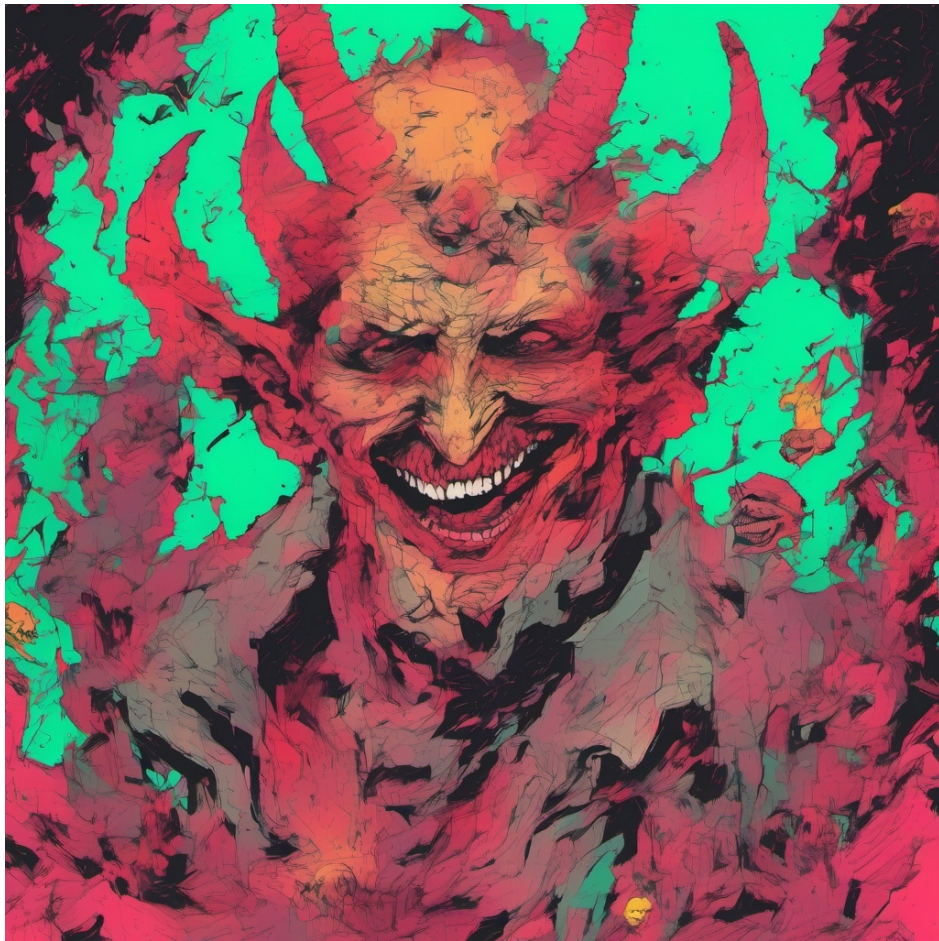


SWILD



#42 Annual February 2023

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Editorial: On Being Evil, Again...

Part 1

Neil Williams

It has come to my attention that I am even more evil than I thought that I was. And NOT at all for publishing SWILL. I am evil incarnate, just for being alive. You see, I am of European-descent, and male. Worse, I identify as a male and I am a heterosexual who not only is a horrible "breeder", but one who has actually bred and raised offspring to adulthood. Additionally, I have politically incorrect thoughts. I am a Leftist, but the most wrong sort of Leftist. I am "old school" place emphasis on the concepts of class and political economy (which is wrong and evil) instead of solely on identity politics and the nested hierarchies of who has the most and least privilege and who MUST and SHALL be rewarded on these terms. Furthermore, I support science and the concepts that empirical data and observed phenomena (that is collected as objectively as is possible) outrank information based on individual emotion and feelings -- against very, very evil. And while I agree, that all of our models of reality contain elements of subjectivity because everything is mediated via a human mind; I do refuse to accept that all models of reality are equal, and support the quaint notion that those models that are constructed based upon our best objective data (that still contain some subjectivity) are superior to those constructed entirely on the subjective perceptions of the "right people". Especially as I am NOT one of the "right people". In fact, I am so NOT the "right people" that the "right people" should be permitted to designate me as a sub-human who is only fit to be apprehended, and then be sent to the slaughterhouse, to be "made useful" by being killed and processed into pet food to make all things wonderful and "woke" in the world.

Brief aside: When I say "woke" I mean the hyper-sensitive, uber reverse racism that views my very presence in society due to my "racialised group" as something that should not be tolerated and must be punished.

What is my great "crime" against humanity? At least, against all "woke" humanity?

That I write, both fiction and non-fiction. But most of the diatribes are against my writing of fiction.

Now, I do not write "realist fiction" or "literary fiction" set in the here and now with zero elements of the fantastic. I write science fiction (for the most part alternate history and interplanetary/interstellar space opera - and sometimes combine both). And I have been told by other writers online who are visible minorities or LGBTQ that people like me should not be permitted to write anything, in particular fiction. And that people like me should just "hurry up and die".

