

BUBONICON 57 PANEL DESCRIPTIONS ----

1. MY A.I. SOULMATE NEVER LEAVES DIRTY DISHES IN THE SINK -- As AI companions and chatbots become more common, fiction is increasingly exploring relationships (romantic, platonic, and otherwise) between humans and artificial beings. What draws people to these narratives? How do stories portray connection, dependency, intimacy, or agency in these relationships? And what might these fictional dynamics reveal about human needs in a changing world? Is this technology a genuine cure for loneliness and lack of connection in an increasingly fragmented world, or is it ultimately harmful? Are we facing a future where close human-human interactions will be considered strange?

2. WILL YOU LOVE ME TOMORROW: YOU GOT ROMANCE IN MY SCI-FI -- Panelists discuss adding romance to SF writing. Romance is very common in fantasy. What about Science Fiction? Do you differentiate between SF with romance vs. a romance in a SF setting? How do you avoid the romance distracting from the plot? What about romance with aliens (by themselves or with humans)? Do you make the aliens alien or do they have human-seeming emotions? What is the biggest challenge about adding romance to SF? Does it tend to just happen as part of the storytelling or do you have to explicitly set out to add it?

3. WHERE HAVE ALL THE MONSTERS GONE, LONG TIME PASSING -- Have SF and Horror reached a zenith in the creation of monsters? After *Aliens*, *Predators* and *Species*, just what kind of monsters will fill the books and movies of the future? And just how will the writers of tomorrow continue to terrorize the sophisticated fans of today? Come explore possible tales of horrifying tomes of haunted houses and beyond...

4. PLAYING IN OTHER SANDBOXES: MEDIA TIE-INS & ORIGINAL CREATIONS -- Authors sometimes get to play in sandboxes they didn't create. They might write a *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, *Ravenloft* or *Conan* novel. Maybe they're writing a story in a world shared by many authors. What are the joys and challenges for a writer of working in a world someone else created? How do you get invited to play in someone else's sandbox? How does an author find the room to move in an already crowded world, especially media tie-ins? Is writing in someone else's world a good way to promote oneself? Dancing with license holders, tiptoeing around cannon, and waltzing with readers' expectations; is it worth it?

5. GETTING COZY: KNICK-KNACKS & NOVELS -- What does it mean to describe a work as cozy? What makes good cozy fantasy? Or science fiction? Or horror? Do they have to include an element of romance? If so, why? What attracts readers and writers to these stories and what is often misunderstood about the subgenre? Did cozies hit at just the right time in history?

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? What do they think of A.I. in artwork, even as a reference? 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. MIXING IT UP: HOW MUCH SCIENCE IS TOO MUCH IN SCIENCE FICTION? -- Are readers interested in hearing about actual science when reading science fiction? Or are brain-eating aliens and epic space battles what draws all the interest? If the latter is true, why call it science fiction? Do we always need to know how the sausage is made?

8. MONSTER MASH: THE RISE AND FALL OF...ZOMBIES, VAMPIRES, WEREWOLVES -- Why do particular monsters become popular, then go out of style? Is it cyclical? What is the current latest monster craze? Still zombies? Are some of the others making a comeback (rising from the dead)? How should they balance featuring a particular creature and not oversaturating us with it? How can each of these types be brought back in a way that doesn't seem cliché? Do editors want these stories anymore? Should writers write them anyway? What are some other monsters that deserve their day in the sun (not vampires, for obvious reasons)?

9. 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.

10. CREATIVE DRIVE: YOU WRITE, I DRAW, THEY SING -- What does the creative drive or spirit look like? Is it different for writers, artists, singers? Some people can create wherever they are, while others need a particular place. What about our panelists? Some people need quiet while others like a busy café, some listen to music while others wear earplugs. What works for you? How do you start? On paper as notes and/or sketches? Or do you go digital right away (keyboard, paint program, etc)? And some creators' spaces tend to be cluttered with toys and goofy oddments. Why is that? How about you? Is there something you do to help yourself that might prove useful to someone else? Are there special tricks that creators use to write or draw better?

11. THE DAILY POST: WEAPONIZATION OF THE INFORMATION-SPHERE -- Unprecedented efforts to censor information with longstanding government sources going dark, attacks against journalists and entertainers to silence their criticism, billionaire ownership of media companies (film, news, videogames, publishing) to construct their own reality. Where do you turn to get your news and entertainment in an increasingly polarized world? How can a free press stay independent and still make payroll?

12. THE ETHICS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: ASIMOV'S THREE LAWS & BEYOND -- Stories have long explored the ethical questions raised by artificial intelligence from autonomy and consent to responsibility and care. How do contemporary creators imagine the moral landscape of emerging technologies? What can speculative fiction contribute to real-world conversations about AI ethics, and where do the classic frameworks (like Asimov's Laws) still resonate or fall short? What lessons from science fiction can we apply when considering A.I. and other new and emerging technologies today?

