

SPARTACUS

NO. 8 MAY 2015 GUY LILLIAN III

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Within a month Rosy and I – and science fiction fandom – have lost three of the most incredible people we have ever known. Two were great friends. The third was Rosy’s mother.

Zoning through Facebook on March 23, 2015, I hit – and was hit by – news that undoubtedly stunned you too: the death of Peggy Rae Sapienza. Telling Rosy was a duty I would gladly have put off forever. As you know, PRae was one of the great SMOFs, and as you also know, were you lucky enough to meet her personally, she was one of the great people. Peggy Rae was a personal friend. She came to our wedding, visited us in both New Orleans and Shreveport, hung with Rosy at many a Worldcon, and was always fun and generous and jolly company.

And speaking personally – well, at our wedding breakfast, just as a for-instance, it was Peggy Rae whose conversation convinced my brother that *all* SF fans might not be the addled trekkie weirdos he remembered from my early NOSFA days. That was a sublime favor.

And speaking of the New Orleans Science Fiction Association, on the morning of April 9 I was in a doctor’s waiting room, nervously awaiting my appointment, when a call came in from John Guidry that put my petty jitters in perspective. Pat Adkins, a.k. professionally as Patrick H. Adkins, Jr., a steadfast NOSFAn, Burroughs fanatic, author, and friend, had passed on two days before.

“Classic” New Orleans fandom began with two events, both involving Guidry and both occurring in 1964: John’s meeting with Justin Winston at a French Quarter bookstore and his phone conversation with his fellow ERB fan Pat Adkins. The talk lasted four hours and never really ended ... until April 7. Pat’s death is a devastating loss for New Orleans, and of course for Pat’s family and friends, one of whom I proudly claim to be.

And on April 22, we were awakened by Nita Green’s intercom call for help. She was having a massive heart attack. The coronary was so powerful it shocked the rest of her organs into failure. At 4:23 that afternoon, Rose-Marie’s mother, a lifelong SF fan and hostess at the great Cape Canaveral “launch parties” of the Apollo era, took two small last breaths and made her crossing. Rose-Marie handled herself and the immediate situation with grace and courage. I am extremely proud of her.

Nita’s death puts the care of Rosy’s stepfather into the hands of his daughters, Rosy’s stepsisters. I suspect strongly that this will cause us to move to Merritt Island sometime soon, and may put the kibosh on our hopes to attend Sasquan. Of course I will put out the final word as soon as I know it.

Our most profound condolences to John and Eric and all of PRae's family and friends and family of friends – which includes us all. And likewise to Dixie Adkins, Pat's widow, their daughter and their son. Thanks to all who proffered their sympathies to *la belle* and her family. After these losses, we in SF fandom are a poorer people. But as wise John Hertz said in a recent letter, "It's a treasure of our community to have had people worth appreciating at their death." Amen.



I wanted to concentrate in this *Spartacus* on American politics and the depthless lunacy of the Republican party – starting with the hypocrisy and blasphemy represented by the Indiana Religious Freedom charade and going from there.

The Republican attempt to schmooze evangelicals with covert anti-gay legislation under the name of Religious Freedom is a familiar subterfuge. Segregationists tried it during the civil rights era. in support of Jim Crow. Those maneuvers couldn't work because of the XIV Amendment and the Constitution's Commerce Clause, which declare that when a business takes money from across a state line, and acts with bias against a class of citizens, federal jurisdiction – and federal civil rights law – kicks in. As constitutional statutes prime vague claims of religious belief, so-called Religious Freedom laws would crash and burn in federal court just as the seggie laws did before them.

But court action will probably be unnecessary. The Republican scam has backfired big time and the smart guys know it. In vetoing Arkansas' law, its GOP governor, Asa Hutchinson, credited the altruism of his son with forcing his hand, but more so than any idealistic offspring, Wal-Mart, the state's major employer, motivated his change of heart. The savvy businessmen who run Wal-Mart knew what financial embarrassment the measure would bring, and wasted no time reminding their man in Little Rock of the most important commandment from the GOP Bible: thou shalt not cost corporations money. If I were a Republican I'd mimic Hutchinson; deference to smart business opinions would be good for the GOP, silencing the nuts and letting the heart of their party, business power, reassert itself.