You see, my great evil is that, through the act of writing, I am harming visible minorities and LGBTQ people. I am stealing "their spot", their representation, plundering their OwnVoices. That I should "stay in my lane". Better yet, don't write at all as the world does not need any more works by "old white guys". Facts, such as that I only have had success in traditional publishing with short fiction and the audio content markets. Any longer works I have published, are self-published. I do NOT understand how this is actually taking away from visible minorities and LGBTQ people, but somehow it is and I should NOT be permitted to write anything.

Great, so I am to "stay in my lane" and I am only permitted to write about European and European settler cultures and only write about people of European descent (I dislike the term "white" as that conjures up images of the Confederate States of America, the KKK, the advocating for strange fruit to be hanging from the trees, and other related barbarian ideology that I strongly disagree with). Well, I have been sensitive and wrote in "my lane" and was strongly condemned for that.

For example, I wrote an alternate history set on a Canadian space habitat as a radio drama back in the 1991 which I rewrote and had aired again in 2000. I then had the idea to turn each of the six episodes into a novellas, I did that for the first episode and then abandoned that project as it had been envisioned. It is a full novel, in progress, that will have two companion novellas...

However, the setting has been trashed as being "too white", lacking representation, and "racist by omission", and "cultural appropriation". The setting is a Canadian space habitat in L4, a

bernal sphere style habitat with a maximum projected population of 32,000 and present population of 18,000. There are two towns Lount and New Credit, with Lount having the larger population and the centre of government. In this alternate history, there was a three week occupation of Montreal and Ottawa by the USA during the 1970 October Crisis (in this timeline, the FLQ did successfully abduct the American consul-general in Montreal). With the aid of British and French military, Canada successfully repels the Americans from Ottawa and Montreal on October 30th (known as the Mat Night War in Canada).

After the Crisis, the Canadian government left NORAD, remained in NATO but like France no longer submitted Canadian forces to American unified command, Canada has also worked to make the Commonwealth more of an economic and military alliance for enhanced collective security. Canada no longer trusts the USA as a partner and ally (Canada views itself as allied to Western Europe in NATO and not as specifically allied to the USA). Post-Crisis, the government of Canada returned to national quotas for immigration and all USA immigration to Canada was suspended. The universal points system was reintroduced in the mid-1990s. Therefore, Canada's demographics are not as diverse as in our timeline. The demographics are similar to that of the 1971 Census, with some modest increases in immigration from Commonwealth countries in Asia and some immigration from Commonwealth countries in Africa.

The habitat was settled by two Ontario populations. The largest group being former residents of the village of Holland Landing that had been amalgamated into a larger city, these settlers established the town of Lount. The second group are First Nations people from a reserve that was also being amalgamated into a larger reserve in northern Ontario, those who didn't want to move to northern Ontario chose to immigrate to the habitat. These people are Ojibwe (Mississaugas) who established the town of New Credit.

So even though there are some Asians within the Lount population, this work lacks "real representation" and is "racist by omission" because it contains no black characters and no African-American characters. It is "too white" and regarding diversity and representation and "Asians and Indigenous don't count"; the latter statement I do take strong exception to, just as a human being (though according to the "woke", I am not one). I am condemned for "staying in my lane". I am condemned for expanding my lane to include Asian and Indigenous characters where they fit

in fictional world I have created. I am condemned for having no black characters, especially no African-American characters; and the reasoning they would neither logically be in this setting in this fictional universe is "not acceptable" and "racist". In the current novel in progress (or "take # six") there will be a few African-American characters; which I will also be damned for as they are not sympathetic characters as they are military personnel of the US Space Marines tasked with the occupation of this Canadian habitat.

And I also refuse to use the "checklist": I must have this many black characters, this many South Asian, this many East Asian, that many West Asian, this number must be Muslim, this many must be gay, this many must be lesbian, this many must be bi, that many must be trans, there must be this many open gay relationships, that many open lesbian relationships, and at least one person coming out, and if there is a male character who is heterosexual he has to be the villain who can only be redeemed by coming out and entering into a relationship with a trans person (otherwise, he has to die at the story climax for being the evil creature that he is).

This is rubbish. These are NOT characters. These are just cardboard placeholders of identities pretending to be characters that have zero substance other than to make everyone feel included (except for male heterosexuals) and are only there to push forward an agenda of some sort. They are totally fake; and everyone over the age of six can see right through the fakeness. I will not do this. It is bad writing. And this makes me racist too.

And another thing...

Why MUST the default "other" be an African American? Currently in Canada, Indigenous peoples just barely outnumber black Canadians (Indigenous is 5% of the total population and black Canadians are 4.3%) and Asians make up 16.1% of the total population. However, based on Canadian advertising and television you would think that half the total population were black Canadians and that Asians were a minority under 10% of the total population and that Indigenous people were less than 1% of the total population. So, I really do NOT agree with the dominant (and American) notion that the "other" is an African American (Note to Americans, the majority of black Canadians are, or are the descendants of, immigrants to Canada who arrived after 1971).