13. WHAT IS "SPECULATIVE FICTION"? WHY DO WRITERS WRITE IT? -- What's it for? Why do we like it when we know it's a pack of lies? Why do writers write speculative fiction? Besides it being crazy fun? What do imaginary universes have to do with who I am? What does this speculative fiction make-believe have to do with my career? Why should I spend time on this course when I know it's about fake stuff? Why should anybody read/write/watch fake stuff when a lack of science knowledge is endangering the planet? If, as Ursula K. Le Guin once said, writing speculative fiction is "handling lava with gloves," what's your lava?

14. WRITERS WHO ART, OR ARTISTS WHO WRITE: MULTI-TASKING TALENT -- Bubonicon is lucky enough to have participants who started as artists and then started writing, and writers who are now doing visual art. How do these two disciplines interplay? Is it a challenge to switch from one to the other? How many writers at least doodle? Are there thoughts that can be described in words but are difficult to do as artwork? What about the reverse? How does a multi-talented person decide which art – words or pictures – is appropriate for a given project? Once a person changes artistic fields, is it difficult to go back?

15. 1001 TALES: SCHEHERAZADE IS ALIVE AND WELL -- Even decades later, there still are tales to be told in Science Fiction and Fantasy. Maybe there are only seven basic plots or themes, but genre fiction seems to find many different ways to tell them. How do our genre tales allow so much variety? How much can the basic plots be twisted? Does genre fiction allow for more than seven basic themes? What is some of the most unique (and appealing) genre fiction being done now? Would Scheherazade be fairly safe these days with so many tales to tell?

16. 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.

17. IT'S JUST A FANTASY (IT'S NOT THE REAL THING) -- What is SF/F and how do you know? What about "Parsing Realism in SFF"? What about Magical Realism – is it part of the speculative genre? Kurt Vonnegut insisted that, when he wrote a story about a time-traveling guy who was going through his life non-linearly and spent part of the book as an exhibit in an alien zoo, it wasn't science fiction. Perhaps he thought of SF as something like *Flash Gordon*. But since his stuff was intellectually respectable, it wasn't SF/F. Similarly, Margaret Atwood prefers to call her own books "speculative fiction," which she defines as stories set on Earth and employing elements that already exist in some form, like genetic engineering, as opposed to more wildly hypothetical ideas.

18. IF I COULD TURN BACK TIME: TIME PASSAGES -- Is time travel still popular in films, TV, and books? What is so compelling about time travel in fiction? Do you believe that time travelers should be able to change the past or just visit it? What are some of the interesting ways to prevent interference in fiction? What are some time travel clichés that really annoy you? What are your favorite/least favorite time travel films/tv-shows/books? If you could go back in time, when would you go? And what would you learn first/take with you? Is time rigid (no changes) or more like a river with many branches?

19. LET'S DO THE TWIST: I WASN'T EXPECTING THAT -- Twist endings, sudden switches, reversals and other fictional flip-flops – they can be eternally memorable or feel like a complete betrayal. What are some examples of a twist ending that played fair and may have shocked but didn't feel like a cheat? What are some of your favorite twist endings in books, short stories, TV shows and movies? A sudden change of character for inadequate (to the reader) reasons may ring false. How long does it have to take and what circumstances can believably lead to an epiphany?

20. YOU CAN DO MAGIC: CREATING RULES OF ENCHANTMENT -- Magical worlds are wonderful places for readers; however, they can be devilishly tricky places for writers. The magic must be powerful enough to be instrumental to characters and storyline, right? Yet isn't it true that the magic must not be so potent that wielding characters become indomitable and therefore their stories become boring? How can researching existing legends, mythology and folklore help an author frame effective magical systems?

21. YOU DON'T NEED THAT: WHAT TO LEAVE OUT -- Writers usually focus on all the things that need to be in their stories, but what you leave out is just as important – and sometimes more so. As Mark Twain said, "A successful book is not made of what is in it, but of what is left out of it. How does a writer decide what to leave out? How does a writer check themselves for things the reader already knows (and thus can be left out)? What things can readers figure out on their own, and what things are better left to the imagination? When do extraneous explanations actually need to be in the story?

22. I AM A LEAF ON THE WIND: BETRAYING VS SURPRISING THE READER -- Some plot points or story beats feel like a betrayal to the reader. Sometimes things are figured out well ahead of time and the denouement is not a surprise. Panelists talk about walking the thin line between keeping your reader on their toes and able to be surprised versus betraying their feelings and expectations.

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"). RoyTack quickly realized there was a need to recognize the worst stuff of each year.

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

The 51st annual Green Slime Awards see Jessica L. Coyle in her 16th turn as Slime Mistress, continuing the tradition about 8:05 pm Saturday.

HANDY-DANDY MAP OF THE ALBUQ MARRIOTT UPTOWN!

