leave the original intact to show they made a mistake. Galloway said that one can look for consensus.

I relayed Mark Leeper's suggestion that maybe we got hours of coverage of Jon Benet Ramsey and nothing on Darfur because it was physically easy to cover the Jon Benet Ramsey case and hard to cover Darfur. Shunn asked whether it was that reporters found the Jon Benet Ramsey case easy, or was it that that was what people wanted to hear. Galloway said that it was "incomprehensible why there is more than fifteen seconds coverage" for the Jon Benet Ramsey case, and none on the Bush wire-tapping ruling.

Valada said that many reporters do want to cover the tough stories because, she said, the adrenaline from having a photograph on the front page is better than sex. But she said that reporters often fail to do basic research: one time she was asked if it was all right if she was identified as Len Wien's widow, and told the reporter that she did not mind but he might object, seeing as he was still alive.

Someone in the audience suggested that there were often time constraints making journalism difficult, and "that's the corporation, not the journalist."

Valada said that Jon Stewart's "Daily Show"'s news update is often better than the actual news.

Someone asked if the changes in media ownership were driving all this, and the panelists all definitively nodded "yes". Valada said that there are a lot fewer organizations covering the news these days. Fischer said, "The point of a large corporation is to make money," and running one story in fifty different markets saves money in costs. He said that during the last coup attempt in Russia, stories by passersby were more "in-the-moment" than those by reporters.

Valada said, however, that there has been a resurgence in small local papers (often weekly), because people want their local news. Galloway worried that Google and Craigslist are killing off local papers by "sucking up" all the ads.

Someone in the audience said they were seeing a lot of incompetence and laziness, but also the "doctrine of false equivalence": "get a quote from each side and you have done your job." There is often no effort to see if one side is more reputable than the other.

Someone else said that a big difference is that mainstream media are "push" media, while bloggers are "pull" media. How will these converge? Galloway said that bloggers will need summarizers, editors, and all the rest. (As a science fiction connection, he said that Brin's *Earth* has all this.)

Fischer said to look at news aggregators (such as slashdot), but "to get all this information, you've got

to do some work, no matter what." Of course, as Valada noted, we are concerned (or we would not be at this panel), but the vast majority of people are not.

Someone in the audience suggested, "We pick our news sources based on what we want to hear." In regard to this, Galloway quoted William James: "Man is not a rational animal; man is a rationalizing animal." He also said that the Internet news media do not necessarily affect results in the real world. Fischer countered that organizers use the Internet. Of course, he added, the police then sign up with these organizations to get information.

I asked about the future of the *newspaper*. Galloway thought that real paper newspapers would be gone in ten years, but e-ink and e-paper was coming in. Fischer said the problem would be that it is Sony and has DRM. He also felt that real paper newspapers would continue "as long as people have puppies or birds."

Valada said that she reads the "New York Times", the "Washington Post", and the "Los Angeles Times" digitally every day. On-line, she said, is easier to scan, to filter, and so on. Valada also recommended the web site "Arts and Letters Daily" (<http://www.aldaily.com>). Other people said that on-line sources made it possible to read international news. Galloway said that with machine translation getting better, this will become even more possible.

One audience member suggested that news has changed but journalism has not. (News is what happens today; journalism is finding out the truth about the news. Or alternatively, news is what happens; journalism is why.) Galloway thought that there was news and historical analysis, with journalism somewhere in between.

Valada closed by saying there seems to be a "creeping take-over of concern over seditious libel." Also, she noted, "George the Third is President now" (that is, Washington, H. W. Bush, and W. Bush).

Classics Remembered: *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*

Wednesday 5:30pm Room 209 A, ACC

Karen Anderson, Alex Eisenstein, Evelyn C. Leeper(M), G. David Nordley, Mark von Schlegell

Description: "Jules Verne's novel begat two motion pictures, a Classics Illustrated comic book, and the world's first atomic-powered submarine: not bad for inspiration. Who's the hero? Professor Aronax? Captain Nemo? Ned? Conseil? Why?"

Estimated attendance: 20 people

[As usual, my note-taking at panels I am on is minimal, so the resulting description is also. I will include, however, all the items that I came up in preparing for this panel.]

When the first description of this came out, it said "a motion picture." I had written to the committee, pointing out that there were more than that, and then watched as many as I could, proving once again that wishing for your favorite book to be made into a film is a bad idea. Really.

The films include:

- | 20000 lieues sous les mers (1907) (Melies): Not seen.
- | 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea (1916):
 - | Retains the major names, and Aronnax is still French.
 - | Adds a daughter for Aronnax, but no romance.
 - | Drops most of the technical explanations and all of the politics.

- i Makes the "Abraham Lincoln" more like a yacht than a frigate (no square sails).
 - i Throws in the plot of "Mysterious Island".
 - i Adds yet another woman.
 - i Claims to have the first underwater photography, and does, even though it seems to be just filmed through glass into a tank.
 - i Has real sharks, but a fake octopus.
 - i Adds another plot ("Captain Nemo reveals the tragic secret of his life, which Jules Verne never told.") with Prince Dakkar in India
- i 20000 Leagues Under the Sea (1954) (Disney):
 - i Everyone knows this one.
 - i Retains Conseil, though much changed.
 - i Uses treasure for ballast, not revolution.
 - i Uses atomic energy.
 - i Nemo's artwork is not heroic portraits.
 - i More fist fights.
 - i Blows up island (suggested as a possibility in book).
- i 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea (1973) (Rankin & Bass, 60m): Not seen.
- i 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea (1985) (Australian, 50m):
 - i Copies ideas from Disney (pet seal, fork/knife).
 - i Keeps characters and locations from Verne (e.g., Norway).
 - i Added endangered species message.
 - i Very abridged and modified.
 - i Poor animation.
- i 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea (1997/I) (TV, Hallmark, Crenna):
 - i Retains most of the names, the motto, etc.
 - i Retains the electrical batteries and other technology.
 - i Makes Arronax and Land Americans.
 - i Adds a woman and romance (which takes up too much time).
 - i Concentrates too much on "Discovery Channel" stretches.
- i 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea (1997/II) (TV, Caine):
 - i Adds Aronnax family problems (senior Aronnax seems to have the worst traits of Challenger or Somersby from Doyle, and there is a near-incest theme).
 - i Adds Nemo's daughter, romance, and *another* parent/child conflict.
 - i Adds a Malayan diver and yet more romance.
 - i Land is Australian, "Conseil" (Cable) is black, Aronnax might be French.
 - i Adds a civil rights theme.
 - i Caine is clearly not Indian.
 - i Power comes from the sea, which gets it from sunlight (not sodium batteries).
 - i Confuses "rapture of the depths" with the "bends".
 - i Nemo is more insane than in others.
 - i Verne exists in the world of the film.
 - i Thinks Jan 1, 1900, is the new century.
- i 20.000 Leagues Under the Sea (2002) (TV, animated, 70m): Not seen.

As I said in my review of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, the book has a reputation as a children's adventure book. This is mostly because a lot of the characterization and detail that Verne put in was removed by Mercier Lewis, the translator whose English translation has been the most widespread (in the United States at least). For this occasion I re-read the book in Walter James Miller's annotated version and Miller includes his translations of the parts that Lewis had omitted, as well as noting the many places where Lewis mis-translated Verne. If Lewis was not writing that the density of steel was "from .7 to .8 that of water" where Verne had said that it was "7.8 that of water," then he was having Nemo talk about "jumping over" an island where Verne says "blowing up" (the same word in French, but Lewis completely misses the meaning).

In fact, Lewis consistently gets the numbers and calculations wrong. He frequently confuses the

French "six" (6) with "dix" (10), and substitutes English measures for metric. The latter would be almost close if he substituted "yards" for "metres," but he sometimes substitutes "feet" instead! When you read this book, use either Miller's annotated version or a newer translation. (If the fourth paragraph mentions Cuvier and other naturalists, it is undoubtedly a newer translation.) Verne has both a lot more technical detail and a lot more politics and philosophy than Lewis included.

(There is a good example of how criticism can go wrong when based on a bad translation in "The Watery Worlds of Captain Nemo", Theodore L. Thomas, *Galaxy*, December 1961.)

Miller gives some information about distance measures. A (French) league is 2.16 nautical miles. A (current) league is 3 nautical miles. A nautical mile is 6080 feet, or about 1.1515 statute miles. So 20,000 leagues is 43,200 nautical miles, or just about 50,000 statute miles. I will also note that the distance refers to distance traveled (odometer reading), not the depth achieved. (People make this mistake all too frequently.)

Von Schlegell talked about how the novel was influenced by Herman Melville's (*Moby Dick*, of course, but also Melville's other sea adventures). (Ironically, people complain about all the details on whales and whaling in *Moby Dick*, yet this has far more "expository lump".)

Nordley commented on a scientific aspect: although Verne talks about the energy powering the Nautilus, he does not describe any sort of battery that might store energy for future use. Anderson said that the hero of the book is the submarine, which most panelists seemed to agree somewhat with, though Nordley said it was a dialectical and as such, does not really have a main protagonist or hero.

The idea was put forward that in many ways, Nemo seemed to be an early version of Gandhi (though obviously more willing to use violence).

Babel Conference Ambassadorial Reception Wednesday 8:00pm Hilton

Description: "Come join us for a reception welcoming everyone to this year's Worldcon and our Star Trek 40th Anniversary Celebration. Star Trek costumes invited."

Estimated attendance: way too many people

This replaced the traditional "Meet the Authors" (or whatever) party, but was so overcrowded and loud that one could not really meet anyone. We stood in line for cake, and true to our luck, the person in front of us got the last piece of chocolate cake, while we had to settle for white cake.

Overrated Films and Overlooked Movies Thursday 10:00am ACC 205-B

Adam-Troy Castro, Dr. John L. Flynn, MaryAnn Johanson, Mark R. Leeper (mod), Frank Wu

Description: "There are some films with a bad reputation but which are really quite good. There are some films with a good rep which are just dogmeat. A few highly opinionated film fans will discuss these overrated films and overlooked movies with the aid of the audience."

Estimated attendance: 80 people (or more)

Leeper began by saying that he gets hate mail when he criticizes someone's well-loved film, but "if

you don't get hate mail, you're not doing your job." He added that he was here "because I have eccentric views."

Johanson said that when she said that *Pitch Black* was overrated, she got lots of hate mail. Flynn said he liked *Pitch Black*.

Wu said that he was willing to say that *The Matrix* makes no sense. Leeper said that most people like *The Matrix*, but it does nothing for him. He added that he has discovered a new observed fact: "I will not like any science fiction film after the 400th bullet is shot."

Castro said that his objection is that all the people in *The Matrix* are on the wrong side. Given that the Earth has been ravaged to the point where it can barely support the people who are currently out of life support, taking millions (billions?) more out of life support will just kill them all. Johanson admitted that even though she loved *The Matrix*, she agreed with everything Castro said.

Later from the audience Dan Kimmel said that the philosophy is that it is "better to face harsh reality than live in a wonderful fantasy." Johanson said that the flaw is not in the movie--it is in the characters is in not recognizing the problems in succeeding. Castro said that *Logan's Run* had the same problem forty years ago.

Flynn said that films similar to *The Matrix* but somewhat overlooked were *Dark City* and *The Thirteenth Floor*. Wu felt that *The Matrix* was popular because, "In *The Matrix*, no opportunity for coolness was neglected."

Leeper, in a Tolstoian moment, suggested that all overrated films are overrated in the same way, but all overlooked films are overlooked differently. He suggested three major divisions of overlooked films: those not noticed, those (wrongly) disliked, and cheapies. Johanson added a fourth category: independent films on DVD (though those share the characteristics of the first and third categories).

