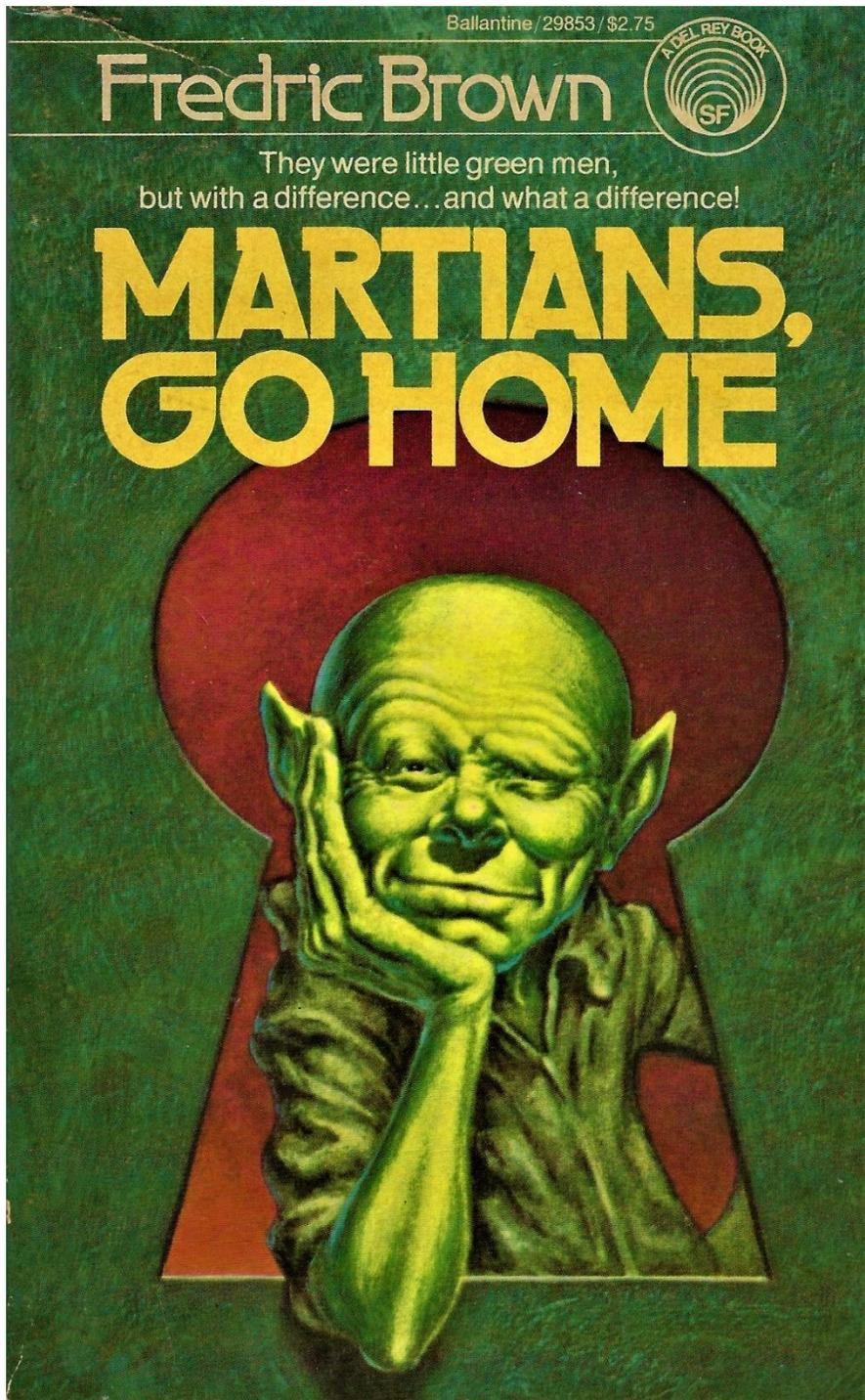


# BCSFAZINE

Clubzine of the British Columbia Science Fiction Association  
(Issue #549 – July, 2021)



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**Dedicated to The Fellowship of The Greater BCSFA.**

BCSFazine is a Canadian non-profit Science Fiction online PDF Clubzine published by the British Columbia Science Fiction Association twelve times a year.

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To submit articles, art work, or letters of comment, contact God-Editor R. Graeme Cameron at: < [the.graeme.bcsfazine@gmail.com](mailto:the.graeme.bcsfazine@gmail.com) >

For lots of back issues, please go to: < <https://efanzines.com/BCSFA/> >

**CURRENT BCSFA EXECUTIVE**

Chair: Danielle Stephens.

Vice Chair: Position vacant.

Treasurer: Kathleen Moore.

Secretary: Barb Dryer.

BCSFazine Editor: R. Graeme Cameron.

Keeper of the FRED Book: Ryan Hawe.

FRED Organizer: Michael Bertrand.

VCON Ambassador for Life: Steve Forty.

**BCSFA SF FEN CONFAB ZOOM MEETINGS** — Every Monday 4:00 PM (PST) to 9:00 PM (PST). All SF Fen welcome.

Contact me at < [the.graeme.bcsfazine@gmail.com](mailto:the.graeme.bcsfazine@gmail.com) > and I'll send you the link.

**FRED DINNER** – (FRED = “Forget Reality! Enjoy Drinking!”) A local Vancouver area meet-up founded circa 1979. Usually held every second Sunday, but currently on hold due to the Coronavirus Pandemic.

**BCSFA PUBLIC GROUP FACEBOOK SITE** – Participate in ongoing discussions and check out photo albums of past VCONs at: < [BCSFA Public Group Discussion](#) >

**BC SF ASSOCIATION WEBSITE** – Download the most recent BCSFazines and peruse assorted texts on BCSFA, WCSFA, and VCON history at: < [BCSFazines and Club History.](#) >

**HELP VCON STAY ALIVE** – Group discussion at: < [Help Keep VCON Alive!](#) >

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### Cover Credit

– Cover Art for *Martians Go Home* – by Kelly Freas.

### IMPORTANT NOTICE

Moss Whelan has stepped down as Chair.

Danielle Stephens has agreed to be the new Chair.

## **EDITORIAL: THE GOD-EDITOR SPEAKS!**

### WHAT IS BCSFA NOT?

BCSFA is NOT an organized club with membership roll, annual fees, scheduled events, or a public presence.

It is a nostalgic concept based on distant memory. Pre-covid it had been reduced to a tiny social club meeting a couple of times a month for dinner at restaurants. The days of a roaring party animal throwing two parties a month with a membership of 100-plus was over before all the existing teenagers of the world were born. More than a generation ago. That's a long time. Moreover, a lot of the old-timers are dead. Really has been a long time.

### IS VCON BCSFA'S FUTURE?

No. VCON is no longer responsible for VCON. WCSFA is. The role of people who think of themselves as BCSFAns or ex-BCSFAns is to volunteer to help VCON if they feel like it, but as individuals. Certainly many will want to attend VCON. Some may even volunteer to join the ongoing WCSFA committee overseeing VCON year after year. But that's a position separate and apart from anything to do with BCSFA.

The only formal connection BCSFA has with VCON is the fact we own the VCON trademark (thanks to Moss Whelan who stepped in to renew it). It's a given WCSFA may use the trademark as they see fit to promote the convention. Someday the trademark may be legally transferred to WCSFA. No need to hurry. It'll happen when it happens. There are other, more urgent matters that have higher priority for WCSFA. The trademark can quietly be taken for granted for the time being.

### HAS BCSFA BEEN REVIVED?

That was my plan. Hence the weekly zoom meeting on Monday nights. What I wanted to do was attract what I call "The Greater BCSFA," the numerous ex-members of BCSFA who might want to get together online for social discourse in this era of Covid isolation. Seems to have worked. There are a few regulars, and a fair number who occasionally drop by. Including fans from across Canada and some American fans. This is great. True, it takes away a little bit from the focus on Vancouver and Lower Mainland fans, which is the traditional territory of BCSFA despite B.C. being in the title, and makes it more fannish than BCSFAn, but I'm fine with that. The more the merrier.

After all, technically the zoom meet isn't an "official" BCSFA function. There are NO "official" BCSFA functions. BCSFA is a concept, not an organization.

Garth Spencer hit the nail on the head when he said "Organizations don't do anything. People do." Exactly. Organizations work well when a critical mass of like-minded people are excited to work together on this or that project. Today, there is no

critical mass, hence no activity. Covid to blame, yes. But it was the same way before covid. The old days were already gone before Covid appeared.

In my case, I'm an individual motivated to do things. I publish BCSFAzine, I host two BCSFA sites on the internet, and I host weekly meetings. This gives the illusion of club activity. Really it's just me and a bunch of people happily participating, which is a "club" of sorts, but not an organization. It just means I've been successful in "reviving" the club in terms of former members happy to converse, contribute a few photos of past events, and reminisce.

However, some people have shied away from the meetings because they felt intimidated or uncomfortable. Just because you are a fan doesn't mean other fans automatically agree with your opinions. I've found it necessary to institute a policy of "No politics, no religion" in the discussions. This is problematic, as SF is often about either or both. Sometimes I'm not as vigilant as I should be. I never know who is going to get their trigger pushed until it happens.

I know you can't please everybody. It never occurred to me you can't please *anybody*, and that, over time, possibly more and more will people drop away.

Facing a bit of a conundrum here. Do I increase my vigilance? Or stop holding zoom meetings? Because there seems little point in hosting meetings where people ignite each other's sense of outrage. That would be as bad as Facebook, for Ghu's sake.

Probably I'll just carry on, being a tad more vigilant in cutting people off when others start to squirm, though often it is hard to tell until somebody blurts out their hurt and leaves. By then it is too late to censor. Oh, well.