Anyway, it looks like the Religious Freedom nonsense is passe, and the right wing's legions of loons have moved on. Their big schtick these days is a far more entertaining spectacle, fear of an invasion of Texas by the United States Army. It's evident that a substantial percentage of people calling themselves conservative in this country these days are blasted on crack. I could fill *Spartacus* three or four times over with pained accounts of right wing lunacy in the outside world. It's a gift that keeps on giving.



But no science fiction fanzine dealing with controversy can stray very far from fandom itself in this season of the Hugo nominations. Right wing paranoia and deviousness have come home to roost, and the Sad Puppies and their Rabid littermates rule. Or do they?

If you've been fortunate enough to have been lost in Carlsbad Caverns for the last few weeks, and know nothing of what George R.R. Martin has come to call "Puppygate", here's my take on it. For several years some SF editors, authors and fans of a conservative bent have claimed that the science fiction community has treated them and their work with disdain – for political reasons. Not only political correctness but a desire for Social Justice has cost more rightist SF and its creators the recognition they deserve – particularly as expressed through the field's dominant honor, the Hugo Awards.

With that perceived insult in mind, certain of these writers and fans drew together to mount a bloc campaign to secure Hugo nominations for others of their ken. In 2014 this effort brought, most

significantly, Larry Correia's *Warbound* to the ballot. This year, the campaign all but engulfed the entire nomination process.

Of course there is nothing illegal or unprecedented about bloc voting. Senior fans will remember the *ERB-dom* effort to get Burroughs candidates on the ballot – which brought Camille Cazedessus and Roy Krenkel their Hugos and ERB himself his only Hugo nomination. You telling me that *Dark Genesis* didn't make the short list without concerted assistance from Bridge Publications? This current debacle is simply the most successful bloc nomination in fannish history. But it is also the most politically stained log-rolling any of us have ever seen, and as that political stain represents an outright smear on the integrity of Hugo-voting fandom, one should view it with less tolerance than any efforts to manipulate the awards in the past.

Why? Check out this quote from a supportive blog by Allum Bokhari: “The Sad Puppies have struck a blow for creative and intellectual freedom. But their campaign is just one part of a wider movement against the forces of the authoritarian left, whose allies are decreasing by the day. Whether they are called CHORFs, SJWs or Stepford Students, authoritarians, finger-waggers, bullies and panic-mongers are facing a backlash across dozens of fronts as the defiant spirit of GamerGate floods into other fandoms... Ordinary people are utterly fed up with the dominance of cliquish culture warriors whose bizarre opinions do not reflect those of the majority. They are fed up with being told what to do, what to believe, and whom to exclude. Wherever and whoever they may be, crusaders for political and social conformity are in the midst of a storm. And that storm is only just beginning.”

We see in this very typical rant a paranoia quite similar to the rank lunacy promoted by the right wing in American real-world politics: a reliance on name-calling (how'd they miss my favorite slur against the politically correct, “pod people”?), an invocation of “ordinary people,” and defiant claims that their vitriol is only payback for assaults from the left. The chief insult they cite is an alleged attempt by Social Justice Warriors to bully SF into conformity with liberal ideas. We've heard this before. The SP revolution is a reaction to obsessive PC? To an insistence on “Literary SF”? Remember the crap visited on the New Wave? Nothing new here.

The falsity of the Puppies' claims has been demonstrated time and again by SFers infinitely more articulate than I. I refer curious readers to George R.R. Martin's “What Now?” blog of April 9; it's almost exactly on point with my feelings. (It also recommends a novel that is both passionate and beautifully written – Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven*. There's nothing in Ms. Mandel's elegantly-wrought post-apocalyptic tale to offend even the most deluded right-winger – wait, no, I'm wrong: there's a villain in the piece who deems himself a religious prophet. That's enough for them to condemn the book as anti-God.)

To return to one of Bokhari's points, I'd deny that the misogynistic psychopathy of GamerGate is in any way reflective of a “defiant spirit.” To tie this business to GamerGate, that sick series of sexist criminalities, does little credit to the writers Sad Puppies put forward through their bloc. I'd hate to see Kevin Anderson, for instance, tarred with that brush. Naomi Fisher had similar worries about identifying the Helsinki in '17 Worldcon bid with Castalia House, publisher of many of the S.P.'s short fiction candidates and located in those Scandinavian climes:

“It would be a totally misguided shame if voters lashed out at *Finland* because of Castalia House! Castalia House is wholly owned and operated by Vox Day/Theodore Beale. He is, like John C. Wright, an AMERICAN, and (unlike John C. Wright, who lives in Virginia, received SIX nominations in four categories, and is a singularly intolerant and homophobic self-professed Roman Catholic) either a fundamentalist SOUTHERN Baptist or ‘a non-denominational evangelical Christian’ of the ranting/hating

sort who make me wish there were another box than ‘Christian,’ rather than have myself classified with him in any way. Including *Homo sapiens*...