Regarding suggesting actual films, Leeper started with *Cypher*, from the director of *Cube* and *Nothing*, also recommended. Johanson seconded the recommendation for *Nothing*, and everyone agreed that they did not want to say more about it or fear of spoiling the experience.

Castro recommended the film *Strings*, about a war on a planet of marionettes, and said that the premise was very well developed. He said the scene of the birth of a marionette was particularly well-done.

Castro named (and Leeper seconded) *The Revenants* (a.k.a. *They Came Back*, in which the dead return, not as scary flesh-eating monsters but just annoyances. Flynn added *The Last Man on Earth* in that broad category, which he noted was based on a Richard Matheson novel, *I Am Legend*, also made into *The Omega Man* (with Charlton Heston) and being remade now with Will Smith. (*The Last Man on Earth* starred Vincent Price.) Castro observed that the adaptations "get worse and worse as the budget goes up." Flynn said that *The Last Man on Earth* was available in the "two-for-\$11 bin--yes, I shop there." (I have seen it on some inexpensive double-feature horror DVDs as well.)

Leeper said he would recommend *What Dreams Must Come*, but only for the art direction. Castro said, "*What Dreams Must Come* works for me on all levels."

Johanson said that she loved *A Scanner Darkly*, but most critics thought it was too talky. Leeper thought the disguise suit was all wrong; it was the complete opposite of inconspicuous. A paper bag over the head would have done better. Wu said it was Dick's great theme that "reality is not what you think it is."

Castro said that *On the Beach* was once considered great, but does not stand up on any level. Among other flaws, everyone in it is far too civilized given that the world is ending. One example he gave

was that the radiation was caused in large part by the United States, yet the American captain and crew are welcomed with open arms. Johanson recommended an overlooked film on the same theme, the Canadian film *Last Night*, in which the world is going to end (the cause is completely unspecified) and everyone approaches the end differently. Johanson said that this was filmmaker Don McKellar's response to *Armageddon* and all that sort of film. Flynn named another film of this sort, *Miracle Mile*, although in that it is only a couple of people who know about the impending doom.

Leeper added *Gattaca* and *Final Cut* to the list. (The former has some reputation among fans, but the latter is virtually unknown.)

Flynn said that anything shot in black-and-white is poo-hooped by students today. He said this means they do not watch such classic British science fiction films as *The Four-Sided Triangle*, *The Creeping Unknown*, *Enemy from Space*, *The Damned*, and *Alphaville*. He said that the problem was that all films after *Star Wars* are about "The Ride", and would like to see a return to more thoughtful films.

Other recommendations as overlooked films were *Delicatessen* (from the makers of *The City of Lost Children*, also overlooked). Audience members suggested *The Killer Shrews* (which the panelists felt was justifiably low-rated), *Atomic Dog*, and *Happy Accidents*. I suggested *Whole Wide World*, a biography of Robert E. Howard with Vincent D'Onofrio. Johanson said that *Gods and Monsters* is also a film of interest to horror fans (being about James Whale), but often overlooked by them.

(From the audience, Dan Kimmel said that both *Happy Accidents* and *Final Cut* are overlooked because they were barely distributed.)

Someone asked about *Primer* which Johanson said was fantastic, and Leeper described as "completely opaque," but with extremely realistic dialogue for development engineers.

Another audience member felt that *A.I.* was an underrated film (though presumably not an overlooked one). Flynn said the film took place in four periods and each had their charm. Johanson thought that it was better described as four movements, like a symphony. Leeper said that the movie addressed the question of what a sentient being does when its life-span is many, many times that of its purpose: "What happens if you live long beyond your purpose of existence?"

Other audience nominations for overlooked films included *Solaris* (both versions), *Afterlife* (a Japanese film), *The Quiet Earth*, *Interstate 60*, *The Iron Giant*, *Battle in Outer Space*, and *Robinson Crusoe on Mars*. Flynn said that the latter was some of Byron Haskins's best work, especially the realistic Mars landing. Leeper noted that the war machines and space suits were re-used from earlier movies, which was a bit distracting.

[Before I even finished this report, we rented *Interstate 60* from Netflix, found it utterly charming, and immediately bought a copy. If you liked *Joe Versus the Volcano*, you will almost definitely like this. And we like *Joe Versus the Volcano*--we have watched it six times in the last six years.]

Returning to overrated films, Lynn asked, "Did we really need another *King Kong*? Or another *Planet of the Apes*?"

I said that a recent overlooked film was *The Call of Cthulhu*, a 2005 silent (!) film set in the Cthulhu Mythos of H. P. Lovecraft, and available only on DVD. (Several of us nominated this for a Hugo, I think, though unsuccessfully.)

Another audience member said that the films of Guillermo Del Toro tended to be overlooked: *Cronos*, *The Devil's Backbone*, and *Mimic*. (Someone qualified this to be the non-comic-book films of Del Toro.) Castro said that Del Toro has a new film coming out soon, *Pan's Labyrinth*.

Since upcoming films had been mentioned, Flynn said he was looking forward to Darren Aronofsky's *The Fountain* and Clive Owen's *Children of Men*.

Johanson said that she "had forgotten how powerful the original *Gojira* was." Someone else said that she "had forgotten how frightening the original *Dracula* was"

Castro mentioned the early talkie *Just Imagine* (notable as the only media mention before "The Flintstones" that had food pills). I said, "It doesn't stand up well," to which Castro replied, "It didn't stand up well then."

Wu promoted his short film, "Guidolon, the Giant Space Chicken". (CD-ROMs of the Quicktime Movie were available on the freebie table, but we are not too keen on putting random CD-ROMs in our PC in general.)

Reviewing Film & Television
Thursday 11:30am Room 207 B, ACC
Dr. Bob Blackwood (mod), MaryAnn Johanson, Bill Warren

Description: "It's not the same as reviewing books. Or is it? What special skills do you need to review movies and TV? Here from professional critics what it takes to do the job well."

Estimated attendance: 15 people

[Up until now, Leeper had thought that he was the longest-running reviewer on the Internet, with twenty-two years, but Warren pointed out that he had been reviewing on-line for twenty-five years.]

Johanson said that she wished more critics actually loved movies: going to them, seeing them, and so on. She said that for some movies, critics do not seem to try to enjoy them, and said (for example) that she dreaded going to *Talledega Nights*, but when she was actually watching it, she loved it.

Warren agreed, and said that one has to critique films in their own context; one should not hold a film such as *Talledega Nights* up to the same criteria as (say) *Million Dollar Baby*. Warren also thought that reviewers ought to know movie history. [I can second that--most people "reviewing" on Usenet do not seem to know anything about movies before 1980.]

Blackwood said that in Chicago, reviewers do not talk to each other after screenings. He said he does not go to many screenings because, he explained, "If it's bad, I don't want to be a week ahead of everyone else. If it's a good film, I can wait." He also felt that the film critic on television talk too much about industry information ("so-and-so's contract is up") and not enough about the films themselves.

Warren said, "The problems are largely a matter of access." The studios seem to be having fewer and fewer advance screenings. [I know that the On-Line Critics Society has a long list of films that were not screened for critics in advance.] He adds that if he is not laughing at a film, but the audience is, he does mention this in his review.

If success in reviewing is getting quoted, Warren said, then Joel Siegel leads in this. But Warren sees success as occurring when he like a movie and then sees that others did too. (He sees his book, *Keep Watching the Skies*, as a success, and commented that Jonathan Winters and Gary Owens have both told him they love it.)

Johanson said, "Feedback from the readers has been the mark of success that means the most to me." Name recognition is another measure, she added, but in general it is "nice to have a regular

readership . . . who appreciates what you're doing." An audience member later added that success is the readers' trust.

Blackwood said that he does not focus on an actor's performance in his reviews because there are too many factors that can affect that, and a reviewer can turn people off by "picking on" one person. Warren added that he does not understand the hatred of Keanu Reeves that he sees in reviews. And though many people think that the more acting there is, the better it is, Warren gives the counter-example of Robert Mitchum. He tells the story of Mitchum reading a script and making the notation "NAR" next to some of his scenes. Asked what this meant, Mitchum replied, "No acting required." The real question, he said, is whether the actor is acting at an appropriate level. He said that John Wayne's acting is often denigrated, but that Wayne's only bad performances were in *The Conqueror* and *The Greatest Story Ever Told*.

Johanson cited Viggo Mortenson as saying that actors have limited control, and are really just part of the director's palette. However, Mortenson added, his job as an actor is to be the best shade of blue he can be. On the other hand, Warren said that Orson Welles made every actor think that the movie was about his character. [There are shades of this in *Shakespeare in Love*.]

(I mentioned later that attacking actors sometimes means that people will miss really good films because they have an actor who up to that point has been considered terrible. Examples would be Jim Carrey (*The Truman Show*, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*); Adam Sandler (*Punch Drunk Love*); and Will Farrell (*Elf*.)

Leeper said that he sometimes likes to discuss a film or read other reviews before completing his review, but wondered what was fair in this regard. Warren said there was certainly no problem with basic fact-checking ("What was the wife's name?"). Johanson said that you needed to judge how likely you are to become "infected." Warren felt it was okay to cite other reviews (with attribution, of course), and other reviews can help illuminate a film.

Blackwood said that one problem is that critics are pre-disposed to believe studio press releases too much. From them, he said, you can get an idea of whether a film will make money, but not whether it is good. This reliance on studio information led Warren to bemoan the fact that "people think a negative review is intrinsically a more honest review than a positive one." Johanson said that there is a notion out there that critics are high-brow and "see only black-and-white Hungarian movies ten hours long that the director committed suicide after."

Blackwood said that there is a prejudice against science fiction and fantasy (unless backed up by huge numbers like *The Lord of the Rings*).

From the audience, John Flynn mentioned that some reviewers seem to write their reviews before (or without) seeing the movie. Warren said that Rod Lurie did this with a "Batman" movie and ended up being caught because he described a long scene that had been cut from the final release. Johanson described this as "pre-criticism."

Warren said that the problem now is that the marketing campaign has become more important than the movie.

Measure of Success: Awards from A to Z
Thursday 2:30 ACC 212-A
David Bratman, Moshe Feder (mod), Jerry Kaufman

Description: "The historical perspective. Overview of some of the awards, current and defunct. What do they all mean?"

Estimated attendance: 5 people

Feder has been associated with the World Fantasy Awards and the Sidewise Awards. Bratman has been a Hugo Awards administrator and a Mythopoetic Awards administrator. Kaufman said he has "voted in some awards," but also has been on the jury for the Readercon Small Press Awards, the Endeavor Awards, and the Tiptree Awards. (One of the audience members was Lindalee Stuckey, who is involved with the Golden Duck Awards. Rob Gates has been involved with the Galactic Spectra Awards and the Lambda Literary Awards. I have been on the jury for the Readercon Small Press Awards and am on the jury for the Sidewise Awards.)

Bratman said that there is an obvious danger in the proliferation of awards: one can end up with "The Best Paperback Book by a Canadian" or similarly narrow award. (I am reminded of Mark Olsen's rule for creating new Hugo Awards--the question is not whether there is something this year that deserves it, but whether one can consistently find enough candidates that are worthy that the nomination process actually trims the field down.)

The Tiptree Award, Bratman said, is for a fuzzy set, so it is actually a fairly broad category. "Centrality helps," he added, because one can extend it in more than one direction to find candidates.

Bratman also said that the primary purpose of awards is ego-boo. But adding more awards deletes the ego-boo aspect.

Feder said that the goal of the awards is to increase sales. (But the only award that has any commercial value is the Hugo Award.)