First of all, what does the term "black" mean? Usually, to most of the "woke" it means African American. And that may be extended to Caribbean and African diaspora cultures. But, should I write a protagonist who is black, I am now taking away a "spot" from African American voices, I am stealing their representation, plundering the OwnVoices of African Americans, am an being an arch racist by this act for which I should be shot on sight.

Really? What if my character is a Tswana farmer in Botswana or an Indigenous person from Australia? How is that taking away from African Americans? What if my character is from an entire fictional culture? Is this also taking away from African Americans?

Or what about this from a series of my stories: the central characters are from a culture in the Kuiper Belt. Their culture is the product of French Canadian and Welsh settlers on the Moon who formed a culture known for their lifesystems engineering. In the late 22nd century, most of this culture moved to Mars and settled in a Belarus area of that planet and where they became the key culture involved in the terraforming of Mars. In the centuries on Mars, they adapted and used gene therapy to adapt, to living in the higher radiation environment on Mars. So now, in the 31st century, you have people who look European in facial features, with light brown to blonde hair, pale coloured eyes, and very dark black skin.

Do these characters and their culture steal the voice for African Americans, or the less represented voices of Africans or Indigenous Australians? Or are these characters and culture "racist" and "appropriating" because they are "black" but not "real black"(aka African American)? Or are they characters, who happens to have a black skin tone? I, as the creator of this fictional culture and people, side with the last option; however, I am aware that that choice IS the wrong and "racist" choice. If a protagonist has a black skin tone, do they really have to be, by default, African American?

Hollywood and the major publishers seem to believe it does. Almost forty years ago I wrote and sold film script set on Mars 300 years into the future, set in what we would now call a post-scarcity society, with a Métis protagonist (because a major aspect of the story was Indigenous spirituality). By the second draft, the entire Indigenous spirituality plotline was cut (as

"not relatable") and the protagonist was now African American, and the post-scarcity society on Mars three hundred years from now was changed to an urban inner-city American setting in the, for 2002, very near future of 2016. This is where I bowed out on the project which fortunately was never green lit for actual production. However, I could have stayed on if I wanted to and write these new African American characters and attempt to write urban inner-city African American slang, which this Canadian would never ever attempt to do. And besides, my original story which was supposed to be a kind of philosophical spiritual drama (with a B-side romance plot) was now an action film and so changed and so stupid and so lacking of any internal logic anymore. So, I decline the opportunity to work on the third draft.

Although I try to stay away from doing so, I will at times write a black Canadian character. But, only if I am writing a near future story (our timeline and no more that 100 years into the future). It is rare that I write near future, as it is so difficult to predict realistically and your fictional world can become very stale, very fast.

However, when I do write a black Canadian, I will write that character as a person born of African immigrant parents (i.e. from Nigeria or Botswana or South Africa) and not as having Caribbean immigrant parents. I do this as I can realistically create a character who has Tswana parents who was born in Canada and raised in Canada, and has their primary identity as an Ontarian Canadian, and their skin colour is that person's secondary identity. I have selected these three countries because I have read ethnographies on the cultures in those countries and I have socialised and worked with immigrants to Canada from those countries. However, my doing this is also very wrong and evil according to the "woke". Because, creating such a character is robbing them of their "true" and primary black identity. Because, the act of writing a character whose primary identity is Canadian and not black, is colour blind and horribly racist.

And so on and so on... I am "so white" and "so privileged" and have never suffered any "real discrimination"... Oh yeah!?

Read on...

Thrashing Trufen: On Being Evil, Again... Part 2

Neil Williams

I have now lived in the province of Ontario for the vast majority of my life. It is NOT my favourite province. I have lived here for economic reasons and because, in the past I had many relatives here. But, I do NOT like Ontario.

When we first moved here in 1969 from Quebec, I dreaded going to school. Number Two, I was in one of the last cohorts that would have been able to graduate high school at the end of Grade 11 and been able to directly enter into university without having to do two years at CEGEP first. So, I was about a year and one half ahead of the Ontario curriculum. But, the local school board believed that it would be psychologically damaging to have me promoted a grade when I was in a new province. Number One, because of the FLQ and the separatist movement in Quebec at the time, and because I was born and raised in Quebec, and because, at the time, I was able to speak much better French than anyone else in this community; I was now a "Frog" and a "traitor". For these "crimes" I would be beaten up every day during recess and after school. And with the support from the school principal who was an Orangeman and hated all Quebecers.

Until the late 1970s, the Orange Lodge still had power within southern Ontario: it was a "fellowship" of political Anglicans who despised Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Francophones, Quebecers, Indigenous peoples, and any non-British immigrants. The school Principal was of the opinion that as Roman Catholics we shouldn't even be enrolled in the regular public school; my parents felt that as we had moved to an Anglo province, regular public school would allow us (and I had four siblings) to fit in better. My parents protested to the school board, but that didn't go far, as there were several trustees whose opinions mirrored that of school principal and the chair of the board was the past master of the local branch of the Orange Lodge. The daily beatings continued until I graduated into middle school.

