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Spring 2022 Newsletter

Welcome to the Spec Fic Writers Spring Newsletter. Follow along with our members who publish in many of the speculative fiction sub-genres including: science fiction, fantasy, horror, dystopian, weird west, fairy tales and more. Get to know our writers and our works. We also share our favorites in the speculative fiction genre and more...

Spring's Featured Member



If you joined Spec Fic Writers recently, you were probably welcomed into the group by Paul Martz. As our New Member Liaison, Paul sets up new members with the group guidelines, shared drive access, and mail list membership that makes it easy to join and participate in our critiques. "I have no clue why they picked me to greet new members," Paul says. "Maybe they wanted a working-class punk, someone gruff and coarse, like Cerberus guarding the gates of Hades."

Paul's earliest science fiction memory was watching 2001: A Space Odyssey on the big screen. He filled his Saturdays with sci fi and horror classics like Godzilla, Frankenstein, The Blob, Soylent Green, The Andromeda Strain, and Planet of the Apes. Ray Bradbury's The Martian Chronicles, Edgar Rice Burroughs's Pellucidar trilogy, and "some crappy English translation of Verne's Journey to the Center of the Earth" all featured prominently on his childhood bookshelf.

"I tried to write science fiction as a kid," Paul says. "My English teachers passed me with a forced smile, as if terrified of the alternative."

Writing took a backseat for most of Paul's life. In the 1980s, Paul was part of Detroit's underground music scene, where he drummed in punk and new wave bar bands. He worked for several years as a programmer in the virtual reality industry. "Programming worked out better than drumming," he says. "Better pay, and no one spat on me." His computer skills have landed him another role in the Specfic group. He owns and administers the web server that hosts SpecFicWriters.com.

Now retired and living in Erie, Colorado, Paul is finally able to pursue writing. His stories fall into the hard science fiction, cyberpunk, and slipstream genres, with a fatalistic edginess that always seems to leave the protagonist worse off. He reads as much non-fiction as fiction, and his favorite authors include Karen Joy Fowler, Kelly Link, and Haruki Murakami.

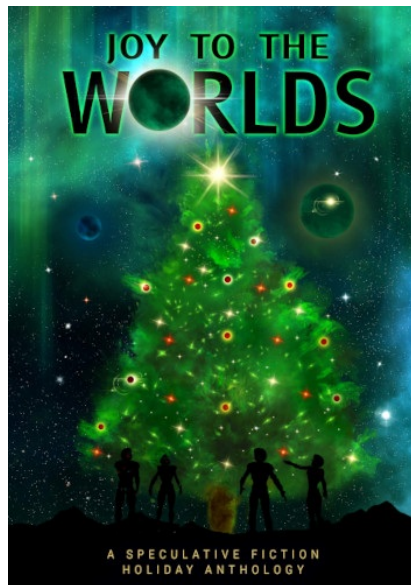
Paul joined Spec Fic Writers because of his inexperience, but recommends the group to both new and seasoned writers. The weekly deadlines motivate him, the feedback improves his work, and he learns a lot from writers with

more knowledge. "I'm not a disciplined writer," he says. "I write when the mood strikes. Our weekly critique sessions help keep my hands on the keyboard." Since joining Spec Fic Writers in 2018, Paul has focused on writing short stories. His work has appeared in all three of the group anthologies, as well as RMFW's Wild: Uncivilized Tales. When asked if he has a novel in the works, he shakes his head. "I'm still learning. Short stories let me screw up without a huge investment. Besides, I've always enjoyed the gut-punch of a good short story."

Goals for the future? Paul doesn't hesitate with his answer. "Look out, man. I'm a slow learner, but my prose is improving. One day, I'll regurgitate this stew of technology, punk attitude, and my own twisted imagination into a mind-bending narrative that will leave the literary world in a smoldering pile of ashes."