Bratman feels that they should have dropped the "Best Artist" Hugo category a few years ago and kept the "Best Artwork" (for an individual piece), in part because "artist" is so badly defined.

Bratman said that for the Hugos the key step is the nominations. Feder said that people say that they do not nominate because they have not read much, and then vote even if they have read only one of the nominees. It should be the other way away, he said.

Bratman said he has long ago given up caring, so he can be completely impartial as a Hugo Administrator. He took the job because he was interested in the actual voting process.

The other person in the audience said that it is not just ego-boo: librarians look at awards. (Though these are probably ones like the Newberry and the Hugo, rather than the Readercon Small Press Awards.)

**Different Types of Writing?
Thursday 4:00pm ACC 207-C**

Maya Kaathryn Bohnhoff (mod), James Patrick Kelly, Stephen Leigh, Delia Sherman, Robert Silverberg

Description: "The Novel, Novella, Short Story, etc. Is one just longer than the other or are they really different? And what about screenplays?"

Estimated attendance: 25 people

Bohnhoff described herself as "a lifetime member of the 'Analog' mafia." Silverberg did not introduce himself--then again, he needs no introduction. He was also the only one who did not flog his or her books.

Bohnhoff asked the obvious question: is it just length that distinguishes among these forms? Sherman promptly answered, "No." Kelly elaborated that the answer was no, there were also issues of complexity, the number of themes, and the number of characters. Silverberg said that the answer was predictable, noting, "If we disagreed with the thesis, why are we here?" Bohnhoff reiterated the comments about cast and complexity, and added world-building as more characteristic of the longer forms.

Bohnhoff asked if there was such a thing as a short story idea as opposed to a novel idea. Silverberg said that Edgar Allan Poe said that the essence of the short story is that one thing happens. This means no sub-plots. So you cannot have someone traveling from Brooklyn to California in a wagon train, *and* trying to invent the airplane. A novel, on the other hand, a novel has a confrontation, which leads to a new plot direction, which leads to a new confrontation, and so on. A novella, Silverberg continued, is a short novel (less than 30,000 words). It has room for the sub-plots and the richly developed ideas of a novel, but not enough to sustain a novel.

Sherman compared the short story to a sprinter, and the novel to a long-distance runner. Also (as she put it), a novel does not have to get there first, it just has to get there. The short story, on the other hand, has a very limited number of characters who are not mere spear carriers.

Kelly said that the classic short story is a three-character story. There are two characters in a relationship; then a third character arrives and changes this relationship. (This third character can be something like "Nature" rather than another person.) In a novel, change is reflected in the world you have built as well. This, Kelly said, magnifies the small into the large.

Bohnhoff said that you may have multiple story arcs in a novel, and said that she had a trilogy that started out as a novelette. Silverberg reacted to that with the flat statement, "That's careless." Bohnhoff said that even when it was a trilogy, Jim Baen asked, "Do you have another one? Can you write more about these people?"

Silverberg compared the differences between a novel and a short story to those between a sonnet and an epic poem. With a sonnet, he said, "You've been hit by the one little point of light that' at the end of it," while the "Iliad" is one situation flowing into another. A short story would be Achilles in a snit, Agamemnon returning the girl, Achilles saying, "Okay, I've been a schmuck," end of story, five thousand words.

Sherman said that a short story can, however, have the "feeling of deep background." Silverberg agreed, adding that the background of a short story can rise to the surface at the end to provide illumination.

Kelly pointed out, "We have a narrative burden mainstream writers don't have; we have to do world-building." He then talked about writers who write for original anthologies who are paid a fee based on the word length requested, but write more than they were paid for. Silverberg said, "I gave them more their money too, which in my younger days I wouldn't have dreamed of doing." He said that Scheherazade needs a minimum number of nights, no matter what. But he always produced a story of the length he intended. For example, before he started *The Alien Years* he told the publisher it would be about 600 pages long; it was 604.

Bohnhoff said that she was most comfortable at the 7500- to 10,000-word length. Silverberg said that he has a 1000-word story, but thinks something this short is a waste of an idea. He said that he looks at the idea and decides what its length is. Then he analyzes the ideas for characters, science fiction content, and so on, based on length. A short story, he added, has "the one burst of life."

Kelly asked, "Do you know the bones of the story before you start?" Silverberg answered, "I don't believe in setting out on voyages without knowing where I'm going." However, he said that in *Lord Valentine's Castle*, at page 472 he realized that the villain was someone different than he thought. "I

am a serious technician," he added. "I don't just make it up as I go along." When he had problems writing *Up the Line*, he said, "I couldn't take six months to get it straight. I had to do it that day."

Sherman said that she takes a completely opposite approach. Silverberg warned that if writing is your day job, then Sherman's approach will not work. He also said that editors do not care if your novel looks like your proposal; they care if it looks like a novel. They do not want a 90,000-word short story. Bohnhoff said that she wrote one once. It had lots of running around, and she was told, "There's too much action in this novel." Silverberg said the problem is not necessarily that it is too dull or too frenetic. But he said that 90,000 words of someone trying to build a time machine is a short story.

I asked where the novelette fit into all this. Silverberg said that the novelette is an artificial creation. Editors wanted to have a 25,000-word story, two stories of 8,000 to 12,000 words, and a few under 10,000 words to put together for a single magazine issue. Kelly said that the novelette is a concept strictly within our genre. It is a short story in which the world is developed more fully. The character's relationship to the world is also more fully developed.

Kelly also said that a short story can observe the unities, but not a novella. Silverberg disagreed, saying the Fritz Leiber's "The Big Time" does it. But he added, "We are trying to arrive at definitions on this panel, not exceptions."

Kelly said that sequels in short fiction are rare because the author cannot assume the reader has read the earlier works, and because the works are short, there is little room to provide a backstory.

Bohnhoff said that the venues (e.g. book, magazine) set a maximum word length, and a novelette can be a good length for character development.

Silverberg said that there are fundamental differences between the short story and the novel, but had more difficulty placing "the novelette, which Evelyn unfortunately mentioned." The novelette and the novella are variant terms for something between a short story and a novel, he said.

Kelly said that he thinks the problem with combining the novelette and the novella as one Hugo category, Silverberg would win most of them. He also said that longer stories within each category tend to win (though he admitted that he had not made an actual study of the historical data). This, however, is not necessarily true for novels.

Bohnhoff said that a short story (3000 to 5000 words) has to hint at the backstory with a word or a phrase. She said that she *can* write screenplays to a specific length. This was in part because screenplays came from other people's ideas.

Someone asked about short shorts. Bohnhoff said that she would never attempt it. Silverberg said that his "Day Million" is 2000 words long. Kelly said, "I would hesitate to call [a short short] a stunt, but a freak of nature."

**Autographing: Connie Willis
Thursday 5:00pm Dealers Room**

There was quite a line--and it was not moving. It turned out that two women at the front were having a long conversation with Willis. While I understand that the committee does not want to tell the Guest of Honor what to do, I still think that after five minutes, then should have mentioned that there was a long line waiting. And they definitely should have announced a three-book limit, because many people had more than three books.

Guest of Honor Event and Speech
Thursday 8:00pm Room 204 ABC, ACC
Mike Resnick, James Gurney, Connie Willis

Description: "A spotlight time for each of L.A.con IV's Guests of Honor. Heinlein Award. Others?"

Fred Patten was given a Special Committee Award.

Mike Resnick reminisced about the 1993 Worldcon, when the entire SFWA budget was spent on six hundred condoms. They were gone by Saturday night. "We may not be the best writers' association, but by God, we're the friendliest!" he said.

The Heinlein Medal(s) went to Jack Williamson and Greg Bear.

Artist Guest of Honor James Gurney said, "Science fiction and fantasy are the evidence of things not seen."

[I assume that Connie Willis's words will be well-covered by enough other people that I do not have to do so.]

Sidewise Award Ceremony
Friday 10:00am Lido A, HILTON
Evlyn C. Leeper

Description: "The annual awards for Alternate History works are presented."

Estimated attendance: 10 people

As usual, attendance was fairly low, and neither the winners nor any acceptors were there. (With one acceptor, it turned out to be crossed signals--the winner had asked if he would be able to accept, but had not later confirmed that he should. At least he was able to take the plaque with him, saving me from having to send both plaques back to Steven Silver to be mailed out.)

The Short Form nominees were:

- | William Barton. "Harvest Moon" (*Asimov's* September 2005)
- | A. M. Dellamonica. "The Illuminated Heretic" (*Alternate Generals III*, ed. Harry Turtledove)
- | Kim Newman and Paul McAuley. "The 2005 Hugo Award Ceremony Script" (posted on Kim Newman Website, September 2005)
- | Jason Stoddard. "Panacea" (posted on *SciFiction*, Sep. 14, 2005)
- | Lois Tilton. "Pericles the Tyrant" (*Asimov's* October/November 2005)

- | Ian R. MacLeod. *The Summer Isles* (Aio)
- | Sophia McDougall. *Romanitas* (Orion UK)
- | Paul Park. *A Princess of Roumania* (Tor)

The winners were Lois Tilton's "Pericles the Tyrant" and Ian R. MacLeod's *The Summer Isles*.

Sightseeing in Japan
Friday 11:30am Room 205 A, ACC

**Hirohide Hirai, Hiroaki Inoue, Takayuki Karahashi, Evelyn C. Leeper, John Maizels (mod),
Tadao Tomomatsu, Maho Watanabe**

Description: "Where to go and what to do before and after next year's Worldcon. And what should I know about the Japanese culture to keep me from insulting anyone by mistake?"

Estimated attendance: 100 people

Five people might have been a manageable panel, but at the convention, they removed one person and added three more, one of whom did not speak English! If that were not bad enough, two people have DVD presentations--and had not tested the technical details ahead of time. One person had a PowerPoint presentation--ditto. I had a piece of paper with notes. I had no technical difficulties. (I will include my notes for presentation at the end of this panel write-up.)

Apparently the Japan National Tourist Office had insisted that their representatives should be on the panel--those were the additions. Maizels had some useful opening remarks, though they were mostly generalities. "Everything about Japan is logical, even if the logic is a mystery." "Japan is not all raw fish." "Everything is on time, even the trains." He said it was the safest place anywhere, with which I would agree. He also said that everywhere had Western-style toilets, with which I would disagree--we found only Japanese-style toilets at the War Museum in Tokyo, for example. I said that since the stall doors and walls extend all the way to the floor, there is no privacy problem. However, I suggested that the one important thing to remember was to take all the items out of your pants pockets before using the Japanese-style ones. (This got a laugh, as did my "bandana" suggestion later.)

Tomomatsu is a Japanese-American actor who recounted anecdotes about his visit back to Japan to find his roots. They were amusing, but not useful. (For example, he is fairly large, so people would address him as "Hello, sumo-in-training, how are you?") He did say to always carry your passport, buy a wallet there (because American ones are the wrong size for the money), and use a dice bag for coins.

Maizels summarized by saying, "Don't behave like a dork."

Unfortunately, people came looking for specific suggestions and I think I was the only one who provided them. I may be biased, but other people also said that my part of the panel (done at high-speed, because there were so many people) was the best part by far.

The bottom line on this panel was that there were too many panelists, too much humor, and too much tech.