#

Later on in life, my family was discriminated against by the State. Now, many have told me that this is my entire fault. That my wife and I made a choice to belong to a minority religion and because of this choice, any and all discrimination, prejudice, and harassment that we experienced is just a consequence of us making this religious choice, and we should NOT expect the government(s) and our fellow citizens to respect or tolerate this choice. Our choice, we were both Wiccans.

This is a religion that carries with it some very negative perceptions in the public imagination (not only by our fellow Canadians, but also our government officials). Wicca is a non-Abrahamic, nature/fertility religion, that is a form of polytheistic monism, with a blend of Western high magic and low magic systems, that has as its central ethical and moral code: if it harms no one, do what you will. All three Abrahamic faiths view this code as "too libertine" as there are no great lists of "thou shalls" and "thou shall nots" or penalties. To which Wiccans ask the question: is there any action that you have taken today that you can be absolutely certain caused no harm to anybody (and if you are fully honest with yourself, that answer will be no).

Wiccans also believe in the three-fold law of karma; whatever energy you put out into the universe (positive or negative) through your actions will return to you with three times its original strength. Thus, we believe that our adherents are adults and responsible for their actions and that if one engages in performing negative acts (doing bad things), that karma will return to them with greater and more harmful power -- i.e. they are going to punish themselves. Wiccans do not believe in the Abrahamic god (or view him as just another aspect of the male godforms). Thus we neither believe in (and certainly do NOT worship) the anti-gods of Christianity and Islam, Satan and Ilbis, nor in YHWH's Crown Attorney, ha-Satan, within Judaism.

So, what happened?

Well, we had a family oriented Summer Solstice celebration and invited some other NeoPagan/Wiccan families to attend. We were then living on the ground floor of an old mansion that had been turned into apartments. The steps on the north side of our deck lead to a circular communal garden, which we used for the celebration. Four families attended and it was a great celebration. However, the woman who lived in the attic floor

apartment and worked as a physical trainer and also as an escort had brought a regular client home the night before. That client was a Crown Attorney for the Central South Region. They were shocked and horrified by the children being "forced to participate in Satanic rites" and were concerned that "two girls had gone missing". The "missing girls" had been taken by their mother to their ballet class, while the husband remained at the gathering. And thus, the police became involved and my family entered into two years of actual hell.

I will not go into the precise details; but from the moment it began, we were under the prejudicial, tunnel vision eye of the State. We were "baby-eating Satanists and defilers of all that is good in the world".

Aside: for those who have never had to deal with the police other than a speeding ticket, a few pointers. ONE, if you know ahead of time that the police may be making a visit, go to the washroom and strip down and take photos of your body as best you can (or have your partner do so and you do the same for them) and upload them to a secure place or email to a person you can trust. This way, you have evidence if the police bring you in and employ "enhanced interrogation methods" in their interviewing. TWO, police are like vampires. They cannot cross your threshold unless they already have a warrant to search your place of residence (that they usually do NOT have on their first visit). Similar to a vampire, they can only enter if you invite them in. DON'T. Anyone who is a regular generally law-abiding citizen will want initially to co-operate with the police and help or aid to sort this misunderstanding; they will probably invite the police to enter. And they will not realise that they have now granted the police the authority to search their entire home and to seize anything that the police may believe to be "evidence". THREE, if the police take you in for questioning, and they will NOT state exactly why or what the charge is; your best response is "No Comment", "I want to speak to a lawyer", and if they are using enhanced interrogation methods "Neil Williams, civilian, SIN". FOUR, if the police used enhanced interrogation during questioning, as soon as you are released and arrive at your home, use your phone to take pictures to document this and send it to a secure site and/or a person you can trust.

I state the above, because our only anomaly to being an ordinary lower middle class family was that we were Wiccan. And because, with the exception of being Wiccan, we were "normal"; we invited the police in. And they seized any book that they considered

"Satanic" (e.g. *Conjure Wife*, *Lammas Night*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, to name a few fiction novels seized), our ceremonial robes ("Satanic sheets" to the police and the Crown), our religious tools, our minor daughter's books that were viewed as "Satanic" (e.g. *Nicky and the Magic House*, *The Worst Witch...*), and we had to call a friend or relative to be with our child, or else the police were going to call Children's Aid to take our daughter. We did, and then we were taken down to the Central Station by Squad A.

We were interrogated as to the purpose of the celebration and at length regarding the "missing girls" and what became of them (the police, the Crown, and Children's Aid would NOT let this go). The police used intimidation and low level enhanced interrogation methods (mere minor assault rather than torture) in their questioning. My wife told them that she suffered from anxiety, hoping for mercy -- it had the opposite effect. My wife suffered more than I did from the enhanced interrogation.

What is clear is that the police, the Crown, and Children's Aid, based only on the testimony of two witnesses, who had stated that two young girls had disappeared during the Solstice Celebration and that those girls must have been murdered as part of a "sacrifice to Satan", were absolutely certain that this had occurred and that this was the sole and central theory. Of course, there was no missing persons report. Nobody had reported any girl children missing. There was no forensic evidence of a murder of two children having occurred. And no bodies. But, the State was certain that two children had been murdered at this celebration and that my wife and I were the perpetrators.