There's still a fair number of people who attend the weekly meetings. They drop in and out, but sometimes as many as 6 or 7 at any one time. Rarely, as many as 14. As long as the meetings seem worthwhile to the majority of attendees, I'll carry on.

When I think about it, keeping Garth's statement in mind, what I am is a one-man sub-committee devoted to "reviving" BCSFA as a meet-up of sorts. I seem to have accomplished something toward that goal. I'll keep at it.

## HAS BCSFA BEEN REVITALIZED?

By that I mean doing proactive events that fulfill our traditional mandate of promoting science fiction to the public. I, myself, don't have the time to commit to that. I edit and publish two semi-professional magazines and write a weekly review column for *Amazing Stories*. Plus I'm trying to find the time to write and publish a novel. I simply don't have the time or energy to revitalize the club. Revive, yes. Revitalize, no.

Along came Moss Whelan. Much younger than I, a published novelist, and someone with widespread connections among newer writers in the Lower Mainland region. He dreamed of a tight focus for BCSFA mandate activities, namely celebrating the diverse voices of up-and-coming local talent. There has been an explosion of First Nations talent addressing First Nations futurism in the SF&F genres, not just in

novels but short stories, graphic arts, podcasts, and so on. Black talent as well. Asians. Diversity in all its forms in our multi-cultural country. Why not celebrate what's new and exciting? What's current and contemporary? This is the sort of thing likely to appeal to young people today. If ever we are to attract new "members" to BCSFA we need to address their interests, which revolves around what is happening now and likely to happen in the near future.

Heck, not just young people. Older people too. But no matter what the age of potential recruits, you can only rehash the past so much. I discovered, years ago, when giving a lecture series at the Vancouver Planetarium on classic SF movies both good and bad, that what the audience really wanted to hear about were the movies that were soon to be released and the movies still in production. Enough with the old stuff, already. What they were mostly interested in is what they wanted to look forward to.

To put it another way, science fiction is "supposed" to be about the future. "Retro SF" isn't as exciting as nostalgic old-timers think it is. Recently, I saw online that someone wanted to know what SF books they should use to entice their young kids into liking the genre. Some old guy immediately suggested Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*.

Umm, no. Heck, I'm nostalgic for ALL the Heinlein juveniles. They had an enormous impact on me. Also the *Tom Corbett Space Cadet* series, and the *Tom Swift Jr.* books. But time, society, and people have changed. These books are now hopelessly archaic and irrelevant to modern kids. Frankly, they'd probably find them dull and boring. What was mind-blowing and wildly futuristic 60 or more years ago isn't exactly hip and cool now. It's Granddad stuff, or as one teenager put it to me, "Twentieth Century Junk."

The current generation wants to know what's happening now and how they can participate. They want to surf the cutting edge, not be buried in dust.

Bearing this in mind, Moss and I got very excited discussing the idea of BCSFA sponsoring an annual award to celebrate local talent, a low-key award where a bunch of fans declare "This is somebody you should pay attention to." Nothing more than that.

To get the ball rolling, and remembering that a number of bars, bistros, and coffeeshops in the Lower Mainland used to host author readings and poetry sessions, Moss suggested BCSFA could participate or even initiate such gatherings once Covid was over. He experimented with a "coffeehouse zoom meeting" to see if any sort of critical mass of enthusiasts could be attracted.

In essence, Moss intended to function as a one-man sub-committee promoting the revitalization of the club much the same way I promote the revival of the club. Two separate goals, each handled by a motivated individual.

Moss planned to concentrate on those who shared his goal, to conduct a weekly meeting that would be by invite only. Sort of like a VCON con-com meeting where only members of the con-com are invited because they're the ones who are actually going to put on and run the convention.

Similarly, only those who wanted to actively promote local writers of diversity, and the writers themselves, would be invited to participate. Idea was to build the infrastructure behind the activities so that once Covid was defeated things can really begin to happen. Public author readings. Book signings. Workshops. Awards. All activities by volunteer enthusiasts. All aimed at the contemporary public eager to know what the current literary scene is all about. Events that would be open to all.

I barely qualified to attend his meetings because I knew I wouldn't have the time to offer anything other than advice. But I supported the program. So did Danielle Stephens. So did other members of the Greater BCSFA. And so, potentially, would many remarkable creative talents in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland. I assumed a critical mass of enthusiasts dedicated to fulfilling our traditional mandate was easily achievable. I thought wonderful things would happen in the near future as a result.

Unfortunately, Moss ran into a brick wall of fannish apathy, politics, and public apathy. This led him to step down as Chair and, as far as I know, to abandon his quest to revitalize BCSFA. Pity, because the program he had in mind was a splendid vision. I thank him for all he attempted to accomplish. It was a heroic effort.

Seems to me there's nothing to prevent Moss from starting an organization of his own. It would have the cachet of being fresh and new and invigorating, a contemporary solution to a contemporary need, and thus potentially attractive to newcomers eager to get involved.

Moss is a man filled with passion and energy. I'm sure he will come up with something. I hope he succeeds.

## SO WHAT IS THE GRAEME GOING TO DO?

I confess I was disheartened by the failure of the revitalization dream. Putting out BCSFAzine wasn't much fun anymore. I lost my enthusiasm. But I've since come to accept my limits and the fact that BCSFAzine is nothing more than an exercise in nostalgia for gaffiated fans rather than an organ for a functioning club. Finally I have recovered my focus. BCSFAzine is like FRED. Point is to forget reality and have fun!

I will keep BCSFA going as a social meet-up for ex-BCSFans. We'll sorta be like FAPA, which for at least 40 years has had the reputation of being the organization where old fannish dinosaurs go to die. Could be true. *I'm* a member of FAPA, after all. There are only 16 of us left. Used to be 64 with a long waiting list, but that was decades ago. Time marches on. FAPA still fun, though. BCSFA can be, too.

I'll carry on the twilight of BCSFA probably as long as I continue to exist, or at least till I get too old and feeble to handle it. Meanwhile, I intend to have as much fun as possible in the time remaining to me. I'm hoping some other ex-BCSFAn will feel motivated to start up a sub-committee of their own in pursuit of some other worthy project and make the club active again, to the point of actively doing stuff, providing it is fun stuff to do. You can never have too much fun. Whole purpose of being a fan.

Like Garth said, it's up to individuals. Up to you and I. And maybe Ghu.

**REMEMBERING STEWART SMYTH ON HIS BIRTHDAY**

By Rissa Johnson





January always reminds me of Stewart Smyth, for his birthday on the 19th, and for Robbie Burns Day, one of his favourite holidays, on the 25th. What's not to love about a holiday centered around ribald poetry, good scotch, and stuffed sheep stomach?

Due to the vagaries of the internet, I only learned that Stewart had died last June, when a passing meme about Robbie Burns Day caused me to reflect that it had been a few months since I last heard from him.

I first met him a decade ago or so, back when the extent of social media was limited to Livejournal and ICQ. I expressed amusement on a Livejournal post featuring a shirt that said,

"Polyamory is wrong!

It should be either multiamory or polyphilia, but mixing Greek and Latin roots is wrong!"

It was the first time I'd heard the joke. I was exploring what it meant to be fully poly, as I was already married, and had recently joined a polyamory group on Livejournal.

I friended him, he turned out to be Vancouver local, and we struck up a casual friendship, which for a time became casual dating, and then other things. It may surprise many people to know that we were lovers. It wasn't a secret, so much as there wasn't anyone to tell, or much to tell. I have no idea if he ever mentioned me to anyone.

He was a few decades older than me, the oldest person I've been with. He was well-read, but mostly a self-made sort (I don't recall if he had any formal education). Life had tumbled him around some like a pebble in a rock polisher. This included being struck by a car as a pedestrian decades ago, and being held together with pins for quite some time. Those experiences, and the lasting health problems that came with them, made him a bit of a grumpy old cynic, prone to expounding on the virtues of the good old days and, "Get off my lawn!"

We attended a Halloween party together in 2010. He as the Green Lantern (a simple costume involving a green t-shirt with the logo), and me as a naughty corrections officer (a joke because I was a real security guard at the time).

I visited him in at least two of the places he lived. I endured the dubious judgement of his one constant companion, his cherished black and white cat, Persimmon. She was named for the box of fruit she was presented to him in by friends one Christmas.

He even cooked for my partner and I once in the tiny kitchen of our second basement suite. Schnitzel, I think. While he waved around a dry martini and told stories from his youth more than he cooked. Eventually, he produced an excellent meal. He was a lover of fine food, and perfectly prepared martinis. Though he often lacked the funds to indulge as he preferred.

He could spend hours explaining the role of the right vermouth and how it should be applied. He spent years searching for the best atomizer to create the barest, finest

mist of vermouth over the finished product. That was Stewart—as the old expression goes, champagne taste on a beer budget.

His third great love after food and his cat (though I do not know what order he'd rank them) was Science Fiction. He was an integral feature in fandom, long before it had a unified name, an estimated forty years or so. He was a walking encyclopedia of science fiction history and lore, a catalogue of old conventions, and a fathomless repository for 50s and 60s pop culture references. (The latter often only he seemed to recall.)

He was a stalwart supporter and volunteer at VCON. I remember tracking him down at Filk singalongs, and assisting the con with him where I could. Even after I broke it off, we had a standing arrangement at VCON for a few years. I think the last time was when I was pregnant with my second child in late 2016 (don't worry, remember I'm married and poly—this isn't that sort of story). Come to think of it, that might have been the last time he was with anyone—his heart problems got more serious shortly thereafter, resulting in multiple surgeries.

