

OPUNTIA 452



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WHEN WORDS COLLIDE 2019

by Dale Speirs

[Reports of previous WWC conventions appeared in OPUNTIA's #71, 253, 266, 282, 318, 350, 387, and 421.]

Calgary's ninth annual readercon When Words Collide was held on the weekend of August 9 to 11. It took place at the usual venue of the Delta South hotel on Southland Drive SE and straddling overtop Bonaventure Drive. The membership was capped at 750 plus volunteers, so the convention was like a village rather than the mob scenes of Calgary Comic Expo (90,000 paid attendees) or the Calgary anime convention Otafest (8,000 paid).

As with my past reports, I'll sort events out by theme rather than chronology. Preceding each panel report will be the programme book listing of that event in italics.



Around The Hotel.

The cover shows a licence plate I saw in the hotel parking lot.

Bottom: I took a long shot of the hotel from a half-block away. At left is the Atrium section where the dealer bourse and science panels were. At right is the Tower section where most of the literary seminars were. The two are connected at their third stories by an enclosed pedestrian crossing over Bonaventure Drive. Most con-goers preferred the shorter route out on the street, and crossed at the traffic lights.

Below: Registration was quick and easy. Well organized.

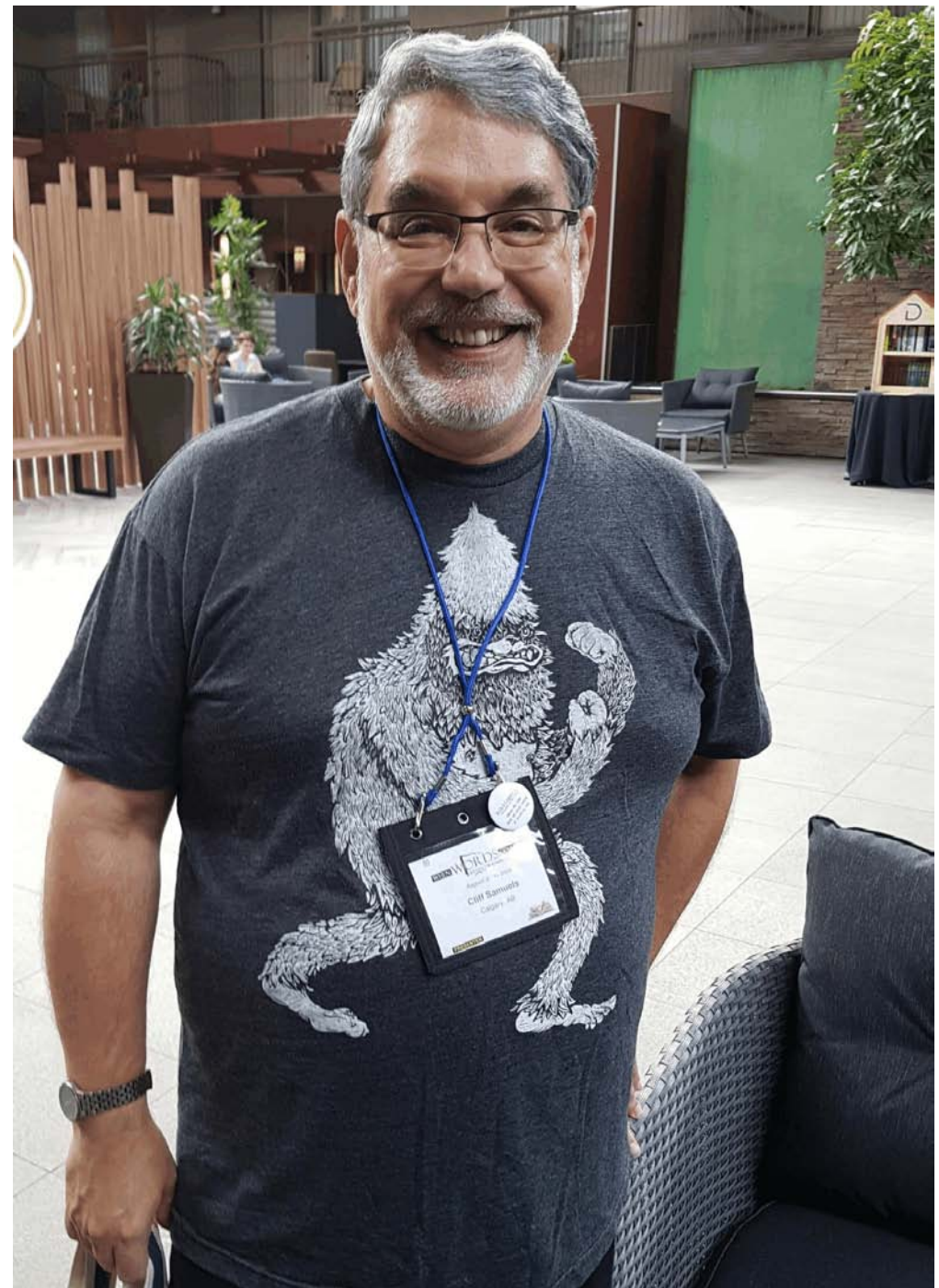


Around The Atrium.