Unfortunately, the NeoPagan/Wiccan community is that in name only. It is only a "community" when things are great (and even then there is always discord under the surface). In reality, it is more like a group of birds that roost for the night together, but should danger come, they scatter in all directions, everyone for themselves. The same happens when the State turns its eyes upon a member of the NeoPagan community, everyone not on the State's radar runs and hides and goes into radio silence. The most damning evidence against my wife and I, was this; not one adult person who was at the celebration would cooperate with the police or admit to attending.

The parents of the "missing girls" refused to comment when the police questioned them. I understand their rationale for their reasons, but do not support their actions. When this occurred,

Wicca was officially designated by the government of Canada as a parareligious group (the Statistics Canada term for a "cult") and thus government employees could lose their security clearance and their job if it became known that they belonged to a religion that the government saw as a "cult" -- so this couple took the "No Comment" route with the police.

We attempted to file criminal charges against the police, a long and drawn out process which the Chief Crown Attorney for your region can quash. We were threatened by the police and we were threatened by the Crown Attorney. The chief Crown Attorney for Central South Region stated that, if we did not stop our attempt to file criminal charges against the police he would ensure that Children's Aid would take our daughter into care and that our daughter would be put into a foster home where he knew there would be a high probability of her being abused. This culminated with another visit by the police along with Children's Aid investigators. One police officer stayed with us. The other police officer went with the two Children's Aid investigators into our daughter's bedroom and questioned her for two hours and twenty minutes. We could hear our daughter crying during the interrogation, but we were not permitted in and we were not permitted to use the telephone.

The police and Children's Aid harangued our daughter about the Solstice Celebration. Demanded that she tell them what happened to the two missing girls. Once our daughter figured out which girls investigators were talking about, she told the adults that two girls left with their mother for ballet class, and that neither girl was missing and that she had seen them both at their parent's home two weeks ago (from the time of this interrogation). She was asked about her "Satanic practices". Had she had sex with any adults in the "Satanic grotto"? Did any adult force her to have sex? Did she see any animals being killed during the "Satanic rituals"? Was she certain the two girls did leave with their mother? Did she see those two girls murdered by the adults as a "sacrifice to Satan"? Did she see the adults drink the girls' blood? Did she drink the girls' blood? And so on, and on... For over two hours they harangued and intimidated (threatened that her parents would be going to prison and she would be placed in a foster home and that she would never see her family again, unless she told them "what really happened"...) and badgered our 12 year old daughter without mercy. I consider what the State viewed to be correct and moral and for the good of society was, in fact, the State

making the decision to subject our daughter to a form of child abuse; obviously, the State disagrees.

We moved, and the police continued their daily harassment; two uniformed officers to six uniformed officers standing on the sidewalk and looking at our residence. That which I consider to be intimidation and that which the State considers to be "cool and normal". We moved again to a different city and still officers from our former city would come out once a week, to stand on the sidewalk and stare at the townhome.

Eventually, I was able to cause enough of a stink with Queen's Park that the police were ordered to do an investigation. Unfortunately, this was far enough back in the past that there was no civilian board; the police service that had committed the alleged offense and/or harassment was the service tasked to conduct the investigation. It was no surprise that the police service found the local police force and its personnel to be not guilty of any wrongdoing. This is just a brief account of what we went through over a two year period at the hands of the State exercising its power to engage in intolerant and prejudicial intimidation and harassment against a non-visible minority group. In the end, on the opening day of our trial, the charges against us were dismissed for want of prosecution as the Crown elects to "offer no evidence". As there was no evidence to begin with. The two "missing girls" that the State presumed were part of a "Satanic sacrifice" never were "missing". Both are now in their late 20s and very much alive.

And yes, I do realise to the "woke" that this is just so "too white" and that this type of discrimination, and intolerance, and abuse of State power, and intimidation, and State violence, and harassment are nothing compared to the everyday life of visible minorities in Canada. Thus, what my family suffered is of zero consequence and that it just doesn't matter. Well, it certainly does NOT matter to the State as the State will do nothing to grant NeoPagans the human and civil rights we are supposed to have under the Charter.

So, the "woke" worldview, the worldview that believes that, just because I am a male of European-decent, that it is impossible for me to experience being subjected to oppression and discrimination and intolerance and harassment; that worldview I will take with an entire 20 kg bag of salt.

Flogging a Dead Trekkie:

On Being Evil, Again... Conclusion

Neil Williams

In this final instalment, I will discuss a final cluster of evils (for now) that I have perpetrated upon the "woke" body politic that is science fiction. These evils all centre upon the following "crimes":

- liking a science fiction film that I am not supposed to like and should hate with a passion if I am a true "woke" individual and not some horrid scum-sucking XY troglodyte of "toxic masculinity"
- the writing female characters, which is the sexist and misogynist theft of voice, representation, and so on that only a sloth-brained trog of a man would consider doing
- the killing of a lesbian protagonist (compounded by the additional crime that the lesbian protagonist and her female lover are both killed).