And now my notes:

My Ten Rules for Affordable Travel to Japan are:

- 1 When to go: The best time seems to be September or October. June, July, and August (especially) are very busy times and hard to get cheap airfares for. May is cherry-blossom time and probably just as bad. December is also busy.
- 1 Guide books: The Lonely Planet has the best information on hotels and getting around. Contact the Japan National Tourist Organization and get their brochures, including maps of Tokyo, Kyoto, and Japan. Stop in their offices in Tokyo and/or Kyoto for lots of useful pamphlets and information.
- 1 Airfare: Shop around. The "bucket shops" (ticket consolidators who place ads in the back of major city's newspapers' Sunday travel section) are a good place to start, as well as on-line search engines such as kayak.com and mobissimo.com.
- 1 Long-distance ground travel: Rail is the way to go, but it's expensive. Get a JapanRail Pass, but maximize its use by compacting all your long-distance travel. If you are doing a Tokyo-

Hiroshima-Kyoto loop in some form within a seven-day period, the one-week pass is cheaper. If you are going to Tokyo and Kyoto, being able to fly into one and home from the other will save you a couple of hundred dollars in ground costs getting back. (Tokyo uses Narita Airport; Kyoto uses Osaka's Kansai Airport.) The Rail Pass does not allow use of some of the fastest trains, though.

- | Local ground travel: Learn the subways and buses; taxis are expensive and the cities are too spread-out to walk. The Tokyo subway system is very simple, and color-coded (for those rare stations where you can't find a map labeled in romanji).
- | Hotels [as of 1996]: You can get reasonable double rooms for around US\$75/night. Singles are cheaper, or you can try youth hostels for even less if you don't mind all the rules. Reserve ahead; given that no one seems to require a deposit, it's probably safer to line up your rooms before locking in your plane ticket. (Note: all the cheaper places seem to be Japanese-style beds-futons on the floor-though with Western toilets. If you can't sleep on the floor, it will cost you.)
- | Eating: Your best bets are the restaurants with plastic food in the window with prices on it. Bring a pad of paper and just copy the symbols next to what you want, then give the paper to the person inside--much easier than dragging them out to the street to point to it. (If you have a digital camera, you can use that instead.) Learn the Japanese characters for the numbers; a lot of places show prices that way. Cheap dishes include noodle soups, pork cutlets, some Western dishes, and even sushi. Any restaurant where people are eating with forks and knives is probably expensive; stick to those which use chopsticks. Large department stores often have food departments where you can buy take-out sushi by the piece. We averaged about US\$35/day each for food, including all snacks, beverages (see below), etc.
- | Drinking: Beverages such as sodas and coffee cost about three times as much in a restaurant as from the ubiquitous street vending machines (US\$3 versus US\$1). To save money, stick to the machines. (Bring a bandana to hold the hot can of coffee after it comes out!) Restaurants serve water or small cups of tea, or both, free with meals. "Coffee shops" are even more expensive than restaurants (US\$5 a cup).
- | What to bring: Not much--you'll be carrying your own luggage through big train stations and such. Bring comfortable shoes. You will be on your feet a lot. In the fight between "comfortable" and "easy to take off at the door," comfortable should win. (Bring a shoe horn if that helps. Make sure your socks do not have holes!) A compass is useful (especially in finding your way around large department stores), and not something everyone thinks to bring. Bring a fork if you must use one.
- | Money: Bring travellers cheques. There are ATMs, but they are not usually on networks like Plus or Cirrus (the one at Narita Airport is), and most don't take North American bank cards, or have prompts in English. Cash advances against credit cards can cost a bundle in finance charges unless you pay the money in first to create a credit balance. (This does not apply to debit cards.) Very few (cheap) places take credit cards (or debit cards).

Our *total* cost for a three-week trip for *two* people in 1996 was US\$5409.

My full travelogue is at <http://www.travel-library.com/asia/japan/leeper.html>.

Suggested reading includes:

- | Daniel George, *Japan* (Travelers Tales)
- | Shifra Horn, *Shalom, Japan* (Kensington)
- | *Japan* (Lonely Planet)

Frankenstein 75
Friday 1:00pm Room 207 C, ACC
Scott Essman, Eric L. Hoffman (mod), Charles Lee Jackson II

Description: "Seventy-five years ago, in 1931, Universal Studios released *Frankenstein* and brought 'the modern Prometheus' to the silver screen. Since then, *Frankenstein* (or, more correctly, his monster) has seen a lot of changes, from the original through sequels and remakes and versions by Andy Warhol, Roger Corman, and Mel Brooks. Come take part as experts and fans reminisce about *Frankenstein* 'puttin' on the Ritz'."

Estimated attendance: 15 people

There was not much new here for anyone even reasonably familiar with the Universal *Frankenstein*. It is often a mistake to attend panels that you are expert in unless you *know* that the panelists are more so. And, again, some of the panelists were more into schtick rather than information.

Hoffman said that he was introduced to *Frankenstein* from the "Shock Theater" package distributed through Screen Gems to television. And he had seen the Hammer films, which were the first done in color, but focused on Baron *Frankenstein* rather than on the Creature.

Jackson said that it should have said "Based on the title of a book by Mary Shelley." The 1910 Thomas Edison/Charles Ogle version is much closer to the description of the creation as written in the book. But he also thinks the book is slow, especially compared to Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. (This is probably just a reflection of the differences in writing styles between 1818 and 1890.)

Hoffman said another way people know the story is through "Classics Illustrated". Jackson said that the most accurate version might be the Mr. Magoo cartoon.

Essman talked a lot about Jack Pierce and the make-up.. Jackson said that the make-up and costume were so hot that Universal developed a noiseless wind machine to cool Karloff down.

There was a lot of discussion of Eddie Parker as possibly playing the Wolfman, and Gil Perkins as the Monster. Essman claimed that it was either Parker or Perkins encased in the ice in *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man*, and that Parker also substituted for Lon Chaney as the Monster in *The Ghost of Frankenstein*.

Jackson said that Parker was always very busy, a real workhorse at both Universal and Columbia. Parker was the stunt double for Batman, Flash Gordon, and Buck Rogers.

Essman mentioned that the sets for *Frankenstein's* lab were done by Kenneth Strickfadden, and were re-used by Mel Brooks for *Young Frankenstein*. Hoffman said that they were also used, in color, from *Blackenstein*.

Essman said that the film *Dracula* was considered slow, and stage-play-like, but *Frankenstein* was not like that. In some test, the Monster had a 90% recognition factor--though as "Frankenstein". And the caricature one usually sees, of a lumbering creature with outstretched arm, is Glenn Strange from *House of Frankenstein* and *House of Dracula* rather than Karloff.

The panelists talked about all the Universal films, including the Abbott and Costello entries, but did not mention Lon Chaney in the "Frankenstein" episode of "Tales of Tomorrow". Jackson thought that *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* was the best Universal "Frankenstein" film. (What has he been smoking?) Mark Leeper asked about *Victor Frankenstein* as a faithful version; panelists had not seen it.

Literary Vs. Media SF
Friday 2:30pm Room 210 B, ACC
Scott Edelman (mod), James Frenkel, Jim Minz, Dr. Isaac Szpindel

Description: "Why the feud? Can't we all just get along?"

Estimated attendance: 15 people

Edelman started in comics, but prefers writing in his own universe; he now works for the Sci-Fi Channel. Frenkel straddles the line: he like doing tie-ins, but "loves editing real science fiction and fantasy." Minz is an editor at Del Rey, and had previously been at Tor. Szpindel has a science background, but also writes for film and television and so also straddles the line.

Edelman said that to him, "sci-fi" means media science fiction, and working with that is not the same as developing a novel from scratch.

Minz said that he thought that writers who write media may have a perception issue. Science fiction and fantasy has a "wonderful range" of works.

Edelman noted that before DVDs, media fiction was the only way for fans to re-experience a film or television show. He pointed out that Roddenberry started writing in other people's universes before doing "Star Trek", and asked, "How much time does a writer have to spend in other people's universes if they have their own?"

Szpinde said that he turns down media tie-in jobs because of the stigma, but writing in other people's universes can also happen in literary science fiction.

Frenkel warned that young writers who start in other people's universes take the easy way out, but have no opportunity to create their own stuff. The worst is novelizations, which already have the plot, characterizations, and so on worked out.

Edelman said that his slush pile contains a lot of tie-in stuff which does not admit it is tie-in stuff. That is, there is a starship captain, an alien first mate, and so on, but all the names are changed.

Minz said that people may decide that tie-ins are their career. It is faster and easier than writing one's own novels--he likened it to "paint-by-numbers". But if writers are worried about science fiction novels being ignored, he pointed out that the average science fiction novel has a better chance of being reviewed than the average mainstream novel. And *American Heritage* magazine has said that Gene Wolfe is the most under-rated author in America, and Michael Dirda has said that Gene Wolfe is one of the five authors he must re-read before he dies.

Edelman said that when he was editing *Science Fiction Age*, they would sometimes have covers illustrating a story inside and sometimes a media cover. The media cover spiked the readership for that issue, but the magazine did not retain them. Minz said the same is true in books, meaning that tie-ins sell, but the readership does not carry over to the author's non-tie-in books. He said that publisher have the problem of their own media tie-ins competing with literature for shelf space.

Many writers-to-be think that media tie-ins are a good way to break in to the field, but Frenkel said that authors should realize that short stories are the easiest way to get into the business, although they may have to go to second-tier publications or even non-paying venues. (Minz said later that while short stories are a good way to break in, novellas are not.) Edelman added that publishers will not buy media tie-ins from new authors. Publishers want someone with a track record, because media tie-ins are commissioned by the publisher and they want to know that an author can produce a readable book, on time.

Szpindel said that it is not easy to break in to the media market, but if you are already a media writer, then writing tie-ins is easier. He did object to the way Frenkel was using the term "real science fiction" to mean non-media science fiction. Frenkel clarified this, saying that works based on media or share-cropped works are not, in his opinion, "real science fiction." Edelman added, "At its heart, any

media tie-in is a collaboration." Frenkel noted that there is nothing wrong with collaborations; for example, Larry Niven and Jerry Purnelle are better as a team than individually. Minz added Allan Cole and Chris Bunch, and Margaret Weis and Tracey Hickman (And other teams are at least as good as teams as individually, e.g., C. L. Moore and Henry Kuttner, Frederik Pohl and C. M. Kornbluth). Of course, in these writing teams, there is interaction between the two, while in media tie-ins, the author does not generally have a lot of interaction with the originator of the universe.

Edelman said he thought that there is no feud between episode writers and movie writers, but Szpindel immediately responded, "You're wrong." Ultimately, he said, it boils down to the fact that "we value originality over non-originality." Frenkel said that television writers told him that they were more creative than film writers.

Edelman said there was a sub-stigma: "I'll read tie-ins by non-tie-in authors."

The mantra of this panel seemed to be "You're wrong," with this being the standard response of one of the panelists to any claim made by another panelist.

Magazines: Flourishing or Withering Away?

Friday 4:00pm Room 207 B, ACC

Ellen Datlow (mod), Scott Edelman, Gordon Van Gelder, Bridget McKenna, Sheila Williams

Description: "There used to be pulp magazines by the score publishing science fiction and fantasy, later to be supplanted by 'prozines' and slick magazines. But there are fewer and fewer now. Or are there? Are the magazines surviving? Are they moving over to the internet? Or are the publications there a whole 'nother thing?"

Estimated attendance: 50 people

Datlow edited *Omni*. Edelman edited *Science Fiction Age* from 1993 to 2000. McKenna edits *Aeon* (a quarterly). Williams has edited *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* for thirty years. Van Gelder has edited *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* for many years; the magazine itself is the oldest of those represented here, being fifty-seven years old.

Datlow said that in spite of everything, there are still several magazines surviving. Van Gelder said that this panel is at every Worldcon and this is the first time in nine years it has asked whether magazines are dying instead of assuming they are and asking why. "Magazines are in some form dinosaurs," he said, "but I believe the dinosaurs and mammals can co-exist." He was not sure whether the panel should be addressing magazine content or magazine sales, but thought things looked about the same as in previous years.