I am not trying to claim some unique standing by this, merely an echo of the thought that has haunted me since the start of the pandemic: There are people I have already seen in person for the last time, I just don't know it yet.

I chatted with him a few times since we last saw each other. I knew about his heart surgeries and his health troubles. We probably last spoke a full year ago, when he was recovering from surgery—around his 65th birthday and Robbie Burns Day. But I never went to see him, and then the world shut down. He said he understood I was busy looking after my kids.

I think I recall seeing his FB post about feeling poorly and being unable to breathe in late June. I just didn't realize it was his last. The previous post was a shared meme hoping for July to come in nice and easy, no funny stuff. Prophetic, since he never saw July.

We may not have been close friends, but we were good friends. We may not have been frequent or constant lovers, but we were lovers.

I'll be sure and have a wee dram of the good stuff on your birthday, Stewart.

Stewart Smyth

January 19, 1955 - June 24, 2020

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The Graeme Notes: I remember Stew judged people on the basis of how much they knew about The Kingston Trio, was easily outraged by injustice, wore the same hats and drank the same drinks as did his father, and was immensely proud of the set of cufflinks, once owned by E.E. “Doc” Smith, author of the Lensman series, given to him by Smith’s daughter Verna Smith-Trestail as a thank you for squiring her around Westercon 44/VCON 19 in July, 1991. He was a creature of long-standing habits but always open to new concepts providing they were fair and decent.

## VOID BREATHER BOMBAST

### Random quick notes:

We're all pretty happy with the **new Martian Rover** and, in particular, with the snappy little helicopter that has exceeded expectations. Still hopping the rover spots an obvious fossil in the sedimentary rocks it examines in the dried lake bed. That be my dream.

I'm also pretty happy with the **Chinese space program**. They landed a probe on the far side of the moon, successfully dropped a rover on Mars, and currently have three astronauts aboard the first module of their new space station. Interesting that the Russians are making noises about participating in the Chinese space station. The Chinese have also announced their intention to send astronauts to the moon and, sooner than most people would expect, to Mars. It's not a race. They know they won't be first. It's not meant to be a propaganda stunt. In my opinion they are as serious about exploiting the resources of the solar system as they are about acquiring guaranteed access to resources on Earth outside China. Long term planning is their forte. Hoping this will accelerate space exploration among all nations.

Alas, the **Hubble Space Telescope** ceased functioning. Computers wor out. Still, it had a pretty good run, producing excellent results. Then the NASA engineers pulled another miracle out of their hat and reconfigured it and it's up and running again!

Just because something can be conceived and hypothetically constructed doesn't mean it should be. Nuclear-powered jet bombers for one. And the **electric rail-gun** the US Navy was working on. Dang thing actually works, propels a shell at supersonic speed a distance of 100 miles. Trouble is it requires enormous power. The rail itself wears out after a mere 12 firings (even a 16-inch gun barrel on a battleship tended to last at least 60 firings before needing replacement). Main problem, any ship carrying the device has to get within 100 miles of the target ship, which would make the rail-gun ship a helpless sitting duck long before it could get within range, if the target is equipped with hypersonic cruise missiles which, by comparison, are extremely long-ranged. Point is the rail-gun is already obsolete. Hypersonic cruise missiles are the coming thing, as current Russian and Chinese experimentation attest. This is one case of futuristic technology outmoded even as it was being developed. Oh, well. There could be future applications someday. They've got the tech on file. Different needs could reactivate experimentation as desired.

Note: Singular lack of detail in the above paragraphs. I'm just commenting based on my memory of stuff I've read lately. Putting down the gist of things as I understand it. I want to rush this issue to publication as quickly as possible and that's why this article is so devoid of facts. But I'll try to do better next ish. As usual I will concentrate on the weird and quirky, or at least, on anything that strikes me that way. It's so easy to make space tech sound dull and boring. I want to avoid that.

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## CORRECTABLE BOOKS ARE HERE!

By Spider Robinson

And clearly have been for quite a while. Maybe you already know. I only found out by accident yesterday. And what a gasser!

Through circumstances too boring to recount, amazon.com mistakenly got the idea my credit card had been canceled, and sternly emailed me to please fix this immediately. So I found myself wandering around their confusing My Account page, trying to find the place to tell their robot, "No, no: just try that card *again* and you will now find that my provider has its head out of its ass again, and remembers that my card is still valid for at least the next three years." But it wasn't an easy job... and at one point, I unintentionally found myself examining a page that listed what looked like, and was, every book I have *ever* purchased from amazon in Kindle format. Going back over a dozen years. And before I noticed anything else about that list, I instantly noticed something about it that made my heart start to beat faster. Namely:

On the first page of that lengthy list, there were something on the order of 40 or 50 books, giving title, author, date purchased, and price. And three of them carried notations in red ink (the only things on that page that were red). Which read (in red)... are you ready?

...which read, "Update available. [Click here.](#)"

Instantly I started scrolling down through the whole list, and on every successive page there were always at least two—and sometimes as many as 6—titles that said, "Update available. [Click here.](#)" In total there were, very roughly, about 30-40 books that promised to update themselves if I clicked [there](#). Some were fiction, some were fact. (And one was neither. I once bought a book by Ann Coulter so I'd have ammunition to return fire with the next time I encountered either of her fans. That one had not been updated.) Both my Bob Woodward books about the Trump years were offering free upgrades, for instance, and so were two of Rachel Maddow's books. But a lot were fiction... and I couldn't help but notice that at least two or three were Thomas Perry titles! He is one of my favorite living writers. I've already pre-ordered the next book in his Jane Whitefield series, which won't be released until early November, if that gives you an idea. I now have updated versions of his THE BOMB MAKER and THE OLD MAN and THE BURGLAR, all excellent standalones, non-series novels.

I went back to the top of the list and worked my way to the end, clicked everywhere I saw red text, and now the first thirty or forty titles listed as Most Recent in my Kindle's catalogue are all updates—version 2.0—in one or two cases, updates of books I hadn't gotten around to reading yet. None of them cost me—or their authors—a ruble.

Do you get it? At least 30 or 40 authors out there already know what I just learned: *the day has finally come!* When a writer notices that there's a gruesome mistake or two in the book he handed in and got paid off for months ago... he can just send the publisher a correction and have them update the Kindle version, and

maybe other platforms. So, in addition to the dozens of *other* attractive sales features that make the Kindle such a gasser, it now will, if you pay attention, always see that you have the most recently corrected version of a book on your Kindle—at not one cent of extra cost. Why should it cost extra? It makes almost zero work for anybody.

This gives me a hat full of bubbles. I am the guy who emailed Thomas Perry that he'd accidentally made an unfortunate error in *THE OLD MAN*. (Since I live on the West Coast, I got to read it 3 hours before it was released in New York.) Not being familiar with the Vancouver area, he had his protagonist get into a cab in downtown Vancouver and get out very shortly afterward at the Empress Hotel in Victoria... which is two hours of driving time and two or three hours of ferry travel away.

Victoria is not in or near Vancouver, but on huge *Vancouver Island*, which is at least two hours west of mainland North America. And by God, Mr. Perry read my email about the error, thanked me for it... and then just *fixed* the damn thing, probably on the day of its release. Technically, he and I have collaborated on a novel! What a gas.

And he's just one of my favorites I've had upgraded. Also on the list of updated titles I was sent on demand, in under five seconds apiece, were two John Varley titles: *GOLDEN GLOBE* and *STEEL BEACH*. Way to go, Herb! (Did you have to Press Enter?) And two Ted Chiang story collections, and 2 of N.K. Jemisin's Hugo-winning novels, I forget which two. And one James Alan Gardner, another favorite of mine. Also some science *fact* books by the splendid Mary Roach, and another one I love by Jonathan Rauch titled *THE HAPPINESS CURVE: WHY LIFE GETS BETTER AFTER FIFTY*.

No more being told, "The only way to make a correction in your published book, even just in the unsold copies still sitting in the warehouse, would be to print your corrections on strips of paper and use an expensive machine to blow one strip into each of the remaining copies; would you like to hear how much that's going to take off your royalties? Hint: it'll cost more than the original printing plus binding of the book."

If you're a writer, and have always wished there was a *practical* way to correct books in your backlist, *now there is*. Just tell your publisher to tell [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). Or if you self-publish, tell 'em yourself. For all I know, maybe this wheeze is now possible with Kobo or other e-book platforms as well. I don't see why it wouldn't be. Surely they'll want to stay competitive...

And if you're a reader who uses Kindle, you might want to visit your Accounts page and find out how many of the books you already own need free updating, *in the sole opinion of their authors*.

If you're my agent, you now have some good news to share with your other clients, which makes me very happy considering all the good news you've given *me* over the past 40 years.

Whoever you are, please pass the word to any Kindle-owners you know. I would not have learned about this myself if my card provider had not goofed, and caused me to look like a deadbeat. To their credit, reinstating my card took—once I managed

to find where and how to do it—less than two minutes. Total time wasted, 32 minutes, tops.

As far as I'm concerned, this development is cooler than the bottom layer of fertilizer in a Nova Scotia outhouse. My mother told me once that when RCA first trained her as a typist, on a manual, she innocently asked, "What do we do if we get down to the next-to-last line on the page and make an error? How do we correct it?" Her instructor said, "We yank that page out of the machine, destroy it, and start over." The horror!

First, came white correcting fluid, then transparent Correctape, then self-correcting IBM Selectrics, then word-processors with cut-and-paste... and now *post-publication correction!* I've been waiting for this since I first heard of electronic publishing. Go, technology!