I will state, though this cannot obviously be the case (due to my "crimes") that I am a feminist -- but an archaic one. I refuse to accept the ideology of 4th wave feminism which advocates that because I am a male, I am some form of sub-human creature that should ideally be "put down" for the good of society, or stripped of all rights and maintained solely for purposes of being "breeding stock (until I can fully be replaced by technology), or at the most "humane" stripped of all human and civil rights and controlled and regulated by the real people (women) and should be permitted no voice. I see 4th wave feminism and their

ideological attitude toward men as very similar to a mirror image of Islam (a religious philosophy that I have little use for because of the fact that it treats all women as sub-humans and because it advocates the execution or the enslavement of all people who are non-Muslim). Of course, this refusal to adopt 4th wave feminism is only further evidence of my sexist and misogynist "toxic masculinity".

One of the science fiction concepts that I really like is that of the sub-light generation spaceship. In my "wrong-headed" worldview this embodies the human spirit. The attempt to bridge the unknown and establish human settlements beyond the solar system; and the arrogance (and faith) to believe that we can build and maintain technology and a bubble of life for centuries, so that we can send some humans across the interstellar void, is a zenith of the human virtue of hope. That hope can also be foolhardy; there is a high probability that a generation ship could fail. And that also can be said for the sub-variety of generation ship, the "sleeper ship" where all aboard are kept in some form of suspended animation or stasis during the long voyage.

Both the generation ship and the sleeper ship create ethical dilemmas. The biggest one being, the removal of consent from the future generations. Those who choose to embark on a generation ship are condemning their descendants to that same choice. That decision is no longer theirs, they are born into an environment that they did not choose. Their only choice is to continue and persist in maintaining the ship until it reaches the destination, or die.

There are also ethical issues with the sleeper ship. There can be no "do-overs", no "buyer's remorse"; once put into stasis, you are there until you arrive. And you may strongly regret all that you gave up (everything you knew and everyone you knew) when you awake in a planetary system around another star.

The "evil" film I enjoy is *Passengers* (2016). I first encountered the original Jon Spaihts script (or an early iteration of that original script) back in 2009 when it was a Keanu Reeves vehicle. The script went through years of

development hell before it was made with a different director and cast in 2016. I have also an early version of the shooting script and have watched the film several times. There are parts of the original script I like better than the final movie and parts I do not, and parts of the shooting script that I like better than the final movie and some that I don't. I was looking forward to this film with anticipation, I was not disappointed, but there were some flaws.

I loved the set design, the costuming, the general design of the ship, the attention to details, the science being mostly good (but not perfect), and so on. And the story, in general. I loved the design of the ship. The ship is beautiful, though not as pragmatic as I would design it. Of course, my design would not be as graceful and would also remove the inciting incident that initiates the story.

***** Here there be spoilers *** read on at your own risk**

The starship Avalon is en route to the colony world Homestead II. It has covered 30 years of its 120 year journey with 5,000 colonists and 200 crew in stasis. The ship encounters a cometary debris field and one chunk of debris, almost as large as the starship itself, strikes the ship's forcefields and it is destroyed -- except for one piece the size of a bowling ball that makes it through and damages the ship. The ship goes into self-repair and attempts to fix the damage, but cannot fix all of the damage; it has placed a "band aide" on the problem, but the problem will continue to persist. Due to the damage and self-repair, there is a glitch and one of the passengers, Jim Preston (Chris Pratt) is revived.

At first Jim thinks that he has arrived at Homestead II. He quickly discovers that he was awakened early and has 90 years travel time still to go. He attempts to find a way to go back into stasis, to awaken the crew, to find any solution. There is none available. He becomes depressed. He drinks too much. He no longer cares about his appearance. He becomes suicidal. He also

intends to commit suicide, but does not. And then, he discovers the passenger Aurora Lane (Jennifer Lawrence) and becomes infatuated with her. Aside: Jim has now been awake and alone for just a few months over a year, he has travelled the hibernation bay and read all of the thumbnail bios of his fellow passengers and committed many of those to his memory.

Jim now has regular meetings with Aurora and talks with her and she becomes an obsession. His only companion, whom he can have a conversation with, is Arthur (Michael Sheen) the android bartender. Jim discusses with Arthur the ethics of reviving Aurora, at length. He also has fallen in love, at least with the notion of being with her. He has read everything she has written and knows a lot about her. And in the end, he revives her. At first, Aurora is depressed and angry with the situation. Jim has lied and states that this was a system error like the one that woke him. Aurora and Jim develop a relationship and they fall in love. Eventually, Aurora learns that Jim woke her up and is furious with him; hates him, and avoids him. Jim plants an oak tree in the ship's Grand Concourse as an intended peace offering. There is another systemic glitch and in the process, a member of the crew is accidentally revived.