I was surprised to see a new addition to the hotel since last year's convention, a Little Free Library in the Atrium lobby.



Cliff Samuels is one of Calgary's science fiction Old Guard, having been involved in con-running for decades. He was from the beginning and still is with WWC's concom. If you look behind him in the righthand distance, you'll see the Little Free Library.



Dealer Bourse.

I buy a trickle of books throughout the year, but WWC is where I pig out in the dealer bourse. Books and periodicals only for sale, and nothing else. There were two book dealers and the rest were small-press publishers.





At left: This is the stack I'll be working my way through over the coming year. And reviewing, of course.

Below: The hospitality section. The hotel set up a grab-and-go food table (at back of photo) which did good business with fresh quality sandwiches and salads at a reasonable price. Rare among hotels.

Next page: And so to the seminars and events.



Science Fiction.

“Taking On The Punks”

Kevin Weir, Halli Lilburn, Candas Jane Dorsey

With its roots in underground culture, the “lowlife/high tech” futuristic cyberpunk subgenre exploded on to the literary scene a generation ago with William Gibson’s “Necromancer”. Now sci-fi punk derivatives abound including biopunk, nanopunk, and the newest offshoot, hope punk, to name a few. This panel discusses the ever-expanding varieties of sci-fi punks, what differentiates them, and why these rowdy kids on the sci-fi genre block are so popular.



Dorsey said the original concept of punk has drifted into a what-if game. Think of a label and then write a Bat Durston story to fit it, or perhaps the other way around. In the original cyberpunk and steampunk, more effort was put into developing integrated cultures. The punks were a method of holding a mirror to current society.

Lilburn said that she liked to create cultures to fit her characters. Many writers just use the punk trope as something authority reacts against. Punk became the opposite of status quo. It used society’s technology against its overlords. Most punkdoms are alternative history, although some, such as cyberpunk, are science fiction.

Weir got a good laugh from the audience when he joked that once society crumbles, get your leathers out, because the [insert type]punks would rule. Punk has two main elements, the story and the aesthetics. The latter attracts cosplayers and others who only consider the superficial aspects.

There was a general discussion of biopunk, a technology based on genetic fiddling, for better or worse. Not necessarily punks in rebellion but misuse of technology. The panelists disagreed if the Jurassic World movies were biopunk.

“Literary Versus Speculative Fiction: Can We Have Both?”

Rick Overwater, Marilyn Ruth Liddell, Arlene F. Marks, JM Landels, Scott Fitzgerald Gray

One end of the spectrum we have literary writers who craft great sentences and hold way too much disdain for fun stuff like space battles, monsters, serial killers, and preventing the end of the universe. On the other end we have established sci-fi, fantasy, crime, and horror world-builders who believe crafting good prose too often gets in the way of telling a good story and can barely be bothered to use spell-check.

Can we not have both? Do we even want both? Is Margaret Atwood’s literary masterpiece A Handmaid’s Tale not a well-written dystopian social sci-fi? Is James SA Corey’s Expanse Series not a current masterpiece of excellent writing that happens to take place in space? The Sisters Brothers: that’s a weird-west tale that won a Pulitzer, is it not? Join us for what will be a lively, spirited, even funny discussion?



Overwater began by telling how he had workshopped stories at the University of British Columbia and was hammered for too much plot. He then took the same stories to a science fiction workshop and got hammered because there wasn’t enough plot.

Marks noted that the bad reputation of science fiction began in the 1930s with the pulp magazines. Prior to Gernsback the stories were better written and were published in general magazines. Before the pulps, the stories were called

scientific romances and taken seriously by critics and intelligentsia. The pulps published first-draft stories by mainstream standards and went downhill from there.

Liddell said the genres began when the amount of fiction was too much for booksellers to put all together on the shelves. They labeled each of the genres, and the small amount left over was called literary fiction.

“Live Action Slush: Science Fiction Edition”

Edward Willett [reader], Susan Forest, James Alan Gardner, Colleen Anderson, Randy McCharles

Bring the first page of your manuscript to be anonymously read aloud and receive comments from our editors.

This is a popular tradition at WWC each year, so much so that it is broken up into a half-dozen panels for as many different genres. I only attended the one for science fiction.

The panelists are all editors or publishers. Audience members submit the first page of their manuscript anonymously, which is then read aloud. When two or more panelists put up their hand because they didn’t like something, time is called. There follows a serious discussion of what was bad and what was good. It is not a hazing session, and all entries are treated with dignity.

An interesting comment from Gardner was that if the reader, Edward Willett, stumbled over a sentence, it needed a rewrite because Willett is an excellent public speaker. Don’t give characters unpronounceable names. Anderson noted some descriptions were in the wrong place, slowing down the introduction to the story.