—Spider

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### **RETRO BOOK REVIEW:**

#### **MARTIANS, GO HOME** — by Fredric Brown

*"If the peoples of Earth were not prepared for the coming of the Martians, It was their own fault."*

That be the opening line of *Martians, Go Home*, the 1955 novel written by Fredric Brown. He wrote a few other Sf novels, such as *What Mad Universe* (1946), *The Lights in the Sky are Stars* (1953), and *The Mind Thing* (1961). Mostly though, he was famed for his short stories which can be found in collections such as *Honeymoons in Hell*. To modern fans he is most well known for his short story *Arena* (1944) which Gene L. Coon turned into the 18<sup>th</sup> episode of Star Trek (January 19, 1967) where Kirk battles the Gorn. Mystery fans know Brown for his detective fiction. One thing all his works have in common is his wry and telling sense of humour. *Martians, Go Home* is a particularly good example of that.

Funny thing. The novel isn't a very good novel. Not much happens. The Martians appear. They hang around. They leave. It isn't even much of a story so much as a situation. An incredibly prolonged vignette. Yet it has been reprinted several times and is much loved by those who have read it. How come?

Because it is brilliant. Absolutely brilliant.

For readers, yes, but especially for writers. It's a classic case of a "What if?" story. Martians exist all right, but they're not tentacled sacs of leather or quivering blobs or ethereal, angelic beings, they're just little green men. About 2.5 feet high, baldheaded, with big mouths, tiny eyes, and a bad attitude.

To be precise, *"But one and all they were abusive, aggravating, annoying, brash, brutal, cantankerous, caustic, churlish, detestable, discourteous, execrable, fiendish, flippant, fresh, galling, hateful, hostile, ill-tempered, insolent, impudent, jabbering,*

*jeering, knavish killjoys. They were leering, loathsome, malevolent, malignant, nasty, nauseating, objectionable, peevish, perverse, quarrelsome, rude, sarcastic, splenetic, treacherous, truculent, uncivil, ungracious, waspish, xenophobic, yapping, and zealous in making themselves obnoxious to and in making trouble for everyone with whom they came in contact.*" Yep, that's the Martians in a nutshell. Also, the novel.

You see, the coming of the Martians betrays every trope you associate with the subject. They don't care about our leaders. They don't want to enlighten or educate us. They don't even want to communicate with us. They certainly don't want to be our friends. Nor do they wish to conquer us, let alone carry off our women or exploit our resources. They just want to humiliate us and make our lives miserable.

Take the main character, Luke Devereaux. A science fiction writer, he's holed up in a shack in the California desert miles from nowhere trying to sneak up on an idea he can wrangle into a novel. Just as he comes up with a hint of a plot to do with Martians, one knocks on the door. Luke's first reaction is to drink a shot of whiskey, then, priding himself on his SF knowledge, to start asking questions. *"None of your business, Mack"* is the reply. The Martian doesn't want to talk *with* Luke, but instead talks *at* him.

In short order the Martian (none of them have names) berates Luke for his choice of friends, lack of intelligence, lack of sanity, cowardice, sexual inadequacy, lousy writing skills, and, to top things off, Kwimms (not teleports, you need machinery for that) into Luke's in-the-process-of-divorce wife's apartment and back again to report on who she is having sex with at this very moment.

Naturally, Luke begins to question his own sanity. He drives to a far-off diner by the highway, even though it is a trifle difficult to see what with the Martian sitting on the radiator. At the diner the Martian sits on the stool next to Luke, who is astounded, but relieved, when the counterman groans *"Oh, God, another of 'em."*

*"Huh?" said Luke. "Another what?" He found himself gripping the edge of the counter so tightly that it hurt his fingers.*

*"Another Goddamn Martian," said the clerk. "Can't you see it?"*

*Luke took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "You mean there are more of them?"*

*The counterman stared at Luke in utter amazement. "Mister, where were you last night? Out on the desert alone and without a radio or TV? Jesus, there are a million of them."*

The novel takes place in the far-off future of 1964. The population of the Earth is three billion, and there are about one billion Martians kwimming about, or one for every three humans. They are everybody's problem. No one is immune.

You can perhaps imagine what would happen to human civilization if everything everybody does, from illicit sex to espionage, is instantly tattled upon by grinning, green skinned, gleeful midgets. Or perhaps you can't. Don't worry. Brown has imagined every possible permutation for you. Not only that, he has also come up with every conceivable desperate attempt on the part of humans to negate or at least ignore the ubiquitous Martians. Of course nothing works. The entire human race becomes pathetically unhappy within hours of the advent of the Martians. More than

usually unhappy, I mean. Universally unhappy. Not the kind of egalitarian equality utopian-minded reformers had in mind I betcha.

Who knew contact with aliens could have such miserable consequences? Not something Carl Sagan ever envisioned, I'm sure. (I'm dating myself here.)

As I say, this isn't really a novel. The ending is just an excuse to tidy things up. It's really a "can you top this?" writing exercise where Brown takes his wonderful premise and hops, skips, and jumps with it in joyful abandon. This is concept-driven fiction in the extreme. I recommend *Martians, Go Home* as something you need to read. It's a hoot.

Sadly, I can't recommend the 1989 movie starring Randy Quaid. It's a terribly unfunny film, lame and flat. For one thing, the whole joke of what "little green men from Mars" are *really* like is thrown out the window by having all the Martians played by normal-size actors in green make-up. Still, if the actors playing the Martians had lines appropriate to the premise, and were as quirky and annoying as originally depicted by Brown, the movie would be a comedy classic. It isn't.

To give you an idea, I, known for my extreme enthusiasm for films like John Agar's *The Brain From Planet Arous* and Roger Corman's *Attack of the Crab Monsters*, do NOT WANT *Martians, Go Home* in my movie collection. Because it's boring. The one cardinal sin I can never forgive in a film.

I can watch Jean-Luc Godard's *Alphaville* and Mario Bava's *Planet of the Vampires* over and over into eternity, but *Martians, go home?* Once was enough. Never again.

The book, on the other hand, should be on your bucket list.

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### **REVIEW DRENCHED IN MAPLE SYRUP**

Canadian Zines & Books Worth Reading  
as reviewed by The Graeme in *Amazing Stories* Magazine.

### **THE HUMAN TEMPLATE** – by Dale L. Sproule

Sample paragraph from review:

Raine is a huge hit. He becomes the fad of the moment, mainly because of his memories of hot, passionate sex with Freda Zhang. Sure, the trees had "read" all the manuals and biology textbooks and literature devoted to the subject, but this is the first time they are able to experience all the emotions and feelings embedded in the memory of someone who had actually had sex and quite a thrill it is. Immediately the majority of trees incorporate the "new" awareness into their own avatars and the culture of the forest is changed forever. But after a few decades the trees get bored, if not with sex, than at least with Raine, and suddenly he is no longer the centre of attention. Suits him. He's still trying to figure out who and what he really is, and

having thousands of intruders sharing his every thought and emotion had been something of an inhibiting burden.

See the full review here < [The Human Template](#) >

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**THE LIGHT-HEARTED VITUPERATOR  
AND JOLLY REVILER:**

Streaming Science Fiction and Fantasy:

A Digital Adventure

By Stan G. Hyde

Both the God-Editor and I are great collectors of physical media—and I doubt that will ever end, but lately streaming services have begun to offer a bounty of films that reminds me of the dawn of the video era .... where sublime classics and awesome exploitation films competed cheek by jowl on the video shelves.

I thought for this column I would go through a few channels, both the free and the ‘cheaper than cable’ options that you might have missed.

**YOUTUBE:**

This is probably not a surprise for most people, unlike some of the later services. YOUTUBE remains a jumble of content ... which sometimes takes some exploring.

Katie and I have been working through a project of watching every film that ever played on Kiro Seattle’s Nightmare Theatre (we’re down to the last 36 films out of hundreds) and YouTube has often been a resource for old television movies that are no longer easily found, like SATN’S SCHOOL FOR GIRLS (both the original 1973 and the 2000 remake), and other delights like K. Gordon Murray adaptations of Mexican gothic like 1960’s WORLD OF THE VAMPIRES - with its vampire destroying organ music played on an organ made of human skeletons, or 1963’s INVASION OF THE VAMPIRES ... not the kind of thing that is always easily found.

Of course, since YOUTUBE is the wild environment, often the films there may not be listed straight-forwardly, as often there are copyright issues which folks are avoiding. It’s very easy to fall down the rabbit hole of YouTube exploring ... and it’s not just movies.

I recently discovered Nigel Kneale’s: The Quatermass Memoirs—a BBC Radio Drama. The piece is an odd combination of Kneale recalling the history of writing the three original BBC Quatermass teleplays, intercut with Andrew Keir (my favourite Quatermass from Hammer’s QUATERMASS AND THE PIT film adaptation), playing an elderly Quatermass being interviewed by a young journalist. While Keir recalls Quatermass’s fictional history, Kneale relates it to the world at the time the BBC serials were aired.

An amazing journey into the Quatermass series if you're interested, and typical of the kind of cool stuff that can be found on excursions into the YouTube jungle.

I recently took the plunge to Premium because I got sick of the ads interrupting things (particularly music) when I was watching/listening ... but of course the service is free if you're willing to watch ads.

[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

TUBI:

In terms of free choices, TUBI is great. (Again, you can pay so you don't have to listen to ads, but there aren't many ads and they are fairly short usually. Overall they seem less troublesome than the YouTube ones.)

Tubi is broken down by genre, so you can find a Horror section, as well as a Science Fiction and Fantasy section. There are also collections on the browsing page—like "Cult Classics." Beyond that, there are also TV stations with both ShoutFactory and Full Moon television probably of special interest to SF fans.

The channel is an odd but cool mix of old films, cult films, foreign films, and mainstream releases—right now TITANIC, RANGO, and MIDSOMER MURDERS are playing.