This is Deck Chief Gus Mancuso (Laurence Fishburne) whose revival was compromised by the system problems and now has only two days to live. He has access to areas of the ship neither Jim or Aurora could gain entry to, such as the bridge were they learn of the damage to the ship, what part of the ship they have to get to, and how it must be repaired or the entire ship will completely shut down and be adrift in interstellar space forever, and everyone aboard will die. Gus dies. Aurora and Jim work together to repair and save the ship. Jim dies, Aurora gets him to the AutoDoc and Jim is saved. Jim shows Aurora a setting that he discovered on the AutoDoc that could only be accessed by crew ID; the AutoDoc can put one person (Aurora) into hibernation for the remainder of the journey. They both choose to spend their lives together aboard the ship.

Now, this film is evil and the character of Jim Preston is evil to the core. The character is the arch-archetype of "toxic masculinity", he demonstrates "male chauvinist", "sociopathic tendencies" and a "misogynist control fetish", encompassed in his "wish fulfilment fantasy" for a woman he has never met, to whom he subjects to a form of "date rape" and "murder by proxy". His isolation is no excuse for his act of reviving Aurora.

I would hazard a speculation that none of these "reviewers" have ever spent a long time in a small remote community, with a population of less than 400 persons, and where the closest city (of only 40,000 people) is a 9 hour drive away during the summer (much longer in the winter). There is not much to do in a small community like this. You work, you go out to the bar, you hook-up, repeat. And, you are also an outsider to the community. You are here on contract for six months and then gone. You are an outsider to your co-workers too, who hail from different parts of Canada. While it is possible for you to know someone on the crew, that is very unlikely to happen unless you and a friend signed up together. You are NOT going to be alone. You will have co-workers and townspeople to interact with and socialise with and you know it is only for six months. But, you will still feel isolated and lonely and cut adrift from all that you know.

Jim Preston is all alone in interstellar space with his only companion being an android bartender. This is not short term duration; this is now a life sentence. This will be all that there is for the rest of his life until he dies. There is no greater isolation than this. We can try and imagine this, and we can; but, nobody, no human has ever experienced this form of absolute isolation, yet. The only thing worse for Jim would be if there was no Arthur the android at all.

And it is not like Jim is a mass murderer or serial killer who deserves this sentence; he is a victim of circumstance, of an accident. I wonder, given the tone, of the condemnation of the character Jim and that the reviewers claim that he wakes up Aurora because he is a male chauvinist exhibiting toxic masculinity and not because he is so absolutely alone; would the condemnation of Jim be as severe if Jim was gay and revived

another gay male passenger named Rory? Is he only evil because he revived a woman?

Using the original script, the early shooting script, and the final movie as points of reference... I would keep the original script's ethical discussions on this issue and modify them, as the content is better, but the overall dialogue within the early shooting script is superior. I would also use the solution to the damage from the original script and completely discard the consequences of making the repairs. This would tone down the intensity of Act 3 where it devolves into an action film, so we can keep the dramatic tone of the film. I would also change Jim's pivotal action regarding Aurora. Just as when Jim contemplated suicide, entered the airlock without a suit and was about to hit the button that would vent himself into interstellar space, but did not; here Jim plans to revive Aurora, tells Arthur about it, plans the date he is going to do this, and then there is another system failure on the ship and during this Aurora is revived. The debate would be over whether planning to do something is the same as actually doing something. The same issues come up. Finally, I would use the ending from the early shooting script (where the crew on arrival discover the oak tree and the cottage and also two well kept graves and Aurora's book).

But that is, probably, just my evil male opinion...

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On the "crime" of writing female characters when I am a man. I know that this is a "crime" because I have been told it is a "crime". But, because I am male and evil; I do not see this as a "crime". I cannot accept the rationale that to preserve voice and representation that I must omit one half of the human species as characters. My response is brief and simple. This is NOT going to happen. I really do not care how cancelled I will be for this; I am just not going to bow to this demand.

In my current work, all of the principal characters are female. Most of the secondary characters are too. There are three protagonists, though one starts the novel more as a "damsel in

distress" and is the third protagonist by the mid-point. In my other current works, there are strong female secondary characters in one and the protagonist is female in the other. And so on. These are fictional worlds that I have created. This is NOT "realistic fiction" or "literary fiction" set in the here and now of our society where an argument could possibly be made that I am stealing the voices and representation of women in the world today. But, my worlds do not exist outside of my mind, except for those that have been published or aired. I do not perceive myself as taking away the representation and voices of women by having female characters in the universes that I have made, to tell stories within.

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Finally, the "crime" of lesbicide. This is the death of a character that has evolved in the various iterations of what began as a six part radio drama series. In the 1991 production this character was just a walk-on character whose only purpose for existing was to be executed by the American occupying forces, a mere background performer without any lines. The description and name of the character fit that of an adversary -- yes, my ancestry is Celtic and the old tradition of satirising your enemies is considered to be far more socially acceptable in 2024 than are "heads on pikes". However, there was more to that character than being just a stand-in for someone who had once wronged me. That character developed and as that happened more of the society was being filled in and this person ceased to be a man and became a woman. And they became a positive character, not a cardboard cut-out. And so things went...