Williams said that the drop in magazine sales is deceptive. There was a drive in the 1980s, she explained, to pimp up subscriptions to get more in advertising revenue based on the numbers. When this failed to generate as much as they had hoped, they discontinued the cut-rate subscriptions they had been offering, and whatever rise they had had vanished. But the figures now are more solid than in the 1980s.

Edelman said that the short story is flourishing, but making a living from short stories is not. (I am reminded of a Readercon 15 panel on ambition, where the panelists were asked by the moderator what their earlier ambitions were and whether they felt they had succeeded. Barry Malzberg said, "To make a living as a science fiction writer, and no, I didn't." Howard Waldrop then said, "Barry stole my thunder, but I'll go him one better. I tried to make a living in science fiction writing short stories.") The impetus to create magazines for these short stories has different places to go than it had before, places such as *Lady Churchill's Rosebud Wristlet*, *Flytrap*, and so on.

McKenna said that one thing that Datlow did was that she "made the world respect the webzine." But he added, "Print isn't dead, not in our lifetime." Datlow said that print "boutique magazines" are run by one or two people, have high-quality fiction, and are "precious" but not in a negative way. She then read off a long list of such magazines that I could not write fast enough to get.

Williams said that even in the 1930s and 1940s magazines tended to last about ten years rather than forever. And Edelman said that all the other specialized genres are gone, except for mysteries. There are no Western magazines, no Zeppelin magazines, no train magazines, and so on. Van Gelder said this was in part because science fiction has been flexible in a way that "Wall Street Cop Stories" or "Spicy Zeppelin Stories" were not. Lots of magazines were killed off by television, and many were tried that went only to a couple of issues. He compared the phenomenon to Fox reality television shows--many get proposed or even tried, but few succeed.

McKenna said that back in the earlier days someone might propose a magazine of "just stories on Mars." Now they would create an anthology instead, which would have as many stories as two or three issues.

The newest professional magazine is *Realms of Fantasy*, which was founded in 1994. Edelman said that his definition of a "professional" magazine is one you can find accidentally. Williams said that *Apex* is carried in Barnes & Noble, but she is not sure that makes it a professional magazine. A variety of definitions were thrown around, using rates, circulation, distribution, and so on.

Datlow said some semi-professional magazines included *Helix*, *Strange Horizons*, *Chizine*, and Baen's on-line magazine. Edelman noted that Baen had tried various magazine formats before, including a paperback magazines (*New Destinies*). Sometime bigger is not better. When *Science Fiction Review* was semi-professional, it did okay at a circulation of 10,000. It died when it went to 40,000. Attempts to turn one's magazine professional, he said, has killed many fine semi-prozines.

Williams said that *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* was started by a publisher already doing *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* and *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*, who had heard about science fiction fans as a market. It did not come out of the field itself. Datlow added that even those publishers were not omniscient-- *Isaac Asimov's Adventure Magazine* failed after four issues. Williams said that *Science Fiction Digest* and *Comics Digest* also failed. But in general the economics of scale in overhead costs help a lot for an established publisher. Datlow agreed, noting that *Omni* was supported by *Penthouse*, and Edelman said that *Twilight Zone Magazine* was supported by *Gallery*.

Van Gelder said that it is harder to create a magazine devoted to a concept like slipstream, which starts out by saying claiming "there's no there here."

Van Gelder said that bookstores were not always helpful to magazines. Hudson's outlet in airports, for example, want a three-hour (!) turnover. And not all distributors are entirely honest.

Datlow said that it is hard to attract a younger audience because there are too many distractions. Edelman said that people who liked blowing up planets used to have to read, but now they don't. And he thought younger readers have a prejudice against the short story. Van Gelder said that publishers are training readers against magazines and short stories. He said that now people want novels to be longer. And if someone dislikes one story in a magazine, they will drop the whole magazine.

Datlow said that J. K. Rowling has done well in training younger readers to want longer works. But she also said that "urban living with mass transit is a perfect short story market." McKenna thought that the Internet was great both for the urban environment (no problems storing paper copies) and for short stories (which can be read on-line more easily than novels).

Someone from Canada in the audience said that she used to teach reading with "readers" (anthologies). Now the schools use novels. And then they expect students to be able to write

sort stories! Williams said, "My daughter is going into 8th grade and she never had a reader." Schools are terrified of offending parents, and it is easier to vet one novel than twenty stories, where one bad story can sink the whole book. Edelman said that some authors might be willing to edit their works for school readers, many are not.

Van Gelder thought that academic publishing (meaning publishing for the school market) may be even more insular than science fiction publishing. One sees the same stories over and over: "Virtuoso" by Herb Goldsmith, "The Test" by Ted Thomas (I remember this one from school), and "Flowers for Algernon" by Daniel Keyes. Edelman said that what teachers want seems to be a readers' guide with each issue of the magazine.

Mars in the Movies
Friday 5:30pm Room 210 C, ACC
Gerry Williams

Description: "Since 1910, when Thomas Alva Edison lensed A Trip to Mars, the red planet Mars has been a favorite topic of over 100 feature films. Gerry Williams, creator of the MarsMovieGuide.com, takes us on a multimedia tour of some of the best (as well as the worst) movies about Mars ever made."

Estimated attendance: 30 people

This presentation consisted of film clips and stills from lots of movies about Mars. Done from a laptop, it had technical difficulties--it was set up to give an audible sound when the mouse was clicked, which led to all sorts of pops every time Williams adjusted the volume control, and that was for almost every clip.

A full list of Mars movies can be found at <http://www.MarsMovieGuide.com>; the ones included in this presentation were:

- | "A Trip to Mars" (1910)
- | *Aelita: Queen of Mars* (1924)
- | *Rocketship X-M* (1950)
- | *Flight to Mars* (1951)
- | *Invaders from Mars* (1953)
- | *The War of the Worlds* (1953)
- | *Devil Girl from Mars* (1954)
- | *The Angry Red Planet* (1960)
- | *Robinson Cruoe on Mars* (1964)
- | *Queen of Blood* (1966)
- | *Capricorn One* (1978)
- | *Lobster Men from Mars* (1989)
- | *Total Recall* (1990)
- | *Spaced Invaders* (1990)
- | *Mars Attacks!* (1996)
- | *Rocketman* (1997)
- | *Species II* (1998)
- | *My Favorite Martian* (1997)
- | *Red Planet* (2000)
- | *Mission to Mars* (2000)
- | *John Carpenter's Ghosts of Mars* (2001)
- | *Stranded* (2002)
- | *Destination: Mars!* (2002)

- | *The War of the Worlds* (2005) (Pendragon Films)
- | *The War of the Worlds* (2005) (Asylum Films)
- | *Doom* (2005)
- | *Benjamin Kenobi: Space Knight of the Future* (2005)

There were also clips or comments on upcoming films:

- | *Transformers* (2007)
- | *The Mars Underground*
- | *Robots of Mars*
- | *Christmas on Mars*
- | *Jeff Wayne's War of the World*
- | *Red Mars*
- | *John Carter of Mars*

I cannot say the presentation was enormously edifying, but it was a lot of fun.

Masquerade
Friday 8:00pm Arena, ACC
Phil Foglio

Description: "Traditionally one the highlights of the convention. Costuming experts from around the world sometimes spend the entire year preparing for this event. Come see what they've created."

This is covered by enough other people that I can skip it, I think.

Classics Remembered: *Space Cadet*
Saturday 10:00pm La Jolla, HILTON
Victor Koman (mod), Jean Lorra, Ph.D., Harry Turtledove, Toni Weiskopf, Jim Young

Description: "Heinlein's 'juveniles' might be his best. This one matches the convention's theme, and it's full of wonders. Matt Dodson taking a telephone from his luggage must have been astounding in 1948. That guess held up; others didn't; but how the author treats them!"

Estimated attendance: 25 people

[I am not sure why some people have degrees or titles listed on the programs. Is it their choice, or something the committee decided? All I know is it looks a little odd, because while people like Isaac Asimov, Greg Benford, and Vernor Vinge all had or have doctorates, you do not see them listing them as part of their name on convention programs.]

Weiskopf started by saying that with regard to Heinlein's work, the first novel of his that she read was *Time Enough for Love*, and "if you can get through *Time Enough for Love* and still love Heinlein, then you're there."

Koman spoke of the "graying" of science fiction fans, and said that while *Space Cadet* and other Heinlein juveniles used to bring in young fans, "I don't know how well *Space Cadet* and other Heinleins do that any more."

Turtledove said that his oldest daughter read *Space Cadet* when she was in her early teens, but did not

finish it. She was impressed that it had cell phones, though. Weisskopf suggested that one problem is that the planets Heinlein describes are not the planets as we know them today. Turtledove said that everyone underestimated what electronics would do, and so Heinlein still had people using slide rules.

On the other hand, Lorrh said, Heinlein overestimated space travel, with the book saying, "You can do this. You can go there." (Koman added, "Let's hear it for the second wave [of space exploration.]") Turtledove said that when Water Cronkite was covering the moon landing in 1969, Heinlein was the person he had with him.

Koman asked how many people read *Space Cadet* and decided to enlist in the Space Academy. Weisskopf replied, "I read *Starship Troopers* first so I was already devoted to the infantry."

Lorrh and Koman admitted that they did not re-read the book for the panel, but Lorrh said that one thing she remembered was the hypno-learning--and she wanted it.

Weisskopf and Koman both noted that Heinlein used the termed "Venerian" rather than "Venusian".

Turtledove said that in the military, "The I.Q. gap between leaders and followers shouldn't be more than thirty points." When someone called out, "I think we've gone too far in that direction," Turtledove replied, "He meant thirty points higher." Heinlein has content for adults, he added, unlike (for example) the Andre Norton juveniles. Young added, "*Space Cadet* is a big step forward from *Rocket Ship Galileo*." Weisskopf said that *Starman Jones* was even more complex.

Koman said that one aspect of this was that Heinlein was not afraid to use adult words or ideas (e.g., "plenipotentiary" or "skew-flip turns"). Heinlein assumed that if the reader cared, he or she would look it up. There was also the use of brand names for an air of realism. And the first edition hardcover even had interior illustrations.

Someone in the audience mentioned that John Dahlquist (of the missing four in *Space Cadet*) was a character from another Heinlein story.

Turtledove said that *Grumbles from the Grave* included letters about *Space Cadet*. One thing he noted was the error on the penultimate page: "Never lead with your left." That should have been "Never lead with your right." As Turtledove quoted Heinlein's Lazarus Long: "I shot an error into the air; it's still going everywhere."

Joseph Major (author of *Heinlein's Children*) noted another error: near the end of the first edition the word "recommissioned" is in bigger, skewed print. The first paperback edition left it out entirely. Young said it was a big shock when he discovered the paperbacks dropped the illustrations. The panel agreed, though, that they loved that the books became affordable.

I mentioned that it was a sign of the times that Heinlein's characters' names do not seem very multi-cultural today. People kept insisting it was wrong to criticize him for this, but I could not manage to get across that I was making an observation, not criticizing him.

Weisskopf said that one of Heinlein's points was that local customs vary, even on other planets. In this he departed from the standard (then, and to some extent even now) that other planets would be mono-cultural. Young said that he found Heinlein's multi-culturalism ground-breaking, especially in his best juvenile, *Citizen of the Galaxy*. Weisskopf said that the message of *Space Cadet* was "People of any race can become part of this culture [the Patrol]." Turtledove added, "One of the things we have to give the Nazis credit for is that they made racism unrespectable."

Koman said that Heinlein's juveniles have a lot of alien races. Turtledove said that his favorite alien race was in *Between Planets*.