For Katie and I though, where else can you spend an evening with the mad scientist/killer plant movie THE REVENGE OF DR. X, the 1935 LIFE RETURNS with a doctor who revives a dead dog, or the cryogenic murder mystery FROZEN ALIVE? Now that's a night of quality television.

Honestly I could do a whole column of the cool stuff on Tubi—from American International/Roger Corman classics like VOODOO WOMAN and THE SHE-CREATURE—to Japanese superhero television shows on SHOUT FACTORY television like KAMEN RIDER and ULTRAMAN ... but best you explore yourself and find your own favourites.

There are tons of American B movies and exploitation films, direct-to-video features, and tons of foreign films—of particular interest to me, a large collection of Italian Giallos (thriller/horror movies that are "yellow" because the spines of thriller paperbacks used to be identified that way in Italy.)

[tubitv.com](https://www.tubitv.com)

MIDNIGHT PULP

Midnight Pulp kinda lays its cards on the table with its name. Again, it can be watched with ads or you can 'try premium.'

A heady concoction of cult, exploitation, and just plain psychotronic films, it can be a lot of fun to browse through. I mean, where else are you going to find BLOODSUCKING PHARAOHS IN PITTSBURGH side by side with LUPIN 3: THE

LEGEND OF GOLD BABYLON from Japan, and Italy's DEEP RED, one of many films by Dario Argento, the master of the Giallo.

Again you can browse in both the HORROR, or the combined SCI-FI AND FANTASY, clusters, but the channel has a lot of great playlists as well.

Currently one of the collections is THE BEST OF FANTASIA (described as “a sampling of many incredible films that have played the world’s greatest genre film festival, Montreal’s Fantasia Film Festival.” Another collection “Bad Science” turns up the RE-ANIMATOR SERIES, Roger Corman’s THE WASP WOMAN, TWILIGHT PEOPLE from the Philippines, and dozens more.

midnight [pulp.com](http://pulp.com)

## ARROW: THE ALTERNATIVE

The specialty DVD/blu-ray/4K deluxe Video producer Arrow from the UK also has a fascinating streaming station which showcases their wide range of product, much of which is of interest to SF fans. They’re currently having a sale to celebrate the beginning of their UK service, so if you sign up you can get a month free, and three months for half price with the celebration code. (Since the service is about \$5.00 U.S. it means you can enjoy it until June for about \$7.50 US).

I have to admit, beyond the wide variety of films that have recently become available, the other thing that has been drawing me to streaming services is the price—which are frequently well below those packages offered by cable—and the fact that they are multi-platform (start a movie on your tv, continue it on your iPad, finish it on your phone ... well, okay, that’s a terrible way to watch a film, but it’s an option.)

ARROW ESSENTIALS breaks the content down by decade, but they also have “essential” SLASHERS and NEW CULT. Overall, the material here is quite similar to the kinds of films you can see on MIDNIGHT PULP, but focused on the company’s catalog. (Some of ARROW films are available on TUBI and MIDNIGHT PULP to entice film fans into checking out the product.)

THE COMPLETE GAMERA COLLECTION is here, all ten films featuring the giant rocket propelled Turtle—yes, you read that right—he pulls in his arms and legs and flames shoot out, Though Atlantis is mentioned in the original series, the upgraded mythology of the 1990s turns the terrible terrapin into bioweapon developed by Atlanteans to defend mankind their previous bioweapon, the Gyaos that wiped out Atlantis and threatens us a now,

The box set is incredible, and included an oversized hardback history of the film series, a series of original art prints by kaiju artist Matt Frank, and some terrific new art for a bound blu-ray book, and tons of commentaries and behind-the-scenes materials. Here you have just the films—but honestly—it is a lot cheaper than the limited edition was.

Besides GAMERA you can find the complete “viral ghost videotape” series RINGU here, and HE CAME FROM THE SWAMP: THE WILLIAM GREFE COLLECTION. The titles here include THE DEATH CURSE OF TARTU, MAKO: JAWS OF DEATH, STING OF DEATH and more, capped off with a documentary THEY CAME FROM THE SWAMP: THE FILMS OF WILLIAM GREFE.

Er, these may be the kinds of films the God-Editor and I live for ... blame it on a misspent youth in grind houses.

The synopsis of STING OF DEATH will give you an idea: “A group of college students travel south to Florida on spring break with their friend Karen (Valerie Hawkins), whose father, Dr. Richardson, is a marine biologist currently studying jellyfish. At the party, Karen's friends insult and ridicule Dr. Richardson's assistant, Egon, who is in love with Karen. Egon creates a murderous jellyfish mutant which begins a killing spree and eventually brings Karen to his secret laboratory in the swamp.”

[arrow-player.com](http://arrow-player.com)

## SHUDDER

Shudder is a streaming channel that can also be watched on Amazon Prime if you have that service. It is primarily focused on horror films, broken down into sub-genres like Monsters, Slashers, Horror Comedy, Supernatural, Psychological Thrillers, and more. There are original series as well.

The mix here is decidedly more modern than a service like TUBI—which has a lot more black-and-white classic films ... but you can find films going back to the 1970's. Some of the films are delightful, like BLACULA with the amazing William Marshall as the African Prince Mamuwalde who becomes a vampire when bitten by the colonialist Count Dracula—which also features Canadian icon Gordon Pinsent as an L.A. cop. Little seen vampire fare like Hammer's VAMPIRE CIRCUS can also be found here, and rare but really interesting splatter films like BRAIN DAMAGE featuring the voice of the one-time horror host Zacherly as Elmer the singing brain parasite.

Really ....

Again there are documentaries like BLOOD AND FLESH: THE REAL AND GHASTLY LIFE OF AL ADAMSON, a director responsible for a lot of “alternate” cinema who was murdered in a real life story that could almost come from the script for one of his films. (Well, ok, probably not nearly as weird as the scripts for DRACULA VS FRANKENSTEIN, VAMPIRE MEN OF THE LOST PLANET, BLOOD OF GHASTLY HORROR, or BRAIN OF BLOOD ... but you get what I mean.)

[shudder.com](http://shudder.com)

## TOKU

Watch Toku is a streaming service focused on “tokusatsu” films. This Japanese genre is equivalent to saying “special effects” films in English.

The channel is broken down into sub-genres. You can find an Ultraman collection, and a selection of other tokusatsu heroes like Mirrorman, Gridman, and Masked Rider Agito. There is also an Asian Horror collection, a fantasy Martial Arts collection, Chinese Drama, and Anime (though, honestly, streaming anime deserves a future column on which I will get to.)

I love heroes like Kamen Rider and Ultraman, but ultimately there are some real joys to be found in the historical films on view here.

For instance, SAMURAI CAT: TAMANOJO GOES EDO. ... the story of Kyutaro, a famous swordsman, who is hired by a dog-loving gang to kill their feline-loving rival's beloved cat. When he sees the cute kitty, he cannot kill it and becomes a cat lover, angering both gangs.

Sigh. So many cool movies ... so little time.

[watchtoku.com](http://watchtoku.com)

Let's end this by going from the ridiculous to the sublime.

## THE CRITERION CHANNEL

Like Arrow Films, Criterion is essentially a boutique film packager, often associated with arthouse films, but with a long tradition of doing exclusive releases of other films as well (like GODZILLA: THE SHOWA-ERA FILMS, 1954 - 1975, a box set of 15 Godzilla films).

Criterion was the first company to ever include a film commentary with a film, KING KONG on laserdisc. The company has continued the tradition of high quality commentaries and documentary extras on their dvds and blu-ray presentations—and the Criterion channel is curated in such a way that the extras are a major part of its appeal.

One collection, “Auteurs in Space” presents Tarkovsky's SOLARIS, Menzies THINGS TO COME, Fassbinders's WORLD ON A WIRE PART 1 AND 2, and Marker's LA JETEE.

You can also find commentaries here that run the gamut from KWAIDAN (Japanese ghosts stories) to THE BLOB.

There is also a collection currently presented on Afrofuturism:

“Coined in 1994 by critic Mark Dery, the term 'Afrofuturism' has become an essential framework for art about imagined and alternative Black experiences. As the author Ytasha Womack writes, 'Afrofuturism combines elements of science fiction, historical fiction, speculative fiction, fantasy, Afrocentricity, and magic realism with non-Western beliefs.' Afrofuturist ideas have found fertile ground in film, and this expansive series takes viewers on an international, intergalactic journey that stretches back long before the term existed, and far into the future. Spanning

animation, documentary, and genre spectacle, these exuberant visions of Black creativity, resistance, and freedom zigzag across the African diaspora from New York to Brasilia to Kinshasa to worlds unknown. Curated by Ashley Clark, the series draws together films from *Space is the Place: Afrofuturism on Film*, which took place at Brooklyn Academy of Music in 2015; a sequel planned for 2020 that was canceled due to the pandemic; and a selection of all-new titles, many of them available for streaming for the first time.”

At the same time, the God-Editor will be happy to know you can watch the killer invisible radioactive brains film, *FIEND WITHOUT A FACE*, paired with a documentary on *Exploitation!* You can also watch the Japanese space vampire movie *GOKE: BODY SNATCHER FROM HELL*, the kaiju chicken *THE X FROM OUTER SPACE*, and all those *Godzilla* movies (including pair-ups like the short film *KAIJU BUNRAKU*—er, traditional Japanese puppet theatre mixed with giant monsters—and 1964’s *MOTHRA VS GODZILLA*).

Who says art house can’t be fun?

So, watch the exploitation films and then stay for the “observations on film art,” “adventures in moviegoing,” “double features” (like *THE WICKER MAN* and *KILL LIST*), and even “Saturday Matinees.”

