

## BUBONICON 56 PANEL DESCRIPTIONS ----

**1. FOOL'S GOLD: THE MARRIAGE OF MAGIC & SCIENCE (ALCHEMY)** -- Why does it have to be magic versus science? Why not both? Why has Alchemy grown in popularity? From Chaucer to Shakespeare to H.P. Lovecraft to pop culture (like *Fullmetal Alchemist*), alchemy has been used to explore themes of spiritual growth, purification, and regeneration, as well as to create satire. What is it about alchemy that is so appealing?

**2. WEIRD SCIENCE IN THE SEASON OF THE WITCH: MAGES & MAD SCIENTISTS** -- What is the appeal of magicians & mixed-up doctors from Frankenstein to Harry Dresden? Where would we be without Dr. Frankenstein, *Re-Animator's* Herbert West, *The Prestige's* Robert Angier and Alfred Borden, Merlin the Magician, Gandalf the Gray, Nikola Tesla, Doctor Emmett "Doc" Brown of *Back to the Future*, Heinlein's Waldo Farthingwaite-Jones, Harry Potter and Albus Dumbledore, etc? What is the appeal of lab coats and wild hair anyway? Are robes and pointy hats any better? And can some people really call you "Tim"?

**3. DON'T KILL THE DOG: ANIMALS MATTER** -- You often hear, "Don't kill the dog." Is it good advice? Why? Why does the killing of animals usually have even more of an impact on the reader/audience than of people (or whole planets)? Why do some people refuse to even go see something or read something if they think a dog might get killed in it? When does killing the dog work and when doesn't it? And does the dog always have to be a dog? Rex from *Primeval*, for example, is the dog in that series. And R2D2's definitely the dog. Also, K9, the robot dog from *Dr. Who*. Is Toto the ultimate dog?

**4. PERSPECTIVES: THE FUTURE IS WHAT WE MAKE IT** -- Feminists in the days of King Arthur. Hip rockers in the 23rd century. Did you ever notice that the good folks of other eras share our views? And the bad folk do not? Is it possible for writers to portray a disagreeable viewpoint with empathy? Is it possible for readers to read it? Can we really understand another time and place without one "us" being plopped in the middle of it? Why or why not?

**5. CRUEL TO BE KIND: TORTURING YOUR CHARACTERS** -- You love your characters and want them to live their best lives. But there isn't a huge market for *Yark the Barbarian Queen Does Shopping*. Or is there? Are characters often tortured for the sake of story? Is there room in fiction for stories where things go well for characters? Do you feel twinges of guilt when you are cruel to your characters? Are there tricks to figure out if you've gone far enough/too far? Can things seem so bleak that you lose your readers? What about the rise of the cozy fantasy, or the cozy romantic fantasy? Do we need a happy ending?

**6. ARTIST CHAT (with as many artists as possible)** -- Ever wonder about your favorite artist? What to know more about their process? Are you just nosey and want to learn some juice tidbits? Then come to the Artists Chat, and see what you can learn. This relaxed chat is designed to make the artists more accessible and have a little fun at the same time.

**7. TOMORROW NEVER KNOWS: DESIGNING THE FUTURE WORLD** -- Given today's tech and an idea of what is coming, how would our panelists design the future world if they had the power? What are some of the world-changing technologies that are here now or that are coming that could transform the world? Are they likely to change things for good or ill? What are the hurdles to embracing new tech?

**8. ONCE UPON A (THIS) TIME: RETELLING STORIES THAT HAVE BEEN TOLD BEFORE** -- From oral traditions to modern print and digital publications, humans love to tell stories. There's the draw of the imagination and creating something new, but there's also the comfort and daring of telling the same stories again and again, often with differences that range from a telephone-like loss of detail to a purposeful transformation of the stories we know and love. So how and why do authors retell stories, from popular fairy tale adaptations and D&D-based fantasy to relying on well-loved character tropes? How do we provide the comfort of the old while making something new & exciting for readers? And most importantly, what are the ethics behind deciding what details should stay or go, especially when these stories are so closely tied to cultural – and human – history?