Below: The slush panel before and after hearing a literary gem.



Fantasy And Horror.

“The Resurgence Of Horror”

Colleen Anderson, Chris Marrs, Rena Mason, Konn Lavery
With books such as Bird Box and The Silence being made into successful Netflix films, The Little Stranger and Stephen King’s It and Pet Sematary into box-office movies, and classics like Shirley Jackson’s The Haunting of Hill House and We Have Always Lived in the Castle into series, horror is experiencing a resurgence. Tor has recently announced they are launching a new horror imprint. Popular horror of now is not what it was in the 80s and 90s with slash and gore cheese.



Mason said Hollywood producers were looking for material from horror writers. She has been contacted frequently by them. Splatterpunk gave the field a bad reputation, said Anderson, but crossover horror with other genres are doing better than straight horror.

Marrs said new outlets such as Netflix are looking for content different than the usual fare. She remarked that the horror field is coming back to the idea that it is more a state of mind rather than blood and guts everywhere. That remark got the other panelists defining what horror should be today.

Anderson said it was losing control of one’s self and situation. Mason said horror was anything that played on the reader’s fears.

“Worldbuilding In Fiction”

Scott Fitzgerald Gray, Nina Munteanu, Kevin Weir, Monica Zwikstra
All fiction is speculative. Panelists will discuss the process and fundamentals of realistic world-building, including how and when to combine imagined with real setting details for best effect.



Zwikstra said the writer has to decide what’s different about a world before describing the characters. Gray replied that it is also the plot which will be determined by the world. Often it is best to have a mix of real and fantasy details so that the author doesn’t have to describe every little thing.

Munteanu remarked that a world had to generate real consequences for the characters, otherwise it was just a painted backdrop and pointless to describe. Zwikstra added oddball fantasy details every so often in her novels just to remind the reader that her novels weren’t medieval Earth stories. Zwikstra once got into an argument with an editor because a character took a shower, apparently verboten in fantasy novels.

Weir recommended starting out slow, not overwhelming the reader with a mass of names and details, nevermind infodumps. Getting the readers through the first batch of weirdness was critical for them to accept everything that followed. Gray said that when building a world, the writer decides what is normal. Once that is established, then other strange things can be introduced.

“Shifting Gears, Shifting Genres”

Sandra Fitzpatrick, Talena Winters, Shirlee Smith Matheson, Faye Reineberg Holt
What are the pros and cons of writing in more than one genre? Writing for various audiences might keep your creativity flowing, but what are the advantages and disadvantages for your writing career? You might have loved reading and writing in a particular genre such as fiction, but you are ready to experiment with new ideas. What kind of reactions might you get from your previous readers, publishers, librarians and book sellers?

Fitzpatrick started off the panel by saying she was having trouble keeping up with all the crossovers and new subgenres. She said shifting brought her a new audience which would not have read her previous work. She used pseudonyms to separate her works, such as Lea F. Patrick. The story was told about the late

fantasy writer Dave Duncan being forced by his publisher to use a female pseudonym for a crossover novel.



Fitzpatrick noted that publishing in multiple genres through multiple publishers under multiple names allowed her to get out more than one book per year. The advantage of the genre system is that writers can get a steady stream of books going and concomitant steady stream of income.

Matheson wrote aviation biographies which publishers and booksellers filed under Transportation next to the train books. Her own publisher suggested she take a pseudonym because men wouldn't buy an aviation book written by a woman. The worst problem she had was when she wrote an advice to the lovelorn column "Dear Gwendolyn" and her publisher told her never to tell that story to anyone else because it would ruin her novel sales.

Holt was having difficulty marketing some of her books because the boundaries and literary fashions kept changing. She used a variety of names for all the different places she had published. Crossovers confuse booksellers, libraries, and publishers because the industry is geared to supplying the reader with clearly labeled genre books.

The panel ended on a horrifying note when one of the panelists mentioned someone had published a cyberpunk novel with fairies in it.

Science.

“Chaos Theory And The Butterfly Effect”

Ron S. Friedman

What is Chaos Theory? Where has it been used in fiction? And how can it be used to write fiction? “You must have chaos within you to give birth to a dancing star.” – Friedrich Nietzsche

Friedman began his presentation by pointing out that the three greatest scientific revolutions of the past century were relativity, quantum mechanics, and chaos theory.



Edward Lorenz was a meteorologist who discovered chaos theory in the 1960s while running a weather simulation on a supercomputer. He originally ran the data to six decimal places. It took so long that when he needed a second copy, he only used three decimal places, thinking it wouldn't make much difference. It made a tremendous difference, producing new results unlike the first iteration.

Prior to Lorenz's work it was assumed that small changes in initial conditions of a complex system produced small changes in the final results. Instead, chaos theory demonstrated that rules and a sharply defined initial condition cannot predict the final result. Complex systems may repeat themselves but never exactly the same each time.