The Saturday Matinees even include *THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN*, and *20 MILLION MILES TO EARTH*.

criterion [channel.com](https://www.criterionchannel.com)

There’s so much to explore in terms of films online now, many films which were, at one time, impossible to see. While I know both the god-editor and I value our collections of media, there’s a lot of fun and diversion to be found in the internet jungle. It is a whole new world.

I hope this helps folks out on their film exploration adventures, and please let me know the sources you folks have found on your digital adventures!

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### **MILLION WORD YEAR BLOG**

Animation: *Dealing with Death*

By Michael Bertrand

This beautifully drawn animation takes a sensitive and insightful look at the important subject of how the elderly deal with death.

LOL. I have to admit, I did not see that twist coming. I am not sure what I thought was going to happen, but it certainly was not a great big kung fu battle.

And I totally love that version of Death. That is a seriously awesome design. I want that Death to be on my van, my tattoo, and my heavy metal album cover. It is one bitchin’ Death.

This animation reminds me of the character Psyche (later Mirage) from the *New Mutants* of the 1980s. After an adventure in Asgard, she becomes a Valkyrie, and through that gains the ability to fight death on the behalf of others. So if someone was dying, she could see Death coming and battle it, and if she won, the person got to live, at least for a little while longer.

This eventually led to a really great issue. As the almighty Wiki puts it:

“Later, on a trip back home to see her parents, she encounters an old childhood friend. Unfortunately, this friend has become racist and mentally ill during the time she was gone. He was also a diabetic and when he fails to take his medicine, he crashes. Danielle confronts Death outside the doors to the operating room, but Death talks her into letting her friend go.”

She actually fights death successfully a number of times before the conversation with Death, but then Death comes to her as a wise old Native American grandmother, and they have the necessary conversation where Death explains to her that her childhood friend is extremely sick and in a lot of pain, and that Death does not always come as an enemy or a ravager, but sometimes as a blessed mercy, or as a friend who comes to usher them on to the next life after the long journey towards their well-earned rest.

It was a really touching and powerful issue, especially for me as I was around fourteen when it came out and so it made a very big impression on my budding teenage mind. When you are fourteen, the idea of fighting Death to save someone you love seems like the most incredibly noble thing you could do, so the idea that Death is not always a bad thing is a pretty radical notion at that age.

At that age, I had my mind blown by comics on a fairly regular basis. I am beginning to think that this is the true power of comics, especially Marvel comics, is that when you are the right age for them, they can, quite painlessly, introduce you to very big ideas that really make you think, and that sort of thing leaves a very deep emotional impression on a person. I know that a lot of those comics are an integral part of my psyche. They are a part of me like my physical organs. Issues of *Spider-Man*, *The X-Men*, *The New Mutants*, *The West Coast Avengers*, *X-Factor*, and who knows how many others all became a vital art of my mental landscape, along, of course, with all the books I read during that period, and all the television shows I watched as well.

It just goes to show that there is no such thing as high or low culture. I learned as much from television and comics books as I ever did from books. Intelligent and thoughtful people will learn from and think about whatever is around them. Dull and thoughtless people will not learn jack even if you soak them nightly in liquid Shakespeare and dry them on a Library of Congress bookshelf.

I have thought for a while that the way to teach English to kids is to start with whatever it is they watch or read for pleasure. It doesn't matter what it is or whether it is, objectively, any good at all. Whether it's an inane cartoon, a stupid sitcom, a hopelessly naive series of movies, or whatever, it has all the elements you are going to want to teach them. Characters, plot, narrative structure, characterization, you name

it, it will all be there, and the great thing is, you don't have to make them read or watch anything. You start with something they have already watched or read! Sure, that means you, the teacher, have to watch or read the thing yourself, but a short time spent with bad art is, to a dedicated teacher, a very small price to pay for getting through to kids on their own level.

Viewed in this light, to me, it seems like all this force-feeding of what the Powers That Be have decided people *should* like is worse than futile, it's a vehemently counterproductive practice perpetrated entirely out of a kind of blinkered snobbery and sheer cultural inertia.

Once you have used their own media to teach the kids what goes into a story, the odds are extremely good that some of them will start thinking about the stuff they like and wondering if it's any good. You will accomplish the aims of literary education without having to cram "the classics" down anyone's throat and thus inculcate in them the same fierce negative reaction to the idea of reading for pleasure that people have towards eating vegetables, and for the same damned reason.

If you love literature, the last thing you should want to do is force anyone to experience it.

I had a rather spirited discussion with my favorite high school teacher once about the definition of a "classic." I, with the full heat of the total arrogance of a teenager, flatly declared that I would decide for myself what I considered "classic" and did not care what anyone else thought. Being an English teacher, he took certain exception to such a blanket statement.

Oh well, we are all idiots when we are teenagers, even us smarty types.

This entry was posted on October 9, 2010, 4:01 pm

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### **INTERESTING BACKDROP DETAILS IN ROBOCOP 2 (1990)**

(Noticed while watching obsessively for the umpteenth time.)

By Felicity Walker

In the MagnaVolt commercial, all the cars in the parking garage have bar-code license plates.

During /MediaBreak/ footage, a human waves a tow truck over to the malfunctioning ED-209.

The newspaper boxes the homeless man is sleeping next to are *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Daily Mirror*, and *Detroit Dispatch*.

The homeless woman's shopping cart has empty cans of Diet Coke, Canada Dry, Pepsi, 7-Up, Coca-Cola, Shasta, Dr. Pepper, and beer. Evidently product placement was not a factor for these props as no brand seems to be favoured over any other.

A recurring piece of graffiti art is a skull with a capital “N” on its forehead and a molecular diagram over its head. Other graffiti: “BIN WA,” “NUKE ME,” “NUKE THE BASTARDS,” “VMEC,” “DIP RA,” “HACK THIS.”

The Cinema Golden Star advertises “XXX HOLOGRAM XXX.” A photo on the wall is captioned “NASTY JANE.”

Other stores in the area: McCrory’s, Wig Salon, Downtown Food Market, Lewis-Nathan Jewelry, Shamrock Appliances, Tre Palle.

In Nick’s Guns (“STATE OF THE ART POLICE & MILITARY ARTILLERY”), there are signs reading “PAUZA SPECIALTIES,” a real-life gun company in Texas (where most of the movie was filmed), and “PELTOR,” a real-life tactical headset company. The store also has a goose with its wings spread suspended from the ceiling, and a bomb hanging in the front window.

At the Nuke lab there’s a bulletin board with posters about nutrition. One has artwork of a giant blue fork over a white circle. Another has the word “FOOD.”

After RoboCop and Lewis save the baby at the Nuke lab, the baby’s mother thanks them in Cantonese: “Doh-je, doh-je, doh-je!”

As RoboCop walks down the hallway at the police station, an arrestee talks on a payphone until the policeman behind him taps him gently on the back with the end of his shotgun.

When the Mayor’s limousine pulls into the OCP parking lot, there’s an ED-209 outside the building.

The Old Man has a framed photo on his desk. We never get a good enough look at it, but it’s a black-and-white photo of two people. (One of them could be the Old Man; the other could be someone famous he met, such as a president.) When the Mayor throws the city’s contract on the desk, it knocks the photo over. The same photo, enlarged, also hangs on the office wall.

A man in a business suit, possibly a salesman, is talking to three men in khaki military uniforms in what seems to be the OCP building’s showroom.

At the police station, Officer Duffy walks past a poster that reads “COCAINE KILLS. WE DARE YOU TO STOP THE KILLER.” The word “DARE” is the Drug Abuse Resistance Education logo.

Duffy hides in a darkened, empty room to use Nuke. At the moment he injects, Robocop happens to walk past in the hallway outside.

When RoboCop and Lewis have the arcade under surveillance and Hob is handing out Nuke to people, a punk with a leopard-print vest walks out, followed by a man with long hair who’s wearing a red-and-black varsity jacket.

The woman to whom Hob says “Go ahead, take two” is wearing a T-shirt with the same skull-and-nuclear-diagram logo as the graffiti. Other people also have the same T-shirt, and the design is also displayed on the backs of various people’s jackets.

Hob says “Ferdy, you got out!” to the punk in the leopard-print vest, who has now teleported inside again. Ferdy injects a Nuke.

As RoboCop enters the arcade, the man in the red-and-black varsity jacket has also teleported back inside. A girl is holding a paper cup with the Pepsi logo.

A neon sign on the interior wall of the arcade says “GROUND ZERO.”

All the video game cabinets have the Data East logo on the side. (Data East Corporation made the arcade versions of the *RoboCop* and *RoboCop 2* video games.)

When the kids start to throw popcorn at RoboCop, several people are holding paper cups with the Pepsi logo. There’s a Pepsi fountain in the background and a neon Pepsi sign on the wall.

Ferdy is now passed out on the concession counter.

When the shooting starts and everyone runs out, Ferdy casually stumbles out. Several Pepsi cups are on the counter.

As Duffy tries to sneak out of the arcade, he walks behind a *Bad Dudes* cabinet. RoboCop throws him into a *Midnight Resistance* cabinet, knocking it over. Then RoboCop picks him up and throws him into a *Bad Dudes* cabinet. If it’s the same one, it’s moved a few feet from where it was, but there could always be more than one *Bad Dudes* cabinet.

Just before RoboCop smashes Duffy’s face into the glass of the *Bad Dudes* screen, the score reads “2700” and there’s a poster of a bald, shirtless strongman captioned “KARNOV.” Karnov is also a video game character created by Data East.

Other games in the arcade: *Sly Spy*, *Slap Shot*.

As RoboCop drives his car through the barriers at the sludge plant, a sign warns “DANGER—DO NOT ENTER—POLICE NOT AVAILABLE.” Graffiti says “EYE OF NUKE.”