**9. DOMO ARIGATO, MR. ROBOT: LIVING WITH A.I.** -- At least until the bubble bursts, it looks like we are going to be surrounded by a lot of tech that is currently being called "AI." Since it's here, how do we coexist with it? How different is what we currently call "AI" from the mental image most people (especially SF fans) use for AI? How has AI infiltrated our world? What AI tech should we be embracing? What should we avoid? If decision makers were made to listen, what should we ask them to do about regulating AI? If there was an actual general AI (or many of them) how would that be different?

**10. PARASITES: WHAT DWELLS WITHIN UNINVITED** -- From *Alien* to every pandemic story/movie, parasites are a genre staple. But what makes a good parasite great? Or particularly scary? Body horror, transformation, loss of self – there's lots of ways this parasite business goes down, and there's no shortage of inspiration from earth life. How do you use a parasite effectively?

**11. WORLDS APART?: SEPARATING THE WORK FROM THE CREATOR** -- You love XYZ, but the writer of XYZ just did something terrible. Is it okay to keep loving XYZ? If you loved someone's work but hate what they're doing/believed in/did is it okay to still keep loving that work? Does it make a difference if the creator is dead? Is there a difference between loving the work and activities that enrich the author (buying new works, visiting their theme parks, etc.)? Do we invest too much or expect too much from creators? *[Moderator: Please Try To Keep Discussion Civil]*

**12. CHOICE IN THE MATTER: MAKING PLOT DECISIONS** -- Roll the dice, throw the bones, pick a card, flip a coin or something else. What are some unique ways of decision making in plots? Everyone has their preferred method of plotting a thing. Beyond pantsing and outlines, what other ways exist for making a choice that might give a new perspective? What can a writer try when they are unsure which direction to go? What unusual methods have you tried that worked? What did you try that seemed like a good idea in theory but just didn't work out?

**13. WORKING FOR A LIVIN': GRAPHIC NOVEL & PULP MAGAZINE ARTISTS** -- Several of our Bubonicon artists – including our 2025 Artist Guest – have done artwork for graphic novels and/or SF fiction magazines. What kind of guidance did they receive? How much detail is in the initial assignment or pitch? How much collaboration is there between the writer and the artist? Is it easy or difficult to interpret scripts? How much do editors control the look of characters, props, aliens and space transport? What about working in a world where the look of characters and locations is established? What notes have artists received on their projects?

**14. WAR, WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR: MILITARY/THRILLER SCI-FI** -- From Joe Haldeman's *The Forever War* and Rick Shelley's *Dirigent Mercenary Corps* to *Star Wars* and Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*, conflict between worlds and interstellar battles are part of science fiction. But what do these books have to say about war? Are they all action/thrillers without any thought/depth? Can you use a space-based war to make commentary on the human condition and the Earth today? Why is military SF still so popular? What about in the movies and on TV? Does the danger of having a favorite character killed add to the emotional connection for readers/viewers? Is War just a "friend only to The Undertaker," or can it mean more?

**15. SNACKWRITES: WRITING EXERCISES** -- In 2018, SnackReads launched SnackWrites to help people – whom life gives little time – to be able to learn some writing craft and keep the dream alive. The moderator and participants will lead attendees through some of the writing exercises, and offer suggestions for time-constrained writing.

**16. GETTING INTO MY HEADSPACE: TIME TO CREATE** -- Whether an author, an artist or a composer, most people need to get into the proper frame of mind to create. What are some of the panelists' rituals and preparations? Are there certain places and/or times that work better? What about music? Can our panelists listen to music while writing or doing art? With or without lyrics? Can our panelists have people around them or do they need to be isolated? Same thing for the TV being on – is it a distraction or just background noise? What is the ideal way to create? Is there such a thing?

**17. SELF-CREATED SELF-DESTRUCTION: SOLUTIONS & IMPLICATIONS** -- In 2000, Bill Joy of Sun Microsystems warned that the “illimitable power” of technology could destroy the human species in the 21st century – a “techno-apocalypse.” He stated, “The cleverer we are, the bigger the problem we create.” Is this true? Do humans think about the implications of technology? What about the Law of Unintended Consequences? Electric cars mean less air pollution, but draw from the power grid and coal generators. Do they solve anything? What about unintended pathogens created by biotechnology? Or Nanotechnology creating tiny weapons that could subvert existence? Is it all paranoid dystopian talk?