Young said that Heinlein's time at Annapolis "informed" this book, and that he found a "quality of realism" in it that he did not find in Andre Norton (even though he loved *Galactic Derelict*). (In particular, Young said that being part Native American, he loved what Norton did with this.)

Young said he also sees a lot of Sinclair Lewis in Heinlein. Lewis's short stories are a lot of fun and often funny. (Note: Upton Sinclair was the Heinlein political connection, not Sinclair Lewis.)

Someone in the audience commented on the "real sense of respect Heinlein had for his readers." Weisskopf noted that in *Space Cadet* it is never revealed whether the training flight crash was real or not. Regarding that, Turtledove said that it is worth noting that the attitude then was that things will go wrong, but we will go on; now we have lawyers. "And grief counselors," Weisskopf added.

Weisskopf did say that the Patrol did seem a bit fascistic, saying things like "We've given the world a hundred years of peace."

Someone in the audience said that her librarian would not let girls check out any Heinlein books.

The Rise of Theocracy
Saturday 11:30am Room 201 B, ACC
Howard V. Hendrix (mod), Mike Shepherd Moscoe, Randy Smith, Robert Charles Wilson

Description: "Was Heinlein right? Is this our future? Who will be Nehemiah Scudder?"

Estimated attendance: 200 people

[This is a partial report. I left after about fifteen minutes because everyone, even the people "on my side," was way too strident.]

Wilson said that he thought the panel was mostly about the "Dominionists", who want an alliance among various Christian factors, and a government of three estates: an umbrella religious organization, the military, and the executive.

Smith said there are currently about 260 different Christian denominations, though there are some commonalities, not only among them, but with them and other religions. He talked about various "predictors" of these, such as a large family size, which says the family is probably either Catholic or Orthodox Jewish. He recommended Will Herberg's *Protestant--Catholic--Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* and Robert Wuthnow's *The Restructuring of Religion*. Wuthnow, Smith said, talk about the breakdown in unity within the three traditional categories of Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish. The new division is evangelical versus progressive (or conservative versus liberal). The conservative groups have allied, but not the progressive groups.

Moscoe is surprised how willing religious leaders are to work with politicians, saying that when politicians and religion get in bed together, the religion get screwed every time. He also said that conservatives want to "fly below the radar," so they do things like lie to exit pollers.

Hendrix recommended reading the neo-conservative Leo Strauss. He said that he models his own work on Cromwell's Commonwealth, and is more fearful of the Commonwealth than of the monarchy. (The recent BBC television mini-series "Monarchy" explained this fairly well: the monarch had limits set on his power from Magna Carta and other documents, while the Protector had no such limitations.) He said that the panel description focused on North America, but this is a world-wide phenomenon.

Moscoe said that it was important to remember that evangelicals are not the same as Dominionists.

The former are a very large group, the latter a very small one. (That was another problem with this panel--there was a very loose use of terminology.) He mentioned Rick Warren's *Purpose-Driven Life* and Pastor Hagee as sources of information on evangelicals.

There seemed to be very little discussion of causes of all this: economic uncertainty, powerlessness, and so on.

[As I said, I left early because everyone was too strident, but also because there was too much audience participation too early. I have also discovered that the first third of the time often has two-thirds of the information.]

Godzilla at 100
Saturday 2:30pm Room 201 D, ACC
Keith Aiken, Bob Eggleton, Eric L. Hoffman (mod), Takayuki Tatsumi, Gary Westfahl

Description: "Fifty years ago, Godzilla was released in the US. (It was released two years earlier in Japan.) Over the years, Godzilla has gone from giant monster and anti-nuclear message to a heroic warrior, keeping nasty monsters at bay, and back again. In that time, fans have come to love the giant lizard. How has he changed? Which changes were for the better? And where is he headed now?"

Estimated attendance: 50 people

Hoffman said that Godzilla has the most movies featuring him as any monster. (Somehow, I still think Frankenstein's monster or Dracula has been in more.)

Eggleton said that he got a "Godzilla" board game when he was six years old (forty years ago) and has not been the same since. In fact he was even in the 2002 film *Godzilla Versus Mechagodzilla*.

Aiken said that in addition to films, Godzilla has been in comic books (from Dark Horse) and even an animated television series. (Aiken has worked on various "Godzilla" DVDs.) Tatsumi said that his book *Full Metal Apache* has a chapter titled "Waiting for Godzilla".

Westfahl said that he had written an article about Godzilla, which was probably why he was chosen, but his son is really the one who should be on the panel. Westfahl felt that Godzilla was really aimed at the adolescent male, and noted that there were no women on the panel, and very few in the audience. (Later, Aiken noted that Mothra was the only creature in the "Godzilla" films that was definitely female. This obviously excludes the Tri-Star *Godzilla*, but then everyone does. It is often referred to as "GINO": Godzilla In Name Only.)

Westfahl noted that as Japan got stronger in the 1960s and on, Godzilla went from being an oppressor of Japan to being a symbol of Japanese strength. Aiken thought there were enough different interpretations to please everyone. Tatsumi said that it was really only the first film that had Godzilla as an enemy. (But what about *Godzilla Versus the Thing*?)

Eggleton and Tatsumi said that Godzilla's "Highland fling" gesture was not original--it had already become popular in comic books.

Westfahl said that the problem with the 1998 United States version was that it made Godzilla a reptile, not a primate (i.e., a man in a suit).

Eggleton gave an overview of the various "Godzilla" series. In the original (1954-1975) series, the original Godzilla died; it was the second one that you saw throughout the rest of the series. The 1983 feature was derived from the first feature, and the "Heisei" series really started with its sequel,

Godzilla Versus Biollante. Again in 2000, *Godzilla 2000 Millennium* again was derived from the original 1954 feature. It was then followed by a series of "Godzilla" films set in an alternate history in which Godzilla had attacked and destroyed Tokyo, and ended with *Godzilla: Final Wars*.

Panelists talked about their favorite moment. Eggleton likes that *Godzilla Verus the Things* has the bad guys fighting over money even while being attacked by monsters. Westfahl liked that *Godzilla 2000 Millennium* has a ship turning into Godzilla. And *Godzilla, Mothra and King Ghidorah* has a dismissive comment about the Tri-Star Godzilla.

One the other hand, Westfahl said it was a mistake for *Son of Godzilla* to have a talking Godzilla. Eggleton said that the 1969 *Godzilla's Revenge* (a.k.a. *All Monster Giant Attack*, a.k.a. *Minya, Son of Godzilla*) was a Godzilla movie *about* "Godzilla" movies. He sees it all as a child's dream.

Mark Leeper asked the panelists how they felt about the recent "Gamera" films. Tatsumi said that they were good films. Eggleton suggested that they have reinvented the kaiju genre. Eggleton also recommended films from Shock Media, especially *Matango*, one of the scariest movies he has seen. With the "Godzilla" films, he recommends *Monster Zero*, *King Kong Versus Godzilla*, and *Ghidrah the Three-Headed Monster*. Tatsumi liked *Destroy All Monsters* and *Ghidrah the Three-Headed Monster*, and also recommended the non-Godzilla *Jurassic Park*.

Eggleton said that you need to accept the premise, but then the anti-megalosaurus branch of the Japanese Defense Forces makes sense. He also said that he is sure there will be another "Godzilla" movie. The director of *Godzilla Versus the Smog Monster* wanted to do a "Godzilla" in 3-D IMAX. You just need a fresh mind to re-think "Godzilla", but all franchises need this (e.g. "Star Trek").

Westfahl said that the each film was dubbed by three or four people, each doing multiple voices, and often recurring between films as well. George Takei did some of the dubbing, but no one is sure which voices. Hal Linden did the commander in *Destroy All Monsters*. Hoffman said that a big part of what makes the movies work are the Akira Ifukube scores.

Westfahl noted that Mothra's fiftieth anniversary would be in five years.

As on the Frankenstein panel, Hoffman spent a lot of time making jokes, doing schtick, and so on, rather than talking seriously about the topic.

H. G. Wells and the Birth of Science Fiction Saturday 4:00pm Room 207 D, ACC

Greg Bear, Alex Eisenstein, Michael Engelberg (mod), James Killus, Brad Lyau, G. David Nordley

Description: "Sure, Verne was before him and there were others around the same time, but the popularity and acceptance of his "scientific romances" makes a strong case for his being the father of the form. Come hear about *The War of the Worlds*, *The Time Machine*, and *First Men in the Moon*, and about his lesser-known works like *The War in the Air* and *Tono Bungay*."

Estimated attendance: 40 people

This began with the tape of H, G, Wells and Orson Welles talking to each other. The panelists then gave their "credentials." Killus said that his interest in Wells grew out of his interest in the Bloomsbury and Fabian groups. Lyau said that he had read seventy-one of Wells's hundred and ten books (the vast majority not science fiction). Engelberg was the producer for *The Puppet Masters*. Eisenstein has had a long-standing interest, noting that the 1976 book *The Definitive Time Machine* cites him.

Nordley said that *The War of the Worlds* was the "Book of Honor" for one of the Potlatches (a Northwest convention). He also noted that *Seven Science Fiction Novels of H. G. Wells* has remained continuously in print (under various titles) for decades. (I am now starting to see a variant edition under such titles as "The H. G. Wells Treasury" that contain only six of the novels, omitting *In the Days of the Comet*.)

Eisenstein noted to Engelberg that he liked the book *The Puppet Masters*, but was "personally very disappointed in the film that came out of it." Regarding Wells, he said that Wells invented the modern forms of the major tropes of science fiction: time travel, travel to other worlds, invasion from other worlds. Wells even originated some lesser-known themes. In "The Wonderful Visit" (1910), for example, he postulated "two worlds parallel to each other like pages in a book." (He apparently did not speculate on divergences, though.)

Killus said that H. G. Wells was also a critic, and that he had reviewed Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis*. Wells criticized the film because there were not enough rich consumers to support the extent of the underclass. The structure, Killus noted, was much the same as that in *When the Sleeper Wakes*, written much earlier. Killus said that John Maynard Keynes was in the Bloomsbury group, and probably told H. G. Wells that *When the Sleeper Wakes* got it wrong, and then Wells used that knowledge in his review of *Metropolis*. Eisenstein said that Wells had a lot of detail in the script for *Things to Come*, probably to avoid anything that looked like *Metropolis*.

Bear said that *Metropolis* was a parable or fable more related to *Blade Runner* than to *Star Wars*. Wells was often scorned as a "nouveau riche lowly socialist"--how dare he presume above his station? Wells and Henry James had been friends, but James thought that Wells was a womanizer and was wrong in being one. Lyau said that regardless of all this, Wells was a best-selling author in the decade between 1919 and 1929, taking the place of Herbert Spencer. (Who?) Eisenstein said that this led Wells to say, "I went to bed one night a fairly well-to-do man and woke up the next morning wealthy beyond dreams of avarice."

Nordley said that Wells emphasized that he and Jules Verne were doing different things, but Wells was respectful of Verne. (Verne also said they were doing different things, but was less respectful of Wells.) Nordley said that Wells originated the idea that there must be only one fantastic hypothesis in a story. Bear said that Wells may have written this, but he did not necessarily follow it himself. For example, *The War of the Worlds* has Martians, heat rays, etc. And *When the Sleeper Wakes* or *Things to Come* have many fantastic elements each. Still, one could argue that these are merely elements that fan out from the one basic premise. Nordley said that Wells was referring not to "fantastic elements", but to "magic tricks"--the one impossible thing versus various plausible extrapolations. Nothing in *The War of the Worlds* is magic. Eisenstein said that this was true of all Wells's works. (Really? Even "The Man Who Could Work Miracles"?)