At Cain’s hideout, next to Elvis Presley’s remains and images of Mother Theresa and Jesus Christ, there’s also a photo of Oliver North from his 1987 Iran-Contra testimony.

The building where Cain’s gang tortures Duffy has a sign that says “HOSPITAL—CONDEMNED.” Cain’s limo parks in a handicap spot.

At Dr. Faxx’s focus group, there are ashtrays on the conference table, but nobody is smoking. This may explain a later scene in which RoboCop over-reacts to a smoking man. A secretary at the end of the table is taking notes and has an amber monochrome computer monitor next to her.

As Drs. Faxx and Schenk are trying to upload RoboCop’s new command program, the new directives include: “DIRECTIVE 233: RESTRAIN HOSTILE FEELINGS.” “DIRECTIVE 234: PROMOTE POSITIVE ATTITUDES.” “DIRECTIVE 235: SUPPRESS AGGRESSIVENESS.” “DIRECTIVE 236: PROMOTE PRO-SOCIAL VALUES.” “DIRECTIVE 254: ENCOURAGE AWARENESS.” “DIRECTIVE 256: DISCOURAGE HARSH LANGUAGE.” “DIRECTIVE 258: COMMEND SINCERE EFFORTS.” “DIRECTIVE 261: TALK THINGS OUT.” “DIRECTIVE 262: AVOID ORION MEETINGS.” “DIRECTIVE 266: SMILE.” “DIRECTIVE 267: KEEP AN OPEN MIND.” “DIRECTIVE 268: ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION.” “DIRECTIVE 273: AVOID STEREOTYPING.” (Orion is the movie’s production company.) The font suggests an MS-DOS/PC operating system.

A console behind Dr. Schenk has a readout for “ROBOTIC STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY LEVELS” with “LEVEL 1” and “LEVEL 2” indicated, plus a coloured line graph.

The evil children’s baseball team is the Motor City Muskrats. The coach is stealing a box labelled “PROTON AI-3000.” Other brands in the scene: Technics, JVC. The Proton logo seems to be in the Sony font.

When the children playing with the fire hydrant tell RoboCop “Go fuck a refrigerator!” the smoking man is in the background and smiles at the remark.

More directives: “DIRECTIVE 238: AVOID DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR.” “DIRECTIVE 239: BE ACCESSIBLE.” “DIRECTIVE 240: PARTICIPATE IN GROUP ACTIVITIES.” “DIRECTIVE 241: AVOID INTERPERSONAL CONFLICTS.” “DIRECTIVE 242: AVOID PREMATURE VALUE JUDGEMENTS.” “DIRECTIVE 243: POOL OPINIONS BEFORE EXPRESSING YOURSELF.” “DIRECTIVE 244: DISCOURAGE FEELINGS OF NEGATIVITY AND HOSTILITY.” “DIRECTIVE 245: IF YOU HAVEN’T ANYTHING NICE TO SAY, DON’T TALK.” “DIRECTIVE 246: DON’T RUSH TRAFFIC LIGHTS.” “DIRECTIVE 247: DON’T RUN THROUGH PUDDLES AND SPLASH PEDESTRIANS OR OTHER CARS.” “DIRECTIVE 248: DON’T SAY THAT YOU ARE ALWAYS PROMPT WHEN YOU ARE NOT.” “DIRECTIVE 249: DON’T BE OVER-SENSITIVE TO THE HOSTILITY AND NEGATIVITY OF OTHERS.” “DIRECTIVE 250: DON’T WALK ACROSS A BALLROOM FLOOR SWINGING YOUR ARMS.” (Directive 242 is notable since Dr. Faxx earlier accused Dr. Schenk of being “given to premature value judgements.”)

The hot dog vendor has a Pepsi sticker on his cart. The cart also says “DELLA CARTS 937 8039.”

When RoboCop grabs a motorcycle to chase Cain, graffiti on the wall says “PROTON?”

As RoboCop and Cain drive at each other, there’s a business called Cal Fresh Produce. The street sign reads “Gould—600 S.”

In Dr. Faxx’s lab, Cain’s file reads: “SUBJECT: CAIN (NO FURTHER DATA). AGE: UNKNOWN. ADDRESS UNKNOWN. PRIOR ARRESTS: 6 COUNTS MURDER. 47 COUNTS DISTURBING THE PEACE. COURT-MARTIALED AMAZON WAR. SERVED 3 YEARS AT THE DANNEMORA CORRECTIONAL FACILITY—DISAPPEARED DURING SECURITY OUTAGE DUE TO EAST COAST POWER FAILURE IN SEPTEMBER. PRESENT WHEREABOUTS: OCP MEDICAL FACILITY.” Her monitor is a Proton! The aforementioned Amazon War first appeared in *RoboCop 2* co-writer Frank Miller’s comic book mini-series from the same time period, *Give Me Liberty*, and was fought between the United States and fast food corporations wanting to clear-cut the rainforest for cattle grazing land.

When Angie and Hob’s vehicle stops at the bridge, there are three people shoving each other on the street corner. They’re gone by the time Angie and Hob drive away.

The “LIFESCAN EEG MONITOR” during Cain’s brain removal says “TIME—11:11:52,” “Display A—400 $\mu$ V—Edge 80%,” “LEFT HEMI—5 MIN” and “RIGHT HEMI—5 MIN.” (The “400 $\mu$ V” is consistent with an earlier scene: when RoboCop was

on life support, Dr. Akita had said that he and Dr. Garcia were “keeping the brain going with micro-shocks.”)

At the Mayor’s telethon, the tote board says “OUR GOAL—37,480,911” and “RECEIVED—4,823.”

The Mayor asks Angie to turn down her TV set when she calls, which she does. As she continues her phone call, on her TV, we see the Mayor nod when she says “Your honour ...”

When Poulos reports to the Old Man, the photo on his desk is back upright. The Old Man also has a New York Stock Exchange readout screen under his desk.

Options on RoboCop 2’s heads-up display menu are: “[Skull Symbol]—Mode—Control—Status—Target—Memory—Record” and “Searching: Mayor • Witnesses.” The skull symbol resembles the skull from the Nuke graffiti but without the molecular diagram or “N.” The font suggests a Macintosh operating system.

At the OCP Civic Centrum dedication gala, /MediaBreak/’s Jess Perkins is speaking into a WTTY microphone. There’s a TV production truck with “WOCP CH. 3” on the side.

The Centrum has banners reading “THE FUTURE HAS A SILVER LINING™” and “SECURITY—PROSPERITY—PRODUCTIVITY.”

During the gun battle between RoboCop 2 and the police, the police cars’ bar-code license plates say “MICHIGAN POLICE.”

As RoboCop 2 shoots at reporters, one woman runs towards a WATB news-van.

When Lewis commandeers a tank, a barricade reads “OMNI SECURITY FORCE.” The tank also has the letters “S” and “F” with the OCP logo in between.

In the closing credits, several characters are missing, including one significant character, RoboCop’s physician Dr. Garcia (Patricia Charbonneau), and one neat bit part, Frank the chemist (Frank Miller). The penultimate credit is “A TOBOR PICTURE.”

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### **OOK! OOK! SLOBBER! DROOL!**

(Letters of Comment)

**Note:** Annoying comments by God-Editor [*are in brackets*] immediately after introduction of topic in question. This, a feeble attempt to create the illusion of a conversation in a fanzine lounge or a hospitality suite in the interests of conviviality.

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From: **Lloyd Penney** – (January 14, 2021)

Dear BCSFAns:

Thank you for issue 548 of BCSFAzine, and welcome to a new decade. Let's see if these 20s roar. No matter, it has to be better than the year past. Comments follow ... I've given myself a holiday from loccing, so let's see what I can think of.

Now that you have a chair and vice-chair, I guess you'll be standing back and letting things happen? No, I didn't think so. Once the pandemic is done, and who knows when that might be (we are under a deeper lockdown now, that I gather no one is paying the slightest attention to), I guess the club may turn away from ghost or zombie status, and become an active club, and have regular meetings and dues again?

*[ That was the hope. Moss Whelan certainly had a comprehensive vision toward that end. But active support failed to materialize. And, as explained elsewhere, I'm not the guy to do it. Could be, as far as local fandom goes, the concept of an active club serving a specific purpose has gone the way of the Dodo. ]*

I fully support the Rainshine award ... I am an old white guy with the full assumption of a kind of life many would call privileged. But, I did see a lot of racism growing up, not against me, but against black families and indigenous people. Not long ago, when this pandemic first started up, we met with a young lady friend of ours who has brought up a big, successful family of children on her own. We talked about the way police treated BIPOCs ... she told us about how she and her children have been abused by police over the years, and we couldn't even comfort her. She is taking virtual classes to try to improve her skills, and to make her more employable. We will never know the pain in her life, or in the lives of BIPOCs, but we have to reduce that pain, and make the colour of their skin a non-issue. We worry about her, and she has had a good life in spite of the racist society surrounding her.

*[ I have always believed the purpose of life is to live. The nature of society can make that difficult, but if people wait for society to reform and become a Utopian paradise before they attempt to live life to the fullest, they'll never experience the life they deserve. By all means be a social justice warrior, but don't forget to live life for yourself and your loved ones too. ]*

The newest-minted astronauts with their ultimate destination of the moon ... half male and half female, and all heroes for wanting to go. With a new president taking office shortly, they will have more pride in their work. I want to see this, too, for I saw my share of moon landings, and I honestly expected we'd be heading off to Mars shortly.