[More from Paul](#)

Our New Releases



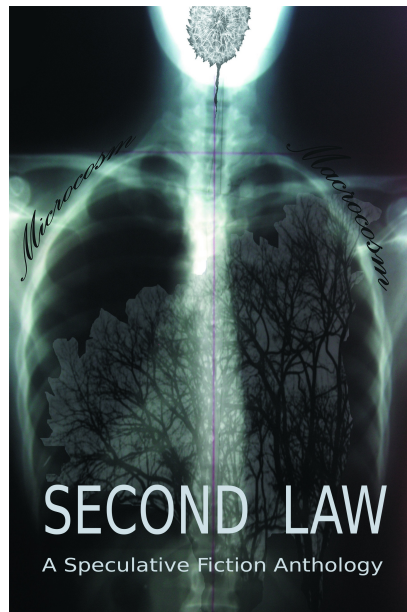
Didn't Get Enough During the Holidays?

Take your pick of maniacal Christmas bots, unexpected visitors from other worlds, omnipotent in-laws over for dinner, or a time travel mission gone terribly wrong.

Or perhaps you prefer festive androids, an unusual champion of might, genetic breakthroughs, or a celebration of a traditional nativity on a future colony. Do the spirits of Christmas bring loneliness and heartache, or cheer and laughter?

Whether you simply endure December or fully celebrate the holidays, this anthology of thirteen yuletide tales is sure to satisfy your speculative fiction craving and make your winter a little brighter.

[Purchase](#)



Second Law Anthology Available NOW!

Laws, framed by unscrupulous leaders, diminish freedom. They can also be just, superfluous, or downright wrong. Second laws are (by design) less important than primary decrees. But depending on how regulations are ordered, the second law might be imperative for social stability, morality, or survival.

This collection offers ten original stories with diverse themes and bodies of law. They include these topics: corporate espionage remains rampant in the future, humans and robots swap identities, space pirates exact frontier justice at their own peril, greed and lust remain ingrained in humanity, teenagers fight robots for their f
To review or purchase *Second Law*, use this link.

[Purchase](#)

Live on *Twitch*: An Interview with Matthew Cushing



WHITE TALE COFFEE

In support of up and coming authors, White Tale Coffee is hosting the first in a series of virtual book readings. Coming in April, their first guest is Speculative Fiction Writers' own Matthew Cushing.

Details of the live event will be released in the coming weeks. Check out www.whitetalecoffee.com and www.matthewcushing.com for more information.

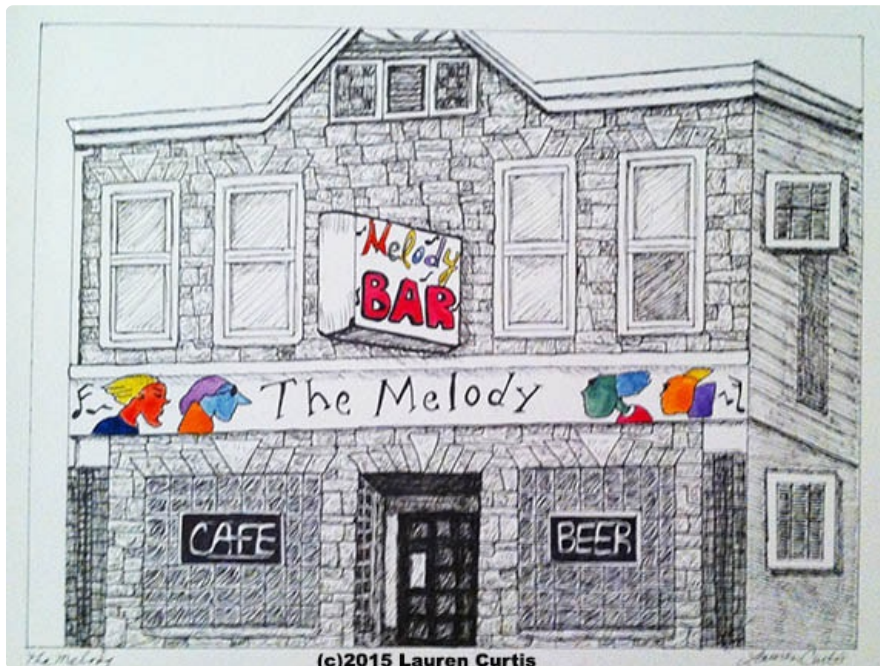


Lauren Curtis is the talented Second Law cover designer we want you to meet. Learn about her and her amazing creations.