**18. INSTANT SLUSH PILE: LIVE REVIEWS** -- This is a live feedback panel. If you are interested, bring a printed-out page (no more than 300 words) for review. It should be completely anonymous (don't include your name anywhere on the manuscript). You can turn in your manuscript at Registration on the day of the panel, or at the very beginning of the panel. Manuscripts will be shuffled and then read out loud. Editors (and other panelists) will indicate whether they would buy this story or finish reading it, and provide a quick critique of the work. Submitters can choose to reveal themselves or not. *[Lou J. Berger moderates.]*

**19. YOU CAN DO MAGIC: WHAT DO MAGES/SCIENTISTS OWE THEIR SOCIETIES** -- Sometimes knowledge, be it a technological advance or a magical breakthrough, comes at a steep price. The Faustian scientist or obsessive alchemist often discovers double-edged or even dangerous devices, from nuclear weaponry to demonic contracts. Are they responsible for ensuring their discoveries are used for good rather than evil? What moral obligations do the mad scientist or the mage owe their societies? Why? Can they be enforced?

**20. ASK A SCIENTIST: PROBING QUESTIONS** -- In this panel, Bubonicon scientists answer questions from the audience that pop up in frequent hall conversations on technical/plot points. Also welcome are young would-be scientists and their parents who want to talk about career paths.

**21. CHANGE WITH THE TIMES: FROM SHORT STORIES TO NOVELS** -- Panelists discuss the transition from writing short stories to writing novels. Other than length, what are the major differences between writing short stories and writing novels? How different is the writing process? What surprised you the most about the different processes? If you are good at short stories, should you stick with them or move to novels? Are there differences in the type of tone/voice you can have in one medium vs. the other? Is it worth considering intermediate length works (novellas, etc.)?

**22. WALKING A TIGHTROPE: BALANCING MESSAGE AND STORY** -- You're working on your new novel Destroy All Giant Bugs! and you are starting to worry you are not being subtle enough with your underlying message of mantis-cide... What are the merits of having a message? How do you get it across without being preachy? Is it okay for fiction to not have a message? What are good techniques for getting a point across? Can you end up alienating your audience?

**23. WANDS, WORDS, AND WILL: CREATING A MAGIC SYSTEM** -- Creating a new, exciting magic system for your story is not as simple as tapping a wand with a hat. Any magic system you create will be uniquely interwoven with your particular world's science, religion, government, culture, technology, and environment, and it will influence how people dress, speak, and interact. Even character arcs will be tied to how your protagonist interacts with magic and other magic wielders. Let's talk about magic systems that work, the ones that don't quite make the grade, and how to go about creating your own individual form of magic and the world to support it, plus the common tropes and pitfalls that surround such a challenging task.

## GREEN SLIME AWARDS RECOGNIZE WRETCHEDNESS

The Green Slime Awards were first presented in 1976 by the late Roy Tackett, inspired by a viewing of the post-holocaust movie *Glen and Randa* (“shot by a blind man with a Super 8 camera”). RoyTac quickly realized there was a need to recognize the worst stuff of each year.

Roy Tackett retired in 1991, and then Roy Buerger ran the Green Slimes 1992-1998. Kathy K. Kubica served as Slime Mistress 1999-2010 before retiring.

The 50th annual Green Slime Awards see Jessica L. Coyle in her 15th turn as Slime Mistress, continuing the tradition about 8:05 pm Saturday. Here's a list of the 2024 recipients:

FOOD: *Sour Patch Kids Oreos* (Unpleasant flavor, just weird), BOOK: *Eruption* by Michael Crichton & James Patterson (Shallow book; characters laughable; super predictable), TELEVISION: *The Spiderwick Chronicles* (Angsty teens; characters talk and talk; poorly written and poorly acted), “TV” MOVIE: *Atlas* on Netflix (Written by Mad Libs; pacing a mess, J-Lo doesn't fit the role and tries too hard to “act”), FANTASY MOVIE: *Sasquatch Sunset* (Unwatchable mess with no plot or dialog), SCI-FI MOVIE: *Rebel Moon* (Zack Snyder manages to zap entertainment out of outer space; *Star Wars* rip-off; awkward dialog; no emotional or philosophical engagement; a soulless slog).

## HANDY-DANDY MAP OF THE ALBUQ MARRIOTT UPTOWN!