“This is entirely a bloc nominating/voting effort by Vox Day and John C. Wright, mentioned again and again on Castalia House’s site as their premier author. Why Vox Day (who’s spoken against women having the right to vote, for pete’s sake!) chose to base his publishing in Finland, after being expelled from SFWA, is probably more because the Finns tend to be tolerant of free speech to the point of lunacy.”

One quibble. There’s nothing wrong with being a Southern Baptist. My grandmother was a Southern Baptist and as they say, “a finer woman never drew breath.” But of course, the Helsinki in 2017 worldcon bid had nothing to do with Puppygate, and no one – as far as I know – thinks so.

Social media went wild after the nominations came out. In addition to Martin, David Gerrold had much of value to say. His defiant wit did a lot to change my perception of the Sasquan GoH. Connie Willis, even as she declined to present a Hugo during this year’s ceremonies, struck a characteristically humane note. My friend Chris Barkley, Moshe Feder, Catherynne Valente, Tom Galloway, Laura Resnick, the invaluable Mike Glycer, Edward Schubert, who withdrew his own Hugo candidacy – all had sensible and pointed things to say. It’s their passion and their good wit – as well as my abiding affection for the awards that brought me into fandom in the first place – that makes me shy away from extremes. There’s no way I’d protest Puppygate by voting No Award in every category, and vehemently disagree with the good people who believe that the Hugos have been permanently and irrevocably damaged as an expression of *vox populi*, and should therefore be abolished. To do so would cheat those who believe in the award, in the fandom that gives it, and in the genre it champions.

When the nominations came forth, I found the Sad Puppies’ domination disturbing and their rationale repellant, but I was mostly upset that Cixin Liu’s *The Three-Body Problem* – as translated by Ken Liu – didn’t get the Best Novel nomination it deserved. By far the best SF novel I’ve read all year, it was a work imaginative but logical, scientifically sound yet passionate, apolitical yet about politics, intensely readable and literate yet – thanks to the splendid translation – accessible and fun. I was left hoping that it would cop the Nebula and future volumes in the trilogy might win over fans. But then Marko Kloos, embarrassed by association with the Puppies, withdrew his *Lines of Departure* from Hugo consideration – a righteous act of ethical character for which I hope to someday congratulate the author. The Liu novel ascended into its ballot place, and my general gloom over the usurped Hugos turned into evangelical enthusiasm. The 2015 Science Fiction Achievement Awards became something I could care about and promote – positively – again.

The answer is activism. The SPs formed a bloc, so let’s *us* form a bloc – or many! – of our own. Let’s promote good stuff for our award. Allow me to fall back on classic, and classically correct, legal aphorisms. **The answer to bad speech is good speech. The counterpoint to biased and dishonest Hugo candidacies is support for worthy ones.** And so:

The Three-Body Problem. Interstellar. Journey Planet. The Flash pilot. Mike Resnick. Toni Weiskopf. Steve Stiles. I’ll say that again: **Steve Stiles.** That’s Guy Lillian’s Hugo ticket. If you haven’t voted yet, you could not do better.

Let’s not tolerate an offensive misuse of our Hugo. Let’s take it back. And in doing so, let’s vow to keep our eyes open for good candidates to promote, and cast our minds back to better days, and better people.

Like Poul Anderson ... Dan Galouye ... Hank Reinhardt. I remember when science fiction's conservatives were gentlemen who would argue with you with passion and laugh with you with respect in a society that celebrated civil argument. Such guys are still out there: Greg Benford, Mike Resnick, Robert Silverberg, whose earnest but cordial political discussion with my fellow liberal Stan Robinson was a highlight of the Aussiecon IV program. In Puppygate, poisonous people bearing poisonous intent have raised their ugly voices to a pitch where cordiality and humor can't be heard. Time for memory and good faith – and good awards! – to overwhelm them.