Friedman remarked that Isaac Asimov was wrong about his Foundation psychohistory. Mass behaviour of humans is not similar to mass behaviour of gas molecules. Chaos is locally unpredictable but globally stable. Examples in the real world are ecosystem populations of animals, commodity prices, and brain synapsis connections.

“SpaceX and the New Space Race”

Ron S. Friedman

The latest updates from SpaceX, Blue Origin, NASA, the Dark Side of the Moon, and where Canada can fit in the new space race.

After the first space race fizzled out, humans were stuck in low-Earth orbit for fifty years. (Friedman was speaking of manned programmes, not robot space probes.) The second space race can be said to have begun when the X Prize was offered for the first reusable suborbital spacecraft. SpaceShip One won the prize in 2004. The Falcon 1 was the first private rocket to reach orbit. In 2015, the first recyclable booster returned from its launch.

SpaceX is building rockets better and far cheaper than NASA. The cost-plus system is blamed for the high costs of NASA rockets. Private rockets will force all the space agencies to convert to reusable rockets.

Friedman then discussed the benefits of space exploration once cheap private launches are standard. ³He for cheap fusion power exists in large quantities on the Moon. Mining asteroids is not economical as they would flood the market and crash prices, making it difficult to get a payback. Mars colonization would be affordable with cheap rockets. Of greater importance would be the ability to deflect asteroids away from Earth.

Mystery.

“Social Issues In Mysteries”

J.E. (Jayne) Barnard, E.C. Bell, P.J. Vernon, David Poulsen

Social issues are addressed in current literature, from women’s fiction to YA. They may form a backdrop, or be the main theme. Our panelists discuss issues they’ve tackled, how they handled political correctness, and feedback from their readers.



Barnard remarked that older mystery fiction did treat social issues, but in many cases those issues are no longer a subject. They are not recognized as such by modern readers. She mentioned Agatha Christie, who treated the way British nobility thought of refugees flooding into Britain during World War One. The class system was a major issue in Christie’s time while it is not today, so modern readers will miss the allusions in the texts. Barnard also commented that many readers object to seeing social issues in mysteries.

Bell said she had to be careful not to let her characters become preachy. Vernon noted that changing a character’s description to a gay or black will automatically change the social issues in the story. Poulsen regretted that we now live in a world where if we disagree with each other, we hate each other.

“Is Plot King?”

Jim Jackson, Alice Bienia, P J Vernon, David Poulsen

Does a satisfactory mystery depend on plot? Or has the classic whodunit evolved into a mainstream novel with a murder or other significant crime? Panelists debate the elements of a good crime/mystery book (e.g. plot, character, action) and which elements are most important to the story.



Poulsen began by asking the audience to think of their favourite mystery novel or series, and decide if the plot was the most important element. Only a minority raised their hands in favour of plots.

Bienia was one of those who voted for plot. She said it was the motivation for reading mysteries. The consensus of the other panelists, and the audience, was for characterization and setting.

Vernon said that in his novels he lets the characters drive the plot by their behaviour. Jackson likes to outline his plots and then decide how the characters

would get into those situations. Poulsen said that after he decides on the crime and circumstances, he ad-libs the plot as he types the novel.

There is no hard rule about plotting, as Bienia mentioned. Authors should use the method they are most comfortable with. Vernon remarked that plot twists and turns should resolve themselves in time for the reader to have a fair chance of guessing whodunit before the climax. If anything can happen and does, the reader is annoyed.

The Craft Of Writing.

“Take Off the Exposition Hat: Introduce Your World And Characters While Avoiding The Dreaded Infodump”

Laura VanArendonk Baugh

All stories require background, from worldbuilding to character backstory. But explaining all this to the reader can be the kiss of death to pacing and compelling narrative. The trick is to get the reader everything they need, at the right time they need it, without weighting the story with anything they don't need, and to do it unobtrusively. We'll talk about ways to do this, tips and tricks, genres conventions, and then we'll try some hands-on problems ourselves.



Baugh has given talks at WWC in previous years, and as always she was well prepared and had a good presentation.

She began by referring to the dreaded “As you know, Professor” infodump. This is a greater problem in science fiction and fantasy because a lot of the background can't be assumed.

Instead, use the eyedropper approach, with names and cultural

notes as passing mentions throughout a novel. Every scene should do double duty, advancing the plot and providing a bit of background or characterization.

The “fish out of water” method is when the reader learns something as the character does, particularly when the character gets into trouble or an uncomfortable position for not knowing. Writers are often urged to show, not tell, but this is false advice. There is nothing wrong with telling the reader something as long as it isn't a lecture.

“Writers Critiquing Workshops, The Forms They Can Take, And The Good And The Not So Good”

Mike Rimar, Ronald (R.J.) Hore, Chris Marrs, Rena Mason

The format these workshops might take and the problems that might arise. The best location. How do you control the length of the readings, the critiques? What do you hope to achieve?



The panelists began by relating their first experiences with writing workshops when they were novices. They were not favourable about them because the groups were not appropriate for them and what they wanted to write.