Eisenstein added that Verne always backed off from a sense of wonder. Bear somewhat disagreed, noting that Verne found dinosaurs at the center of the earth, and excelled at describing the wonders of the natural world throughout his "extraordinary voyages". Wells also was familiar with Olaf Stapledon's work, at one point writing Stapledon to say that while prose-wise he could write rings around Stapledon, he could not match Stapledon's imagination. Eisenstein said that there was a definite Wells/Verne rivalry, with Wells being called the English Jules Verne, while Verne was often considered an "upstart."

Bear said that by the time Wells was claiming that he was not a predictor like Verne, he had written *The World Set Free* (1915), was working on *Things to Come*, and had written *Tono-Bungay* (1908), all heavily predictive works. (*Tono-Bungay* dealt with radioactive waste.) Wells stated, "I am not a science fiction writer, I am a fantasist."

Killus said that *The War of the Worlds* is both a great science fiction novel and a great novel, but that it is the only one people could agree on in that regard. However, Wells was not predicting

interplanetary warfare, but rather modern warfare. Bear said that some of the warfare techniques are actually very old: Joshua used a "scorched-earth" tactic in the Bible. As far as *The War of the Worlds* being the only novel that people could agree was both a great science fiction novel and a great novel, Bear suggested *We* by Yevgeny Zamiatin, *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, *The Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula K. Le Guin, *1984* by George Orwell, and many others. (This sounds like it has the making of a future panel topic.)

Engelberg said that while Verne went at most a century into the future, Wells went 8000 centuries. But while Wells continued to write science fiction throughout his life, his best science fiction was written before 1900. After 1900, he switched to writing primarily "condition-of-England" novels, such as *Tono-Bungay*, *Veronica*, *Kipps*, and *The History of Mr. Polly*.

Eisenstein claimed that to some extent Wells was looking over his shoulder at Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. Engelberg felt that the important difference was that Wells's *built* a time machine, not just had his character travel in time. (Another difference was that Twain's character went backward in time, while Wells's went forward.) Bear thought that J. H. Rosny (the author of *Quest for Fire*) might have written an earlier time machine story. (A check with the fairly thorough Wikipedia entry indicates no such story.) Lyau said that in any case Wells encapsulated various traditions and inspired people to follow these ideas.

Nordley said that one thing that strikes people is how much better Wells is than authors in the 1930s. (He claims the rocket science in *The War of the World* is correct--and he should know.)

Someone mentioned the E. Nesbit story "The Amulet", in which Wells is revered in the future.

Bear said that Rudyard Kipling wrote his classic science fiction piece, "With the Night Mail", in response to Wells displacing him as the best-selling author. The voice of Kipling becomes the voice of Robert A. Heinlein, Bear added, but it is the ideas of Wells that become the ideas of Heinlein (and of all the *Saturday Evening Post* authors).

Engelberg thought that people started to dislike Wells because he was disrespectful of Henry James shortly before James's death. (*Boon* and other writings by Wells relate to scandals about James, or parody his books.) Eisenberg said that James had wanted to collaborate with Wells and was also writing *Berkeley Square*, a time travel novel.

Recommended works regarding Wells's support of a world government included *Anticipation* (1901) (cited as Wells's best non-fiction), *H. G. Wells and the World State* by W. Warren Wagar, and *H. G. Wells: Critic of Progress* by Jack Williamson. (*Boon* was published as part of *Boon*, *The Mind of the Race*, *The Wild Asses of the Devil*, and *The Last Trump* under the pseudonym "Reginald Bliss".

Someone suggested that Wells was like Christopher Columbus: he was not the first, but he was the first to last and to have an effect.

The Death of the Book

Saturday 5:30pm

Roger MacBride Allen, Mike Moscoe (mod), Louise Marley, Kevin Murphy, Steve Saffel

Description: "It's been predicted several times but it still hasn't arrived. What's keeping books around? What are the alternatives? Why aren't they making a louder noise?"

Estimated attendance: 30 people

Saffel talked about the numbers. Print publishers are happy if they sell 30,000 copies but the San

Diego ComicCon (for example) attracts 130,000 attendees. This indicates to him that there are a lot of people anxious for books, but unaware of most of them. The trick is to put the content in front of the intended audience, and Saffel seemed to think e-books were part of the answer. There are 135,000,000 people in myspace.com, he said. If a publisher could sell to even 1% of them, that would be 1,350,000 copies. Saffel says this means that there is more opportunity for writers than ever before. (Why Saffel thinks that every entry on myspace.com is unique and active is not clear to me, nor is why he thinks that any one book would appeal to 1% of them across the board.)

Saffel continued, saying that the death of the book may result in a bigger success than ever before. "It's up to us to immerse the audience in our world," he said, and suggested using blogs, etc., to do so. These do not pay by themselves, but do generate sales.

Allen interjected here, "I've got some 'excepts'."

Someone in the audience said that kids do not know how to read, which would be a major problem. Marley disagreed, pointing out that the "Harry Potter" books do very well. (If every author sold as well as Rowling, they would be very happy.) And Saffel also said, "Kids are reading."

Allen gave as an example of one of his "excepts" the fact that Stephen King's e-book failed, and that *Snakes on a Plane* failed. Having a well-known name is no guarantee, nor is having a lot of Internet buzz.

Murphy thought that one major problem is that there are too many e-book formats required for all the e-book readers. (Allen later said there were at least five e-book formats, and someone else said that books never need a new operating system.)

Murphy also said that e-books that are "as cheap and easy to have as paper books" need to arrive. Saffel insisted that "the future is here and we're not going to go back." Murphy responded, "The future is not here and it's not coming." If readers could be used for textbooks it might be (for the search capabilities, etc.), he conceded, but there is too much money in textbooks.

Marley pointed out, "The first toasters weren't too great either." What she asked, keeps books around? Her answer was basically three-fold: tradition, feel, and smell.

Allen asked, "You know what's extinct? The door-to-door encyclopedia salesman." Reference works are being replaced by CD-ROMs (or the Internet). "For those things, words on a screen were vastly superior to words on paper."

Saffel seemed to think that e-books could benefit from multi-media, saying that it would be valuable to hear the same opera as the protagonist, for example. (Laura Esquivel tried this with *The Law of Love*, including a CD of music with instructions which tracks to play when. I found it intrusive and interruptive to have to go switch on a CD at given points.)

In response to a question from the panelists, there were people in the audience who had paid to download books. Allen said that for this to work, you need a really good copy protection plan, and Saffel replied, "Welcome to the music industry." Murphy said that there was a similar problem with public libraries. Someone later noted that with books, loaning is fairly straightforward, but with an e-book, "loaning" means copying. Allen said this was a question of simultaneity, and of the perfection of the copy. Saffel said, "There's the things we want to have happen, and then there's reality." (My library system also "check-outs" of downloadable audio-books, but limits the number of simultaneous users.)

Regarding audio-books, Marley said that one problem was that an audio-book needed to sell 50,000 copies to make it profitable to have the publisher hire a professional reader for it. However, she added, you can always do your own; just make sure to reserve your audio rights in your contract.

Someone in the audience insisted, "Books are declining in reading." (Which books was she talking about, I wonder.) Marley said that we were printing and selling more books than ever. Allen added that people who say that reading is declining have a vested interest in selling you a solution. (Presumably he meant the people quoted in the media, not the audience member reported what she read.) Murphy said that people also predicted that radio would lead to the death of the magazine.

Someone wondered if the Internet might lead to a revival of the serial novel.

Allen said that when it came to books on the Internet, he did not want links to music, dead links, etc. Some books are more amenable to the medium than others. And, he added, "In a basement, I can create an entire universe with words." But each aspect of a multi-media presentation needs a separate production chain."

An audience member reminded the panelists of "the three Bs" that people want their reading material to survive: bed, bath, and beach. Allen thought that this might be the wrong approach. Cars were initially "horseless carriages" but changed, and e-books do not have to look like books. Marley said that her major concern is eyestrain, but Allen said that back-lighting would solve this. Murphy said that a PalmPilot seemed a lot like a Roman wax tablet or hornbook; he wants a five-inch by eight-inch reader.

There was mention of the fact that people often acquire bootleg copies of books, music, etc., when legal copies are not available. Saffel and Marley both suggested an honor system for people to remove bootleg copies when legal copies are available. Allen asked the audience to repeat the following oath: "I will not buy advance reading copies until the book is no longer available."

In a related area, Marley said that print-on-demand for first novels is a scam (see SFWA for more details), but it is okay for keeping backlist works in print. The rule of thumb is that the money should flow to the authors. Allen agreed (I think), saying that print-on-demand is only a method, and can be used for good or for evil.

[It is bad enough when someone in the audience has a cell phone go off during a panel, but to have a panelist's go off is really pushing it. This panel had one panelist's cell phone go off *twice"!]

Hugo Award Ceremony
Saturday 8:00pm ACC Arena
Connie Willis, Robert Silverberg, Harlan Ellison

For the first time ever, we skipped the Hugo ceremonies, because we wanted to have dinner with a friend we do not see often. In addition, Connie Willis's schtick is funny the first few times, but does start to wear thin. And the clincher was the addition of Harlan Ellison to the program--I find him incredibly irritating and rude. So we missed seeing him grope Connie Willis on stage. (Of course, since there were videos on the Web within hours, we still had a chance to see it.)

There was much discussion afterwards about his behavior, and why conventions keep inviting him. The answer seems to be that they know he will act like this, they know there is an audience for it, and they hope to attract that audience. Of course, for some of us, he is a "negative attractor." I avoided all program items he was on, even if it meant missing a Robert Silverberg panel--and I *love* Robert Silverberg panels.

The other question was why the convention felt it necessary to give Ellison a special award. It is not as if he has not won Hugos and Nebulas, and in fact the two previous L.A.Cons each also gave him a special award.

But I will report on what won the awards.

Big Heart Award: Forrest J. Ackerman (The name "E. Everett Evans" is now retired and the award will be known as the "Forrest J. Ackerman Big Heart Award". This also generated discussion, as being somewhat disrespectful to Evans.)

First Fandom Hall of Fame: Joe Hensley

Seiun Awards:

- | Best Novel in Translation: Greg Egan, DIASPORA
- | Best Short Story in Translation: Ken Macleod, "The Human Front"

Special Committee Award: Betty Ballantine

Special Committee Award: Harlan Ellison

John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer: John Scalzi

And the Hugos themselves:

- | Best Novel: Robert Charles Wilson, *Spin*
- | Best Novella: Connie Willis, "Inside Job"
- | Best Novelette: Peter S. Beagle, "Two Hearts"
- | Best Short Story: David D. Levine, "Tk'tk'tk"
- | Best Related Book: Kate Wilhelm, *Storyteller: Writing Lessons and More from 27 Years of the Clarion Workshop*
- | Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form: *Serenity*
- | Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form: *Doctor Who*: "The Empty Child" and "The Doctor Dances"
- | Best Professional Artist: Donato Giancola
- | Best Semiprozine: *Locus*
- | Best Fanzine: *Plokta*
- | Best Fan Writer: David Langford
- | Best Fan Artist: Frank Wu

Mars in Fiction

Sunday 10:00am Santa Monica, HILTON

Geoffrey A. Landis, Beth Meacham, Edwin L. Strickland III, Gary Westfahl (mod)

Description: "A discussion of the tradition of Mars exploration stories in SF, exploring the evolution of the sub-genre from its planetary romance roots to the current hard SF mission-to-Mars stories. "

Estimated attendance: 10 people

Landis began by addressing the current debate over the status of Pluto: "After the Disney Corporation makes their opinions known, Pluto will be a planet."

Westfahl said he did not have any books with him to promote. He is tired of carrying books so, he said, "Go to amazon.com, type in my name, and buy everything."