Or as Laura Resnick put it on Facebook (reprinted by permission):

Shall I not compare thee to a Puppy Sad?
Thou art more stinky and intemperate.
Noisy yaps do fill the air of Spokane
And WorldCon parties lack a puppy mat
Sometimes the Rabid eye of Vox Day shines
But never is his shrill voice dimmed
Yet northwestward will all fandom go
To see those Puppy claws get trimmed
And every winner that's announced
Will probably see the canines trounced
So long as rockets shine and Hugos live
So long will fans not them to Puppies give.

Laura Resnick



A statement from Julian Warner, new administrator of the Down Under Fan Fund...

Following a brief announcement on the “Unofficial Down Under Fan Fund” page on Facebook this is a more extensive statement regarding the Down Under Fan Fund (DUFF). Justin Ackroyd and I (Julian Warner) were asked by Bill Wright (current Australian DUFF administrator) on behalf of himself and Juanita Coulson to take over DUFF administration until a new delegate and administrator is appointed by the voting masses. For differing reasons, Bill and Juanita find themselves unable to devote the time and resources necessary to the necessary tasks. We do not need to debate the reasons why we have been asked to help. Speculate on other people's motivations if you must but please respect the privacy of others.

We just want to get DUFF back on track – running races for as long as fandom supports it. Justin and I believe that we cannot viably run a race – from Australia/New Zealand to North America – this year. We need a period of time to replenish funds and to allow for a well-organised campaign for next year. Obviously we would like to deliver DUFF to a very capable next pair of hands.

Lucy Huntzinger has kindly offered to be the administrator at the North America side of things for the interim. Her credentials as a previous DUFF delegate and fannish networker are impeccable. She will take over administration of the NA funds from Marty Cantor who “volunteered” to take them over from John Hertz. We owe a huge debt of thanks to Marty

for his efforts. I'm glad that John and Marty have the sort of friendship which can survive the odd mutual grumble. It sounds like the way that Bruce Gillespie and I, for example, grumble about each other.

Justin and I have some behind the scenes matters to clear up but we will continue to re-vivify the DUFF network and look for fund-raising opportunities in the future. We also want to include our cousins across the Tasman Sea in New Zealand in our plans and deliberations. Lucy wants to establish a network of helpers in North America and I am pleased to see that volunteers are already coming forward.

Justin and I are happy to answer questions about our intentions. We are both now signed up to the FanfundAdmin list. I am active on FB but Justin is not.

I applaud this for many reasons. DUFF means a lot to Rosy and me – it brought us our greatest recognition as SF fans and most importantly, exposure to Australia and its magnificent people. Considering the chaos that's befallen the fund in recent years, and the inability of the last few delegates to run things as they should be run, taking time to regroup is an excellent idea.

(A neglected point, brought up in the FanFundAdministrators list and elsewhere: DUFF and TAFF aren't just honors, they're responsibilities, and the ability and enthusiasm to fulfill those responsibilities should be among the criteria used to judge candidates. Of course, the imp of the perverse strikes where and when and whom he wants – but still, maintaining the fund should be a factor in selecting our delegates.)

Secondly, it's often been the case that one North American worldcon has both DUFF and TAFF winners to celebrate, and the next year's con has none. That's a burn, bad for the neglected Worldcons and bad for the funds. I've often advocated alternating the funds, giving each NA worldcon a fan fund winner, and now, by fate, it's happened. Let's keep it this way.

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Rodney Leighton (with interlinos by Chuck Connor)

Hi Guy:

Challenger #39 and *Spartacus #7* appeared April 14. This is April 19. I was just writing a section on these 2 zines for *Rodney's Fanac #5*. Don't know when it will appear. I expect Chuck will send you a copy.

I don't think there is any way for me to resolve my dilemma re LOCcing. Your method of using *TZD* is ok and would likely work for me now that Chuck is doing some of the work and most of the distribution and I can fire the things off every so often. But I think about what will happen if something should happen to him or when he decides he has had all of me he can stand and goes away. For one thing 40 to 70% of the fanzines I read will disappear. Paper zines should still keep coming, everything I get now are published by folks who are willing to send copies in return for letters of comment and as long as I write to them, even if I can't afford to do any zines, those zines should continue. But the email will be gone. The e-fanzines will be gone. And I don't anticipate any way to retrieve those things. If Chuck doesn't abandon me for a few years, it is not an issue. If it happens next week, well, no more *Broken Toys*. No more zines from you. And I guess some other things. Which means there is no reason to LOC you guys. Except that Chuck wants me to. Or if there is a reason.