This emphasized the importance of researching a workshop before joining it. If you want to write a novel, a journaling or poetry group is not the place to be. Several of the panelists mentioned that these days a workshop is a combination of face-to-face meetings and online communication.

Mason said that after learning the basics at a workshop, she preferred conventions for meeting experienced writers and learning from them. Rimar said that once he found a compatible workshop group, he stayed with them.

Because they were like-minded, they could agree on a common procedure and goals.

Hore mentioned one member in his group who kept rewriting the first chapter of his novel after each critique but after seven years still hadn't written the rest of the novel.

This prompted Mason to say that new members require vetting before taking them on. Don't just take anyone who applies. Talk to them and see what their goals are and what kind of self-discipline they have. Some people can't be helped no matter what and have to be eased out of the workshop so they won't waste other members' time.

“Armchair Travel Through Fiction”

Rena Mason, Diane Terrana, Jay Martin, Elissa McColl

The appeal of reading and writing about far away countries, cities and landscapes. Do writers need to visit a place to portray it accurately, vividly and with sensitivity?

What sources are useful for armchair research? What are some favourite books written in other lands by non-residents? What foreign setting depictions have missed the mark?



McColl said an author writing a scene set in a foreign country, without having traveled there, will never satisfy the nitpickers. The best method is to avoid going into too much detail.

Martin mentioned the Canadian problem where the SJWs denounced anglophone authors who wrote aboriginal characters. Relying on memories of a foreign trip may or may not be dangerous depending on the type of novel. Historical fiction is held to a higher standard than fantasy or romance.

“Writers at the Improv”

IFWA, Edward Willett

Attend this hilarious panel where teams of writers use audience suggestions to create a speculative fiction story. The results can and have been out of this world.

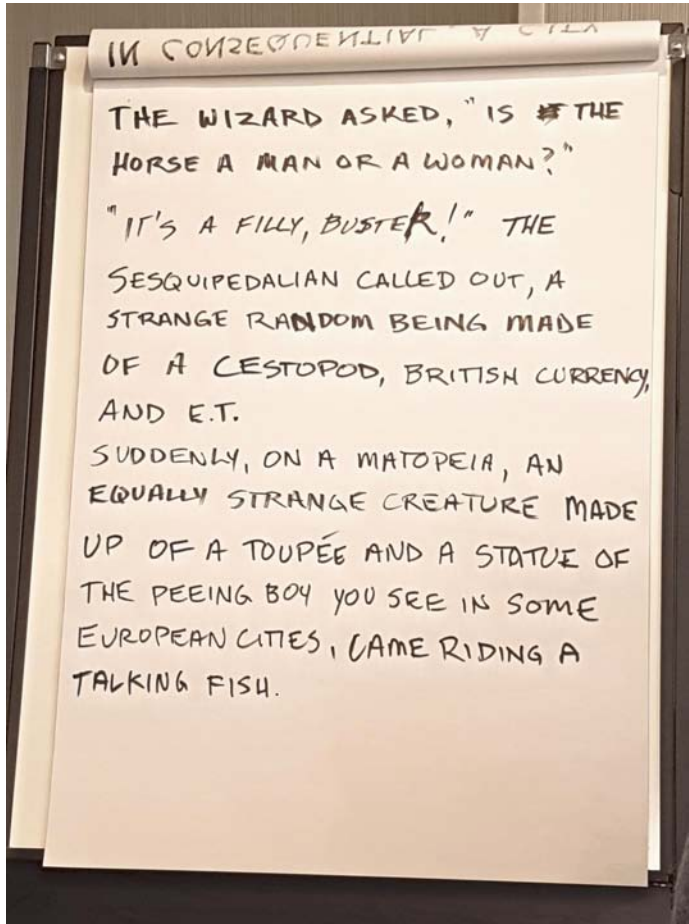
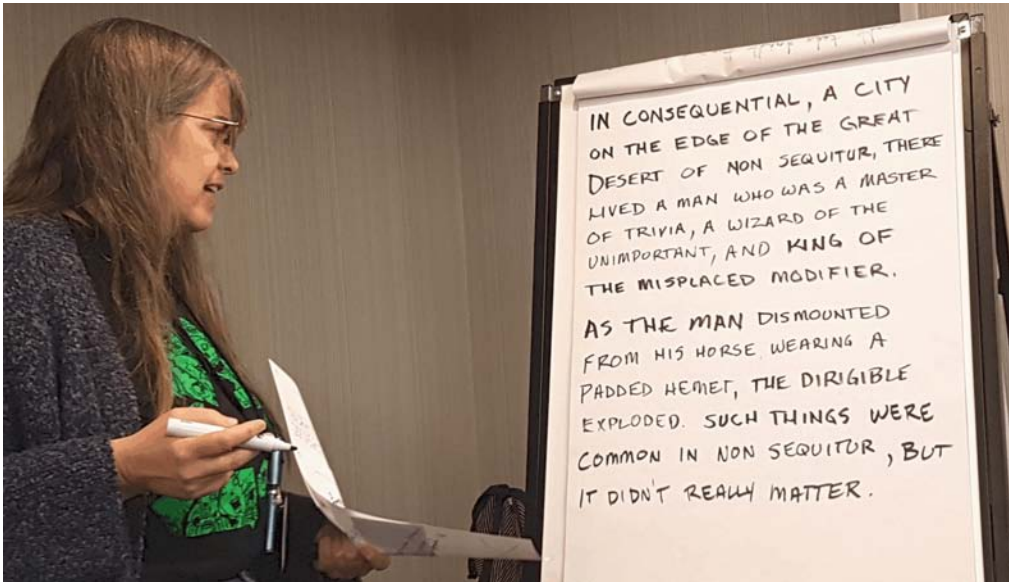