*[ I'm content if more nifty pictures and videos of the reality of looking around on other planets come my way. Ancient ruins would appear to be out of the question. Still hoping for fossils though. ]*

I have a number of Phil Dick books on my shelf, but *The Man in the High Castle* isn't one of them. I was warned away from that book a long time ago. Go read *Valis* or *Martian Time-Slip* or *Ubik* or *Albemuth*, but not *High Castle*. I might have had a copy of it at some point, but I just checked, and it's not there. Maybe I should find a copy of it, and try it again.

*[ Warned? It's not perfect as a novel, but as a frightening glimpse of what could*

*have been it's quite remarkable, and given recent events, seems less and less far-fetched as time goes by. Trouble is, why read about fictional Nazis when there are so many real ones running around these days? The book is depressing in part because aspects of it seem prescient and prophetic. A nasty turn of events. ]*

Hi, Stan ... when my family moved from Orillia, Ontario to Victoria in 1977, I helped to start up the Trek club there, and that's where I first met Paul Delaney and Lynn Fonseca, now happily retired in King City, ON, if I correctly recall. Paul joined the Trek club, and I can say that Paul and Lynne are my oldest friends, getting close to 45 years. I don't know if you ever got to meet Cat Middlemiss, Tony Sine and Dan Cawsey, the Trek club founders.

I have many of the fanhistorical books Garth mentions, and even if we have all read the same books, I think the opinions we form will all be different. I have had some negative experiences in fandom, but they have been greatly outweighed by the positive. The books were meant to convey the experiences of those who fanned long before us, and to encourage us to make what we will out of the aspects of fandom, no matter the core interest, and have as good a time as possible with your involvement. Some experiences are negative, and those people either grouse about their poor times, or simply leave. Other experiences are positive, and you might measure your involvement in fandom in decades. As we say for just about anything else, your mileage may vary.

*[ That's the problem with the concept of fan unity. Every fan is different. I bought into the concept of fandom as a definable entity and spent years trying to attract converts. Nary a one showed up. I no longer proselytize on behalf of fandom, mainly because being futile is a lousy hobby. Now I just sit back and cherry-pick what I like about SF. A purely personal approach. ]*

My letter ... The James Beamon book, *No Police = Know Future*, has come out, and I am indeed listed as an associate editor on the page after the ToC. Just announced today is another book I have worked on, *The Tiny Time Machine* by John Stith, so I'd better get myself a copy of that. (Just ordered.) I know that Ira Nayman has announced his resignation from the editor-in-chief position of *Amazing Stories*, but I have indicated to publisher Steve Davidson and art director Kermit Woodall that I would be willing to stay. This is a gig I am pleased with, and I am actively looking for more opportunities.

*[ Best of luck on getting good editorial gigs. There is a crying need, and something of a demand, for self-publishing authors to have their works vetted in a variety of editorial ways, and maybe that's something you could look into? Free-lancing among independent writers rather than working for magazines or publishers? ]*

My comments on the modern space race and American involvement ... looks like I am already proven wrong, and I am pleased with that. They have announced their newest roster of astronauts ready to return to the moon, and once a friendly government is in charge, I know there will be a level of Canadian involvement as well. The incoming Biden government should be much easier to deal with.

Time to add a pretty bow on top, and move this into the constant flow of the Web, heading towards you. I find myself getting tired a little earlier each day; I need to find more sleep (usually sleepless), and a little more incentive to get moving. I think we're all suffering from some level of pandemic non-impetus syndrome. That's my story, and I'm sticking to it. Anyway, I will keep the Monday chat in mind, and with luck, I can join you. Perhaps see you then.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

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From: **Felicity Walker** – (February 06, 2021)

Letter of Comment on *BCSFazine* #548

**Cover:** Life in the future: that square at the end of “... *will make your hair stand on end* □” now looks to me like a missing character in that typeface.

**BCSFA Once Again Swamped by Controversy!** – This direction feels good.

[ *Except that the new direction came to a screeching halt. Oh, well. ]*

**Void Breather Bombast:** “*Moon Astronauts Named. I plan to stick around till then because I want to watch live TV coverage of astronauts frolicking in the Lunar dust ... Hell, I want the thrill, once again, of stepping outside, looking up at the Moon, and thinking ‘There are people walking around on that even as I’m looking at it.’*” – We’re finally getting back to the future we were promised. Exciting! Think I’ll try to stay alive too.

**Current US Base on Mars:** “*Thirty-nine people died. That’s where this sort of thinking leads.*” – Sometimes it does, sometimes it doesn’t. I’ve stood up for fringe paranormal beliefs and conspiracy theories a lot over the years, though recently the harmfulness of far-right-wing conspiracy theories, in which people try to create their own personal head-canon for reality, has tested my tolerance. I haven’t listened to *Coast to Coast AM* in a few years. I wonder if it’s gone full Q-Anon or if it’s kept its sanity.

[ *I hate conspiracy theories because they’ve become the de facto logic of modern politics. They’re no longer “cute” or “imaginative” or “amusing.” They kill people. Case in point, a widespread conspiracy theory, now a couple of decades old, widespread in Brazil and fully supported by their current nut-bar President. Namely, that all the international protests over the destruction of the Amazon rain forest and the murder of its indigenous inhabitants are a coordinated international conspiracy designed to destroy the Brazilian economy and prepare the country for invasion and conquest by a secret alliance of nations coveting Brazil’s resources. This is taken as gospel-truth by a huge number of Brazilians. It is one of the bases of the President’s populist appeal. As long as he is in charge, measures to save the Rain Forest and protect its inhabitants are sporadic and largely futile. To many Brazilians such actions are*

*treasonous and evidence of hostile nations at work. They look to their President to defend them. Such is the power of conspiracy theories. ]*

**Books to Be Ignored: *The Man in the High Castle* by Philip K. Dick:**

*“Whereas the American Reich celebrates Americans being American, albeit with all festivals and cultural practices adopted and adapted to Nazi ideology, much as the conquistadors built cathedrals atop Mayan Pyramids.”* – There’s a pretty good B-movie called *The Philadelphia Experiment 2* (1993) which is partly set in an alternate timeline where the Germans won World War II. The guy in charge of the American Reich is trying to add a musical score to some propaganda films, and he suddenly realises that Wagner won’t work for his audience the way country music would.

*“Hence the Nazi plot to find the path to this and every other alternate universe in order to invade and conquer them all.”* – The parallel-universe series *Sliders* (1995) jumped the shark when it became about the “Kromaggs” trying to conquer all the other parallel Earths.

**Million Word Year Blog—*Underworld* (2003)—by Michael Bertrand:** “... *Everything is in the Official Gritty Realistic Filter that makes everything blue, black, and white.*” – Someday maybe TVs will come with the technology to correct this and change everything back to natural colours. In the meantime one thing that occurred to me is that we can always turn the colour all the way down on our TVs. That won’t add colours that are missing, but it will mean that we can’t be forced to watch movies in the everything-is-orange-and-blue palette that everything is in right now.

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**ANOTHER EDITORIAL: ON TURNING 70**

Text I posted on Facebook July 17, 2021.

I'll be 70 years-old in a few days. Been thinking on this.

My physical decline is what it is. It proceeds at its own pace.

My mental decline is worrisome. Increasing bouts of mental fatigue, mental fog, forgetfulness, and worst of all, confusion. If my mind is creatively sharp for as much as two hours that's a good day.

I'm no longer as bouncy and energetic as a fifty year-old. Time to adjust my life in accordance with that reality.

Therefore, though full of regrets, I'm stepping down as writing workshop coordinator for VCON. I realize now I can't handle the task of finding enough professionals and newbies to make it work, nor do I possess the stamina to run three 3-hour workshops over the course of a weekend. Anyone who would like to take my place I will provide all the "secrets" as to how it can be done. It's just not something I can do anymore.

I will also be cutting back the hours of the zoom meetings I host.

And I will no longer attempt to organize the B.C. SF Association into a

functioning club. That's a task for others with time and energy.

I will continue the following activities:

"Professional" Tasks:

Publish Polar Borealis.

Publish Polar Starlight, with Rhea Rose as editor.

Write review columns for Amazing Stories.

Host SF Canada zoom meets 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. PDT.

"Fannish" Tasks:

Publish a smaller, less formal BCSFA Newsletter.

Host BCSFA zoom meets 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. PDT.

Participate in FAPA (Fantasy Amateur Press Association).

"Personal" Tasks.

Publish three poetry books, with Swati Chavda as editor.

Write and publish my novel.

I will still promote writers and conventions, but I'm going to stay clear of any and all organizational activity. This to avoid stress, pressure, fear of failure and all the other negative emotions that go along with things that "have" to be done.

Sorry to disappoint people, but I figure my "reduced" plate of projects is full enough as it is. Time will tell if I have to cut back further.

Cheers! Graeme

End of text of Facebook Posting

So, what all does this mean? What will be the practical results of my decision?

As far as BCSFAzine goes, I will take a less structured approach. I'll no longer be concerned with rigid deadlines, or the "necessity" of this or that article appearing on a regular basis. I'll just write what I feel like writing.

Contributors are welcome to send stuff in. No deadline. Whenever your article or column arrives I'll just plop it into the template for the next issue. Simple as that.

Screw deadlines. I'll aim for publishing whatever I've got on hand sometime in a given month. Might be a little. Might be a lot. Depends.

General intent will be to provide material people will enjoy reading, or at least find interesting. I have zero intention of presenting data or info dumps "for the record." Some fannish news, perhaps, but it will be dated by the time you read it. You can go online for that stuff. Reams of mere information is boring, the kind of thing people skip over. So to heck with that. Go to FILE 770 if you want info.

In general, I'm aiming for a kind of low-key multi-author journal offering personal musings and reflections on myriad SF&F interests, the more personal the better. I'm looking for contributors anxious to share their enthusiasm. Could one be you?