SPEC FIC IS MORE THAN WRITING: ARTIST DESIGNS COVERS

by Lauren Curtis

Being a full-time, freelance, artist/designer is a dream come true. I enjoy working with new clients across the globe to make their visions come to life for businesses and creative projects! I have many years of artistic experience, beginning with receiving a BFA in illustration, painting and graphics from Mason Gross School of the Arts (Rutgers) in 1988.



Since then, I've continued to expand my visual art career by creating fine artworks for exhibits and also respecting the artistic needs of my clients, striving to create work that will make them happy. I currently exhibit around the country, and am represented by galleries in NJ and have done many shows in PA, NYC and MA as well. Creating from my personal experiences, which includes traveling and shooting photos that depict the essence of a particular place, is something I continue to explore. I've also been commissioned to create paintings, illustrations, graphics, marketing/promo materials and photography. The medium I use depends on the project. I work with photography, oils, acrylics, watercolors, pen and ink, and computer graphics.



Illustrating for crafter and greeting card companies, publishers/authors and historical organizations is another way I earn income doing what I love. I have extensive experience in marketing/fundraising, which has lead me to teach art marketing lessons. I also give private art lessons in my home studio and virtually. One of my favorite subjects to do for commissioned work is portraits, both humans and animals, but animals are my long-time specialty! I pride myself on meeting deadlines, keeping in regular communication with my clients, being able to work in my own studio in an organized fashion to produce work that pleases my clients and collectors! Please feel free to contact me with any questions about my work or to commission a piece.

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Who Are We to Judge?

The inaugural Self-Published Science Fiction Competition (the SPSFC) launched last year under the direction of accomplished sci-fi authors Hugh Howey (Wool) and Duncan Swan (Monstre). Reading and reviewing over 300 self-published science fiction books, SpecFic Writers authors **L.V. Ditchkus** and **Matthew Cushing** signed on as part of Team Meteor, one of the ten judging teams. The submissions, many highly acclaimed, range from hard-boiled sci-fi to space opera to character driven who done its set in the distant future.

Bringing to bear their writing and critiquing experience from the SpecFic Writers, these two award-winning authors provide analysis and scoring of submitted books in a variety of areas, including plot, characters, story opening, setting, and climactic ending. Book covers were reviewed and scored in a separate portion of the competition. Both authors believe reading these novels has helped them critically evaluate and improve their own writing.

The SPSFC is still in progress with winners announced in summer 2022.

Live Well and Prosper

- **Know any aspiring High School or Middle Grade writers?** The **CC Writers Exchange** is running a short story competition for young

writers (closing date for submissions is March 31, 2022). You do not need to be a Chaffee County resident to submit. The theme "It Happened Near Here..." allows room for a story in almost any genre—fantasy, science fiction, romance, suspense. Writers' ages are limited to 14-18 in the Senior Division and 10-13 in the Junior Division.

- **We're working on a new anthology.** Our Spec Fic Writers Group has decided on a title for our next anthology: *Third Wave*. Check our summer newsletter for all the details.



A Colorado publication, **Third Flatiron Publishing** established in 2012, is headquartered in Boulder, Colorado. (No relation to Macmillan's more recently founded Flatiron Books.) They publish digital science fiction and fantasy anthologies with accompanying print editions and podcasts.