A favourite tradition in high comedy, put on by the Imaginative Fiction Writers of Alberta, based in Calgary. The panelists are given a word by the audience and have one minute to construct a sentence, humour obligatory. The process is repeated until a short-short is cobbled together.

In this go-around, the first few words suggest were inconsequential, dirigible, filibuster, sesquipedalian, onomatopoeia, and so forth. It will be no loss to posterity if I fail to illustrate the full text.



Renee Bennett, the moderator, contemplates the priceless words of IFWA.



Publishing And Marketing.

“Promoting Yourself While Remaining Human”

Natalia Yanchak, Danika Stone, Jenna Greene, Kat Flannery
Social media has given authors a great power to connect directly with an audience. But often putting yourself out there can feel too personal, or at the other extreme, dehumanizing. This panel addresses the value of meaningful engagement, and how to distinguish between one’s public persona and private life.



This seminar had a full room since a good majority of the con-goers were trying to sell novels. Flannery said to stick to a schedule separating work and personal life, especially when working at home. Greene said she did most of her promoting online because she had young children at home to care for.

Stone said that publishers expect authors to be active in promoting and not just sit back and have others do the work. She said it was basically a second job, like working part-time in a fast-food outlet. Authors have to be where their readers are, out in the social media.

All the panelists agreed there is no choice in the matter. Authors must be on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and preferably have their own Website. Stone noted that agents want to see your online sites if you are new to them. These days they won’t consider an author who doesn’t already have an online presence. Flannery said to consider your online material as if it were a résumé because it is.

“The Discovery Of Digital Plagiarism”

Claire Ryan

Plagiarism in e-books has become a difficult topic to navigate for every author. Claire talks about the recent Cris Serruya scandal, the problems of plagiarism on the Kindle store, why Amazon doesn't seem to be doing anything about it, and the technical limitations of even finding plagiarism to begin with.



Ryan is a computer programmer who developed software to detect plagiarism among ebooks, a growing problem. Plagiarism is a civil tort matter, not a crime.

Amazon and other big Websites have no way of knowing who holds the copyright to any given text. Checking 6,000,000 ebooks in their inventories is too expensive and not practical. They are not required to do anything since distributors are not liable.

Legal action is expensive and probably not worth it, especially if culprit is in a foreign country. Nora Roberts, the bestselling romance author, could afford it and went after a Brazilian plagiarist. A more realistic method is the takedown of Websites and removal of offending books.

“Self-Publishing Versus Traditional”

Jonas Saul and Tracy Cooper-Posey

Join these two prolific authors who've both had (or still have) literary agents and who have (and still do) self-publish. This interactive discussion will cover the pros and cons of self-publishing and the ups and downs of having a literary agent. Get a feel for which direction to go in your own journey to publication after hearing tales from both sides of the fence.

Cooper had 35 books published traditionally when she found out the publisher was selling foreign rights without telling her. She went self-publishing after that in order to have control. She discovered what was happening when a German publisher sent her a proof copy of the cover art for the German translation.

She has found some problems with independent publishing. PUBLISHERS WEEKLY and other periodicals used by booksellers and libraries will not review self-published books. Another downside is that all the work is on the author. Income can swing dramatically while expenses are fixed. She uses a team of freelancers for copy editing, cover art, and set-up, who free up time but have to be paid.

Cooper noted that selling different rights to books (movie, foreign print, audio) is time consuming and takes away from other jobs. It is better to delegate to a commission agent. Lawyers are very expensive in the field of intellectual property. An independent author will learn contract law the hard way.

Saul got around this problem by setting up his own publishing house as a properly incorporated company, mainly so that distributors would take him seriously. His incentive was that traditional publishers were delaying his books for two or more years to fit their schedule. He used his company as leverage with publishers because they knew he could afford to walk away.

He said the best thing about book publishing is that over time the royalties gradually build up into a steady flow. The best way to promote yourself is to write another book. Continual production builds up readership.



Cooper said that traditional publishers don't know how to market ebooks and are still messing up. They don't spend time or money on reformatting and proofreading, and often overprice their ebooks.