Sometimes there are things I feel the urge to say and once in a while I get the urge to write something that looks like a LOC. Just wrote a nearly 4 page letter to Mike Meara, I am now praying that he doesn't print a

page of it in a block since if he does I will have to chastise him for giving me too much space in one place. I mailed you a request recently for copies of *Spartacus*; possible I might have something to say on #5 or #6 if you send copies; I probably would have written more on #4 except I was feeling like shit. Got nothing to say on #7 at all; short paragraph in *RF*#5.

A lot of my letters of late are too damned self-referential. Which is, well, weird in that I don't think anyone would be interested yet publishers print the things so you must think they have some value. And people change their views. Me, often and repeatedly. Chuck, not that long ago, felt it was important for me to have some zines on the internet. Even as recently as when he passed on that last LOC and included some comments and even more recently than that, he was saying there is no difference between paper zines and ether zines. Yet, now, here he is, holding his new zine off **e-fanzines**.

*Chuck speaks: [This is for several reasons. First off, Rodney didn't have any distribution mechanism, mailing list, etc. Now he has more of a presence it's easier for him to hold back if he wants to. If he was to actually publish LOCs then there would be a point to "holding back" – i.e., you get a better response from those you email and paper-snailmail to than you do from the passive consumers who graze e-fanzines, download zines, read them then hit the delete key. Rodney wants to read eZines, but is of the opinion that as they have not been specifically sent to him then he's not pressured into LOCcing them. I'm holding back on putting my own zine up on e-fanzines because some of my readership take months to generate a LOC, and to just dump it up on e-fanzines means it's basically run its course. Like Mike Meara says in **aMfO** – e-fanzines should be an archive, not a point of distribution – however, in Rodney's case, it was originally just getting his name out into the ether.]*

And, also, I understand the view of people wanting to know that folks read their works. I have been on all sides of that. Back when I started *The Life of Rodney* Chuck volunteered to post it to e-fanzines. I said, ok, go ahead, I don't care. I didn't. Doubted it would do be any good. But then I switched around to a feeling of wishing that anyone who read my zine would let me know, good, bad, indifferent, at least tell me you read the fucking thing. But, you know what? I swung back. Right around the time Chuck started to badger me about LOCcing all and sundry. *[See what I mean? The guy swings worse than a 1960's suburban housewife!]*

I realized that I didn't care whether I heard from anyone who pulled it off the net. And I don't. It's there, they are there, for anyone who wishes to who has the ability to read them. Hopefully everyone who does will get something out of them. It would be nice if some of my old friends read it or some of them and it would be nice if one or some got in touch. But for the rest? Who cares! I don't.

So, basically, it will be thank you letters which might turn into LOCs for zines which show up in the mailbox from the publisher; LOCs to zines I get via email via Chuck if there is something in them that stirs me to write or if I want to write some self-serving thing like this and mostly comments in zines and anything off e-fanzines will likely get some comment in a zine but no letter. If I don't care if anyone reads *RF* #4 online and then writes me a letter, why the hell should I write a letter to ??

Of course, I change my mind a lot!

But also, this email business is confusing.

Ah well, that's enough of that. Hopefully you will send me a copy of *TZD* #whatever it is if you haven't yet done so. FAANs all went to English people, didn't they? Giggle.

Rodney [*and Chuck Connor*]

Comments on Spartacus no. 6 ...

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I don't agree with you that US policy has been benign and the atrocities isolated incidents. The culture of barbaric cruelty takes its approval from policy – My Lai was inspired by the policy decision that “winning” in Vietnam was worth any number of noncombatant lives. The thousands of lynchings in the South were possible because of the general attitude that blacks were inferior and to be treated as

animals. That executions are still government policy may be partly responsible for the police slaughter of unarmed civilians.

Furry fandom is no sillier than golf or football, and poisoning the air in a hotel with chlorine gas is an atrocity no matter whose convention it was aimed at.

But it was funny that the Furrries were evacuated to a dog show – could it be that the giggles on the TV news were because of that? As to the origin of the gas, we apparently know that it was hypochlorate powder in a stairwell – but just that one stairwell, and just that small amount of the powder? Whether it was aimed at the Furrries or intentional at all is not clear.