Publisher and editor Juliana Rew is a former science and technical writer for the National Center for Atmospheric Research and the Geological Society of America, with experience writing and editing scientific journal articles, newsletters, annual reports, and computer-user documentation. She has won over a dozen technical writing competitions, and is a software engineer by training. She mentored minority and female college science interns at NCAR in writing scientific papers. She advocates digital preservation of literary works and has produced several public domain books for Project Gutenberg. Juliana, the author of short stories and three novels, created the anthology model for the publisher when she decided to retire from NCAR. Always a writer, although technical, not fiction, she was also drawn to the creative side of publishing.

The publication covers the range of speculative fiction, works in which the setting is other than the real world, involving supernatural, futuristic, or other imagined elements, such as sci fi, fantasy, horror. The content she prefers to include might be described as "space opera." The slant of the publication is anthropological, plots in which the reader learns what humans are capable of, a human angle for the discerning reader. She hopes to appeal to people who want thought-provoking works, but not necessarily apocalyptic.

Over the years she's built a base of readers and subscribers. The most challenging part of her publishing venture is promoting the house's authors, a time-consuming effort. The most fun or most fulfilling? Hearing nice things from the writers, many of whom are new.

A more recent venture is podcasts, which she's been producing since 2015. She's able to give these pieces away online, so they serve as a good introduction to the anthologies. All the listener has to do is click on the story or visit Apple iTunes. The issues are also now available online as paperbacks. Her editorial team consists of herself, a proof reader, and slush readers for submissions that come in over the transom.

The name of the anthologies and the publishing company is obvious to most residents in the Boulder, CO, area. A prominent geographic feature lies just west of town. Five immense rock formations, called flatirons, frame the east slope of Green Mountain, a steeply sloping triangular landform created by erosion of a dipping layer of rock.

Submissions are taken quarterly and should be between 1500 and 3000 words, either as an attachment (Word, RTF) or in the body of the mail (text) to flatsubmit@thirdflatiron.com, using the theme for that quarter. Juliana's blog is **The Well-Rounded Geek**. Her website is julianarew.com. Tweet her at [@julirew](https://twitter.com/julirew).

VIDEO REVIEW: Star Trek Discovery



Rating: 4 stars

- Viewed on CBS/Paramount+
- Created by: Bryans Fuller and Alex Kartzman. Written by 34 authors, so far.
- Starring Sonequa Martin-Green as Michael Burnham, Doug Jones as Saru, Anthony Rapp as Paul Stamets, and Mary Wiseman as Sylvia Tilly.

Star Trek Discovery is third in the series of Star Trek Original and Star Trek Enterprise. Compared to the previous versions, it is darker, more violent, contains a vast improvement in special effects, and the cast portray both racial and sexual diversity.

Michael Burnham, the main character, is linked to the older versions as the adopted daughter of Sarek who is the father of Spock. The back-story falls apart when the viewer finds a much more modern Enterprise with better weapons and transporters. The theme of season one is the fall and redemption of Michael Burnham. Klingons, who have much cooler uniforms than in the past, return to threaten the order of the universe.

The episodes are very fast paced with main characters killed off periodically. This is SciFi with some fantasy elements. The Enterprise zooms from place to place, not only with warp drive, but with an instantaneous boost from a trans-dimensional fungus that fills the universe. The fungus strains viewer's ability to suspend disbelief, especially when Ensign Tilly is tapped to cure the fungus in the brain of Lieutenant Stamets. Doctors don't carry much weight in this series, unlike Bones in the ST original or Dr. Phlox in ST Enterprise.

Michael Burnham is a powerful character. She has the smarts of a Vulcan, fights far above her weight, and always knows the right thing to do. Despite the writers' tendency to painfully eliminate characters, she survives at least 50 episodes. It's a dramatic SciFi adventure worth watching.

Reviewed by R. C. Beckett

Specific webpage and blog: <https://specificwriters.com/>
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Newsletter editor Bonnie McCune, bfmccune@gmail.com,
BonnieMcCune.com
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Speculative Fiction Writers Group
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