“Blue Pencil Café” and “Query Café”

These ran continuously through the convention with dozens of editors and publishers. They were five-minute pitch sessions for wannabe authors and were booked long in advance. Blue Pencil was a one-page manuscript pitch session with an editor, and Query was for query letters and initial approaches to publishers. I didn’t go to any since they were private meetings but mention them because they were a major activity in the convention all weekend long.

Selling Screenplays

“Robert J. Sawyer”

A surprise talk from past festival guest, Robert J. Sawyer.



Not really a surprise since we knew he was attending, but the subject matter was not announced. It turned out to be Hollywood, as Sawyer had just returned from there.

He had two television adaptations in progress. It was a humourous talk. Sawyer is a good public speaker and doesn’t need a microphone.

He discussed the long and winding road in getting a novel to the screen. Since even the cheapest show will cost six figures and require a hundred or more production staff and actors, studio executives are very cautious.

The process begins with options, which are first-refusal rights on a novel, usually paying about \$15,000 per year. Many writers make a good steady income from options for drafts that are never filmed.

If the decision is made to go ahead, the first draft of the script and second draft pay about \$60,000 each. The next step is the polish, which doesn’t pay as much

since the writer will only change a few details here and there. After that, the studio has to find a director who is willing to take on the script, and from there the production costs soar.

Few novelists know how to write a script that can be conveniently filmed, so the studios will hire a screenwriter who not only can visualize a scene but do it in a practical way for cameramen and production designers. There have to be as few sets as possible because they cost money to build or to move an entire crew and cast out to a location.

One can see why studios are so conservative. A novel is cheap to print, and if it sells 25,000 copies it is a success, with congratulations all around. If a movie only sold 25,000 tickets, there would be a massive purge among the studio executives.

Sawyer emphasized that it is absolutely essential for an author to be able to summarize a book in three sentences, and do a face-to-face pitch with a studio executive in a few paragraphs. Absolutely nobody but nobody in the studio process will ever read the novel. They don’t have time, and they hear dozens of pitches per day.

“Get Your Oscar Speeches Ready”

Joe Compton

How to take your book from novel to screenplay. The differences between formats. The do’s and don’ts. And how to get it out there into the system.

Compton has experience in writing and selling to movie and television studios. He began by saying that in Hollywood the writer is the least popular person on the set.

It is not easy getting started and there is no overnight success. He originally did short films and Webisodes to build up his reputation enough that he could get pitch sessions with studio executives who decide things. His first job was as a script doctor.

Screenplays are visual. When adapting a novel, the interior dialogues and thoughts cannot be used. They are replaced with opposing characters arguing the pros and cons. The best example is from Star Trek, where Captain Kirk’s interior dialogue was voiced by Dr McCoy (the emotional side) and Mr Spock (the logical side).

Most novelists don't know how to write visual screenplays and most screenwriters can't do characterization and mood in print. It is more profitable to be a novelist than to peddle screenplays because books can earn out faster.

Compton remarked “Never bring a tree.” when talking about pitch sessions. Don't take more than two pages. In Hollywood, pitch sessions cost about \$50 for five minutes. Verify that the producers and directors are legitimate big names by Googling and searching IMDB. It is surprising how many big names will attend these sessions because they are trying to find new material. Compton said he has paid for about 250 pitch sessions over the years.



If you are finally successful, you need to join the Writers Guild, who can then offer assistance.

Don't bargain for your first contract. Don't make caveats at pitch sessions or ask for a price, as that comes later. If the studio makes an offer, you will only get union scale as a beginner with no prior record.

Deals take six months to a year to close because studios have to plan their schedules and book sound stages and locations. Executives have to be cautious because even a single television episode costs six figures. Once you've got your first contract, get a lawyer on retainer who knows intellectual property law.

Above: Compton demonstrates how to approach a producer.

Westerns.

“Gunsmoke And Dragonfire: A Fantasy Western Anthology!”

Diane Morrison, Ron S. Friedman, Claire Ryan

We'll be reading from some of the stories and Diane will talk about her vision for the anthology and the Weird West subgenre. Please feel free to come in your best steampunk or cowboy outfit, or as your banquet character!

I'm an old cowhand from the Red Deer River, so I moseyed on over to this book launch. Two of them actually. I had already bought both from the dealer bourse. I don't like traditional Westerns because their plots are about a century old and the writing not much younger. I do, however, like weird Westerns, which are becoming a subgenre in themselves.

The three panelists read extracts from their stories. Not much else to write about, so I'll let these photos speak for themselves.