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When I first found fandom in 1977, I did so through *Trek* fandom. The optimism of *Trek* was attractive for so many, balanced by the antipathy from so many fans who against the influx of what were labelled as mediafans. The reception was so hostile. We have never been very welcoming; we were open only to people who were “fannish enough,” and the Trekkies didn’t qualify at all. More SF movie and television properties swelled our ranks with more mediafans, and it is easy to see that the original fans of written SF have been outnumbered by the mediafans. And yet ... there has been such an outpouring of emotion and reminiscence on the death of Leonard Nimoy. We revered the man for his iconic role, and the length of time he played the Vulcan-human hybrid, the representation of two solitudes. I mourn his passing; for me, he was the symbol of my early years in fandom, the positivity and the first onrush of new friends, some of whom I am still in touch with as of this very day. *Live long and prosper?* He did, as did we all. Just another indication of our age. We’ve also lost Sir Terry Pratchett, and recently Peggy Rae Pavlat/Sapienza. Dave Langford and Mike Glycer must hate putting together the RIP sections of their respective fanzines.

As does Steven H Silver, so ably assembling the enormous Memorials list for the Sasquan program book.

The TAFF race is an interesting one. Two good candidates indeed, but such campaigning might be a little foreign to them. I have made some comments about the TAFF race being for more than just American or British fans, but it may be that American and British fans aren’t all that excited about the fan fund, if neither candidate is a countryman. Both Yvonne and I have voted; I hope our votes make a difference.

The winner was Nina Horvath, an experienced Austrian fan and award-winning short story author, who is also very cute.

I have seen the list of FAAn Award winners this year, and in my area, congrats to Paul Skelton. I’d like to see how well I did myself. Haven’t won in some years, which just tells me that quantity doesn’t necessarily mean quality.

How close to actual treason did the Republican senators come? I would hope that Obama could do a lot, but chose not to. I am pleased to say that Sun News, the Canadian equivalent of Fox News, shut themselves down a couple of months ago. They were kept on high numbers on local cable, and didn’t get many subscribers. The Sun newspaper chain, which got this cable channel started, is about to be purchased by a national business paper, the *National Post*, and the right wing will have few outlets to spew their hatred in this country...which is just fine with me.

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No, Greg Benford is wrong: it’s not true that Islam is at war with the West. It is at war with itself, with occasional sorties against Israel. Of course, since we have gotten involved in wars in the

Middle East and taken no notice of the real divisions among Middle Easterners, we are hated by everyone there.

As well as disagreeing about Islam, I disagree about [the French humor magazine] Charlie. At least partly disagree. I am uneasy that Charlie showed depictions of Mohammed. It is as gauche as insulting Catholics about their religion. On the other hand, none of the Charlie cartoonists deserved death.

The Charlie Hebdo incident was the obvious inspiration for the Garland TX contest to draw cartoons of Mohammed – just as obviously, a ploy for notoriety by the winger organizers, who were undoubtedly gratified when their “contest” was attacked by two Muslims. Something smells about the whole matter. I have problems defending the free speech rights of blatant provocateurs itching to create trouble.

Going from right and wrong, I go to the motives for wrong: those of Calley and the Ferguson cops for what they did. What motives are they? Fear and anger in the middle of battle. It makes you do things you wouldn't otherwise do in your right mind.

*That was the point of “Breaker” Morant, as articulated in the attorney's brilliant closing remarks. I don't think it applies to the specific Ferguson incident at all. Calley and his cadre suffered a **group** psychosis, a **mass** murderous hysteria brought on by paranoia, frustration, undisciplined racist brutality, and the sense that the **group** was making all decisions. The **group** was psychotic. Individual conscience and judgment – assuming those brutes were capable of such – were abandoned to the military need to move and act as one, and the fact that no one in authority had the integrity to tell them No. Remember that the helo pilot who busted Calley was on his own.*

Such warfare is not our fate, however. So Taral can deplore the hypochlorate attack against some Furies, even though he is ambiguous about them. He finds people who dress up like animals are weirdos. On the other hand, unlike the Furry terrorist, he doesn't think they should be sentenced to death or injury.

Has it been established at all that the Chicago Furry incident was deliberate?

Even in the States, we have to pick our fights, even for justice. For that reason, I agree with Jeff Copeland's letter. Real male chauvinists abound. It is just plain good strategy that the defenders of women shouldn't sweat small stuff like men looking, or approaching within five feet.

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The atrocities in Vietnam are now like the mistreatment of the Chinese and blacks and Italians and Germans and Irish as they came to this country. And how we slaughtered the American Indians and took their lands – all in the past and easily glossed over. It's viewed by too many as just part of history. There are far too many lessons of history that all of us ignore or make excuses for. Every country. Every race. Every religion. Every century.