Regarding Mars, Strickland wanted to start with the pre-science fiction Mars, full of Enlightenment

ideas and scientific romances. For example, there was Garrett Serviss's *Edison's Conquest of Mars*.

Meacham said that the idea of the exploration of Mars is good to have out there, regardless of details. Landis said that he is a scientist and writes about Mars and about Mars in fiction.

Strickland said that Edgar Rice Burroughs invented a new genre with *A Princess of Mars*. Landis said that Burroughs was a ne'er-do-well who failed at everything, and who tossed off the novel in desperation for money.

Another early Mars book, said Strickland, was Stanley G. Weinbaum's *A Martian Odyssey*. This was a second generation of Mars fiction. Mars was no longer an Earth-like planet, but a cold, dry desert where humans need masks to survive. (Westfahl said that even though *A Martian Odyssey* is a classic, its sequel, *Valley of Dreams*, is quite bad.) Landis noted that the earlier *War of the Worlds* has the first non-humanoid aliens in science fiction. Westfahl said that people think *War of the Worlds* is just political allegory, but there is a lot of solid science in it. Meacham said it also portrayed the first non-humanoid intelligence. Landis disagreed, pointing out that Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* had non-human intelligence, but it *was* allegory, not a serious portrayal. Westfahl mentioned "The Crystal Egg" as well.

From the audience, Mark Leeper gave another early Mars novel, Kurd Lasswitz's *Two Worlds* (a.k.a. *Two Planets*).

Strickland said that there was now a third generation of Mars fiction, a post-Space Age scientifically accurate Mars where humans need pressure suits to survive. Meacham said that last "unreal" Mars story was probably George R. R. Martin's "Sandkings" (1979), but Westfahl added Frederick Pohl's *Man Plus* (1976, so it pre-dated "Sandkings") and Strickland said that Larry Niven's "Known Space" series has some (again, predating "Sandkings"). Landis said that among other things, no one really believed that the atmosphere was nitrous oxide.

Strickland said that James Blish's *Welcome to Mars* (a young adult novel) was the last second generation--it was published while Mariner IV was en route (1967).

Landis noted that 19th and early 20th century views of Mars were influenced by Madame Blavatsky. Westfahl said that Percival Lowell wrote about Martians in *Mars as the Abode of Life*, but the Martians were extinct in this. Strickland said it was bad science, but it was still science. Landis said that at the beginning of the 20th century a French prize was set up for the first communication, but that Mars did not count.

Westfahl mentioned some films: *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (but this had nothing to do with Mars), *Robinson Crusoe on Mars*, and what he said was the worst, *Wizard of Mars*. Landis said that *Santa Claus Conquers the Martians* is worse. He also reported that "Marvin the Martian" has been adopted by Mars scientists.

Westfahl observed that the panel could be expanded to include comics and cartoons, and Landis added radio, particularly versions of *War of the Worlds*. There was more than just the Orson Welles version. It was also done in a similar style in other places, including Quito, Ecuador, where when the listeners found out it was just a play, they stormed the station and burnt it to the ground, killing several people. Meacham said that she heard that, while the Mercury Theater did run an explanatory introduction, they ran it two minutes *before* the hour. Landis said that since we knew there were no Martians, we should have thought that the puffs of smoke were interstellar invaders landing there.

Returning to Burroughs, Westfahl said that *Llana of Gathol* was the most relaxed and charming of the "Mars" books. He also mentioned A. E. Van Vogt's "Vault of the Beast" (though he said the math was bad), George O. Smith's "Lost Art" (in *The Complete Venus Equilateral*), and Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles* and "Lost City of Mars". Landis added H. Beam Piper's "Omnilingual".

Landis said that Marc Zicree was trying to collect all of Ray Bradbury's non-"Martian Chronicles" Mars stories into a book (to be called "The Other Martian Chronicles", I think).

Strickland added Leigh Brackett's "Eric John Stark" stories, which Landis said were more layered than other similar work of the time, and both Westfahl and Landis agreed had better prose.

Strickland said there was a Ludek Pesek "Mars" novel from 1969, as well as Robert A. Heinlein's *Red Planet* and (of course) *Stranger in a Strange Land*. Westfahl listed Arthur C. Clarke's *Sands of Mars*, and Landis contributed Kim Stanley Robinson's *Icehenge* and "Mars" trilogy. Interestingly, he said he likes *Icehenge* more. Meacham said that in *Icehenge* there are three points of view, similar to *Rashomon*.

Landis described Roger Zelazny's "A Rose for Ecclesiastes" as being about "an ancient wise race that was dying." Meacham suggested Greg Bear's *Moving Mars* and Landis said that Jack Williamson's *Beachhead* was starting a new wave of "Mars" stories.

There was some discussion of films, with Westfahl saying that *Total Recall* was the first film about terraforming Mars. There was mention of *My Favorite Martian*, and Landis said, "I am opposed to the death penalty but in the case of producers who remake 1960s television shows I will make an exception." Westfahl said that the Mars film *Rocketship X-M* was the first film representing an atomic war.

I mentioned two other classic novels set on Mars: Olaf Stapledon's *Last and First Men* and Paul French's (Isaac Asimov's) *David Starr, Space Ranger*. Westfahl said that ten percent of the "Golden Age" stories were set on Mars, and Meacham said that many of the remaining ninety percent mention it in passing. Landis said that Werner Von Braun's 1949 novel *Project Mars* was later rewritten by him as the non-fiction book *The Mars Project*.

Westfahl thought that future stories which previously would have been set on Mars will be set on Titan or Europa, as the current most likely solar systems bodies with life. Landis said that both are very cold; he would choose the upper atmosphere of Venus. Strickland said that in Venus's atmosphere you would need a respirator and silicone coating to protect you from the sulfuric acid haze. Landis and Meacham both said that Russia has done a lot of research with Vneus, but the popularity of Venus and Mercury ended a while ago with the discoveries about their inhospitable environments.

It might be interesting to have panels for other planets, but they would be much shorter.

It Came from the 1950s
Sunday 1:00pm (AR-2, ACC)
Eric L. Hoffman, Bill Warren, Frank Wu

Description: "There was a deluge of science fiction movies made in the 1950s. Many people who grew up in that decade have made those movies part of their lives but even people born much later have embraced them, and not just on a 'so bad they're good' basis. Why does this continue to happen? What is the appeal of these movies? Are they unique?"

Estimated attendance: 30 people

Warren was surprised that there were so many fans of the 1950s science fiction films, and especially that there were young fans. The older generation saw them on local television stations, but even where these stations still exist, they are not running 1950s science fiction films any more. Warren also said that he was talking about people who did like them. "I don't believe in 'it's so bad, it's good'.

If it's really bad, it's really bad." Wu said that when one looks at the IMDB ratings, people do like them. Warren was skeptical of using IMDB ratings as a guide--he pointed out that there were ratings for *London After Midnight* before there was a reconstruction of it (i.e., when it was still a lost film). Wu said that maybe it was that "you don't need to eat an entire apple to know it's bad."

Warren asked the big question: "Why are these movies still popular?" He suggested that they have a freshness, a first look at ideas, which makes them better. (I would observe that the early Universal films of their horror cycle were better than the later ones, possibly for similar readings.) Warren also said that the basic premise of the 1950s film was the science fiction idea, not something else (like a dysfunctional family). Wu added, "The science was completely wrong, but the ideas were so fresh ... [and] completely unfettered by reality." Warren agreed that they were "such utter malarkey even then." For example, he noted that *Riders to the Stars* had diamond-encrusted ships.

Hoffman said that another reason that the films were fresh because they had new creatures instead of the same old monsters, and the plots were simple. Warren said that they also had marketing--*X the Unknown* had no model kit, but every other monster movie did. Hoffman said that his favorite monster was in *Invaders from Mars*. Warren said he got so many questions about one scene in that film that he was tempted to put "Sand Opens Up, The One Where the" in the index of the next edition of his classic work on 1950s films, *Keep Watching the Skies* (highly recommended, by the way).

Hoffman thought that another reason for the popularity of the 1950s films were that they were simpler to understand. (Darren Aronofsky did not make 1950s films!) And he added that plot lines mattered. They were simpler, with no overkill as you find in today's movies.

There are 275 films that could be called 1950s science fiction films--how many of these are actually still loved? Warren said that in fact a fair number of them are indeed loved.

Warren noted in passing that in 1950s science fiction films, women scientists have androgynous or male names.

Wu asked, "Is there something special about a monster in black and white?" Warren agreed that *Creature from the Black Lagoon* was better in black and white than it would have been in color (as had been considered at the time), and the same was true of *Them!*. He thought that the contrast between today's films and those of the 1950s makes people like them both.

Warren mentioned an article titled "The Leech Woman's Revenge" by Vivian Carol Sobchak, which discusses women's roles in three 1950s films (*Attack of the 50 Ft. Woman*, *The Wasp Woman*, and *The Leech Woman*). [It can be found at <http://www.cinema.ucla.edu/women/sobchack/default.html>.] There was a stereotypical view of women, even scientists, in those films. But there were non-stereotypical women scientists such as Duprey in *The War of the Worlds*, and a background one in *The Thing from Another World*. (Someone noted that there was also a great female character in *Gorgo*.)

An audience member suggested that there was "a lack of cynicism in the fifties that came along in the sixties." Warren said that now "executives have decided irony is the big deal." Someone said that in the 1950s there was no cynicism about the military, corporations, or the government, and Warren reiterated this lack of cynicism and lack of irony. [But wasn't *On the Beach* cynical? And is *Iron Giant* a 1950s film with cynicism?]

Warren said that *Forbidden Planet* was supposed to come out on DVD in November 2007 packaged with *The Invisible Boy*. Warren said that *The Invisible Boy*, as well as *Invaders from Mars* and *Space Children* were told from the children's points of view.

Closing Ceremonies

Sunday 4:00pm (Room 204 ABC, ACC)
Christian B. McGuire, Craig Miller

Description: "The official conclusion of this year's Worldcon. Come bid farewell and see what last surprises are in store"

I suppose the last surprise was that Connie Willis said that if anyone would start a petition for Harlan Ellison to keep his f***ing hands off her, she'd sign it--and yes, she used that word. It is the first time I have ever heard Willis use that sort of language, which I think indicates that she was not amused by his antics.

Miscellaneous

Kudos to L.A.con IV for their excellent job on the Pocket Program, with the pages well labeled, good indices, etc. I will confess that even now, five months later, I have not gotten around to reading the souvenir book (which is on my stack). This should support the theory that the souvenir book should not contain any time-critical material. (One convention I went to put the restaurant guide in the souvenir book!)

Denver won the bid for 2008 and will be called Denvention 3 (or Denvention III--they do not seem to have quite decided yet, since I've seen both forms). Since Denver is the Mile-High City, I guess this means it is "Denvention III--A Worldcon with Altitude".

Next year the Worldcon is in Japan. Unfortunately, family events conflict with the scheduling, so for the first time since Aussiecon Two in 1985 we will not be attending Worldcon. (We do expect to be at Denvention III, though.) We have already visited Japan, however, and I highly recommend it--we loved it. See <http://leepers.us/evelynleeper.htmjip-tips.htm> for some quick tips on travel to Japan and a pointer to my full trip log.

Possible future panels:

- | Many novels are great science fiction without being great novels, and vice versa. Which books are both? Possibilities include *The War of the Worlds* by H. G. Wells, *We* by Yevgeny Zamiatin, *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, *The Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula K. Le Guin, and *1984* by George Orwell. Are there more? What qualities must a book have to achieve both claims?
- | The Correspondence of Olaf Stapledon and Virginia Woolf