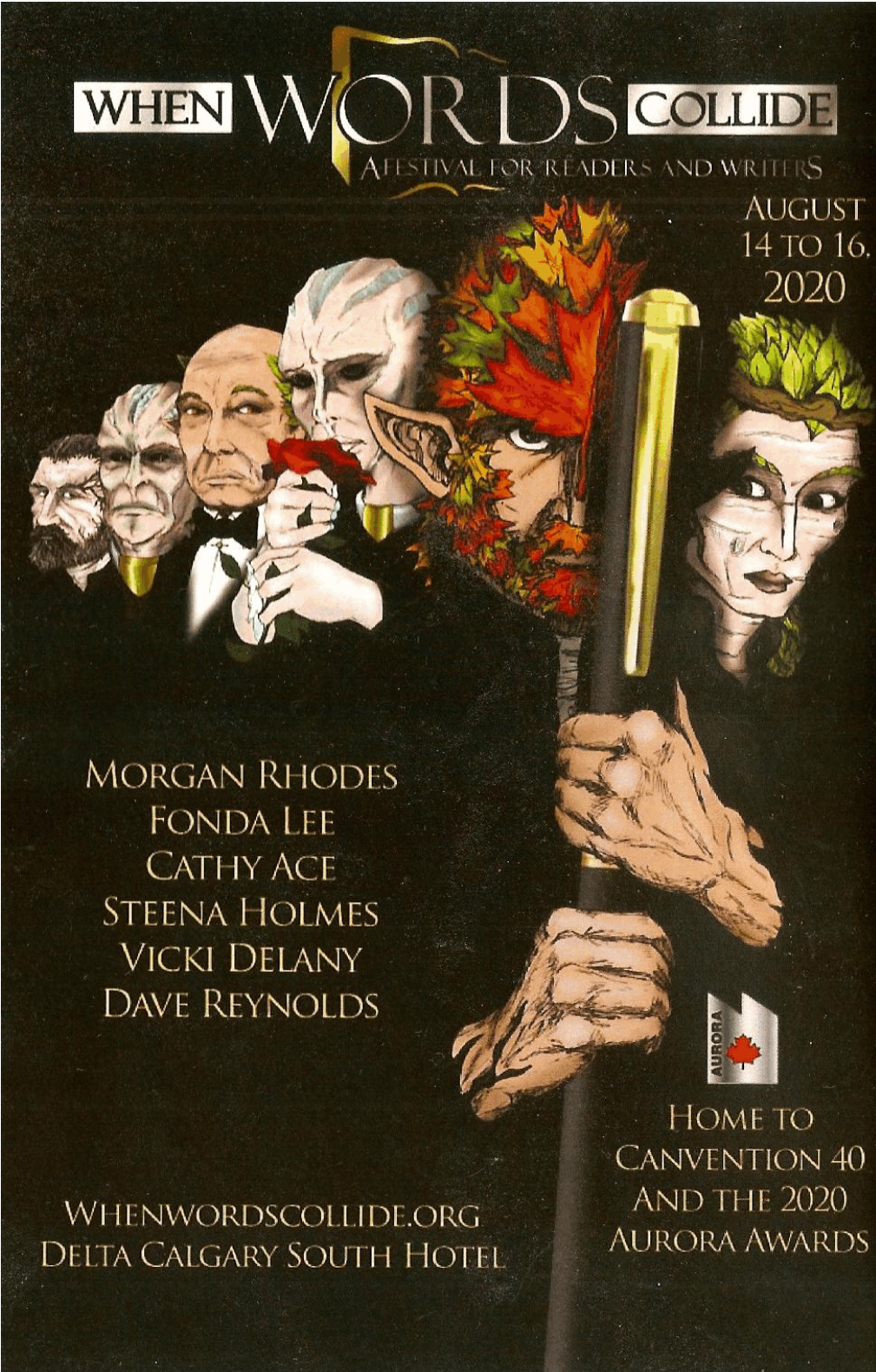


Summary.

All told, another excellent readercon. The smaller and more tightly defined membership made for a friendly village of like-minded people. I thoroughly enjoyed myself.

See You Next Year!

On the Sunday of the convention, memberships went on sale for next year's convention, and I bought mine for \$40. The tenth annual When Words Collide will return to the Delta South Marriott Hotel on the weekend of August 14 to 16, 2020. It will incorporate the Aurora Awards and Convention 40. WWC always sells out by June, as do the banquet and hotel. Details from www.whenwordscollide.org

The poster for 'When Words Collide' features a dark background with several stylized caricatures of authors. From left to right, there is a man with a beard, a man with a mustache, a man in a tuxedo holding a red rose, a man with a large red maple leaf on his head, and a woman with green leaves on her head. A large hand is holding a gold-tipped pen vertically on the right side. The title 'WHEN WORDS COLLIDE' is at the top in a stylized font, with 'A FESTIVAL FOR READERS AND WRITERS' below it. The dates 'AUGUST 14 TO 16, 2020' are in the top right. A list of authors is in the center: MORGAN RHODES, FONDA LEE, CATHY ACE, STEENA HOLMES, VICKI DELANY, and DAVE REYNOLDS. At the bottom left is the website 'WHENWORDSCOLLIDE.ORG' and the location 'DELTA CALGARY SOUTH HOTEL'. At the bottom right is the 'AURORA' logo (a red maple leaf) and the text 'HOME TO CONVENTION 40 AND THE 2020 AURORA AWARDS'.