The main novel is a political thriller (heavy on the politics) set on a Canadian space habitat (that same evil place that has no African-Americans) that has a positive ending. It is now preceded by two novellas. One is a long novella and set 20 years before events in the novel (and sets the stage for that novel) and the middle novella is a short novella.

The first novella that is the long novella is a character study of two people, both who believe they are doing what is best for the habitat and both follow their different paths. One by their

actions descends into the "dark side", and the other discovers that good isn't always enough; that with sufficient power, evil can triumph.

The novella is a tragedy. What makes a tragedy tragic is that the good people fail and the bad people win (or if the bad people are defeated, a lot of good people die in the process). In this tragedy, evil triumphs and good is conquered and the good protagonist dies. Wielding political power is really not sunshine and bunnies and rainbows and unicorns, especially when superpowers are involved and you are a territory of a middle power...

And so a fleshed out, likable, yet flawed, political figure, who is a lesbian dies in this novella. It is too bad, but almost all the other good people die in this tragedy. I think that it would have been more of a "crime" to have left her, as a him; a cardboard minion of the politician who is executed with fellow minions once their political utility has ended.

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And in the end, my opinion, my thoughts do not matter. The bottom line being this. According to the "woke" consensus, people like me should not be permitted to write. There should be a law to prohibit people like me from writing and there should be long prison sentences for those found guilty of this "crime". And is the "crime" the act of writing fiction "by the wrong people" (c'est moi) or by the "wrong people" being published or engaging in self publishing?

To which, the "woke", who are just a very loud and vocal minority, have no power over me. Oh, they can attempt to cancel me. Tell everyone not to purchase my fiction. They can ban me from attending SF conventions. They can dis me in social media. And while I care a little (nobody likes to be demonised), I do NOT care a lot. They, the SF & F "woke" have some power, but that power is limited and ephemeral. And so, people who probably should be, at least frenemies, if not uneasy allies are now foes.

Thus, I will continue to write, regardless of the screams that this action will cause.

Scribbling on the Bog Wall: Letters of Comment

Neil Williams

It would appear that the temporal portal experienced for SWILL #41 and SWILL #43 has now closed. Any LoCs received between now and the middle of February 2025 will be published in SWILL #44. Amazing..

Endnote: Welcome to the Working Week

Neil Williams

After being told that I am redundant, useless, and that all of my education, my skills, my experience were utterly worthless, and that the only thing I was good for was to be worked to death as an Amazon "meat robot", until I dropped dead on the warehouse floor; I was now desired and wanted for my knowledge and experience. I was hired to teach part-time at university in a sociology/history course.

Based on the initial job posting criteria and the emphasis in Zoom panel interviews and the focus being placed on having previous experience working with and teaching Indigenous students had created an impression that there would be a significant sized Indigenous cohort within the students in the course. Thus, although the course I was assigned to teach had an almost entirely emphasis on Indigenous peoples and their history and issues in Canada, I had zero Indigenous students in the course.

I did not have any First Nations students, but all of my students were Indians from India. And recently too. They had arrived in Canada in August and the Winter 2023 semester was their second semester in Canada. I had taught a course similar to this for years at my previous employer. This course had no textbook, just articles and videos on the LMS (Learning Management System). There were no tests, just many written assignments, and a group presentation assignment.

I have taught many cohorts of International students over the years. And most of the time, each specific cohort was different. And there were some similarities too, usually due to country of origin and sometimes also region. In general, with the exception of students from Saudi Arabia, most International students have a degree of respect for educators; Saudis only respect educators who are Muslim and Sunni (being Shia is almost as bad as being a mushrikun, like me). About one third of the students were from the Punjab region in India and were Sikhs and the majority were Hindu.

But, it was wonderful to be teaching again))

The commute was a little difficult as I had to get a ride to Kitchener, where I could catch the GO train to Brampton. Woodstock did not have any public transit options other than Via Rail and were not on the line that went to Brampton. This made for a long day, as I had my classes scheduled from 9:00 to 12:00 and from 13:00 to 16:00, but also all my in person teaching on one day per week.

With the September semester, my courses moved to the new campus in Mississauga close to the airport. This was good and bad simultaneously. Good, because I could get there all on my own, and bad because VIA Rail was inconsistent and unreliable.

For those, like me, who do not know this fact; Via Rail has low priority when it comes to track. Freight comes first, and then GO transit, and Via Rail last. So at times, if their trains are being "bumped" in favour of freight, the Via Rail scheduled times are suggested at best and fictitious at worst. The new campus was in an industrial park which kind of sucked. There is this long tradition in Ontario of building satellite campuses in the midst of industrial parks. I don't agree with this tradition, but it seems to be loved by administrators and there is no sign of any change in these policies emerging ((

And so I ended the year, employed again (and even though it was just part-time, well compensated). With my reduced pension, along with my part-time teaching income, I was now making only about two thousand less per month than what I was making when I taught full-time. This was good)))