Sad, but it's who we are.

And on Spartacus no. 7 ...

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Earlier this year, we took a class on “Science and Science Fiction” as part of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Vanderbilt. The professor showed a clip from the film *Them!* that featured Leonard Nimoy.

I'd love to have taken that class! Sounds like one Rosy taught at LSU-S!

I also thought *Birdman* was an excellent movie, but would only recommend it to people who also liked Hitchcock's *Rope*, because of the long takes, and Fellini's *8 1/2*, because of the main character's hallucinations.

Rope features one of the best performances in Hitchcock: John Dall – an underrated and troubled actor – as one of the homosexual killers. Strangely enough, Jimmy Stewart isn't convincing in the film, probably because he played a Nietzschean scholar so alien to his everyman/goodguy persona.

American Sniper was highly successful at the box office and controversial for what many critics consider its pro-war message. I'm not sure it is pro-war, because it shows the psychological and physical damage the war did to both Kyle and other soldiers. Chris Kyle's widow Taya has stated the movie accurately depicts Kyle's life. Kyle himself was actually murdered by a Marine suffering from PTSD in 2013.

J.K. Simmons has been doing excellent work for decades, so it is nice that he is finally getting some recognition.

Once you get over the gimmick in *Boyhood*, you realize that the film really does not cover any new ground that has not been covered by other family dramas over the years or decades. The father finally grows up, the mother chooses the wrong husbands, and the kids become young adults. On the other hand, the acting is excellent, especially Ethan Hawke and Patricia Arquette, and if it seems plotless, it is because the action is character driven, a rarity in films.

Allan Maurer
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I just read your essay on Leonard Nimoy/Spock and the way science fiction rocketed into mainstream culture. Excellent piece of writing. I've said for years that whatever else you can say about Star Trek - it brought the masses to SF fandom (including, as you note, girls).

I attended that first Trek Convention in New York City back in the '70s when the thousands who showed up astounded everyone, including the show's stars. You could barely move in the hotel ballrooms, but the first thing I noticed was that as many women as men were there, maybe more.

Something that doesn't get mentioned often enough is that the show had that superb second season sparked by an appeal to fandom and sf authors that resulted in scripts by Harlan Ellison, Theodore Sturgeon, Robert Bloch, and Norman Spinrad. Geez, I thought at the time, real SF on TV. Hadn't happened much since *Twilight Zone*.

Over the years, I attended *Trek* themed parties hosted by folks who otherwise would know diddly about SF, and had wonderful conversations with people about SF ideas that would have been impossible among a "mundane" group in the past.

I will say that boomers brought up on the juvenile novels of Robert A. Heinlein, the Foundation Series by Asimov, and the stories of Arthur C. Clarke did soon show the hold SF had on them by making all three of those Golden Age authors best sellers for months (with novels not as good as in their *Astounding* and '50s heyday, I often thought, although Asimov's *The Gods Themselves* was an exception, as was Clarke's *Rendezvous with Rama*.)

I enjoyed the rest of this issue too, first of yours I've read, though I'm about to go through the batch. I was happy to see you point out that the GOP's Iran letter was one helluva lot bigger issue than that of Hillary's emails.

The letters were also a pleasure. Not infrequently, coming to a new Zine I like, I'll read the letters and go zipping into the back issues they discuss. Will do same here.

Thanks for putting *The Zine Dump* on e-fanzines.com. The site has made finding and enjoying many of the best Zines so much easier, although I doubt it's lessened the work necessary to write and publish them, something I've done at every level professionally, including pasting up issues with a waxer and printed offset sheets.

Game of Thrones is never without delights, but the show exceeded all expectations the other night. Forget swords and dragons, this episode wielded a stronger weapon: *grammar*.

A member of the Night's Watch: "Less Wildlings, less enemies." King, sotto voce: "'Fewer.'" Aide: "What?" King: "Nothing."



Dzhokhar Tsarnaev received a federal death sentence for the Boston Marathon bombing. It's hard to argue against it, because his actions meet every conceivable standard for the penalty. Of course, there is the common – yet most profound – argument against buzzing the little monster, which is that no one, which means no person and no government, has the right to kill. That the story of civilization has been written in bloodshed is no excuse.

However, there is a more persuasive argument, one that I would have considered strongly had I been on that jury. It was voiced effectively by a victim's family. Putting Tsarnaev on death row means that his case will linger for years – perhaps many years. Closure – the hope of every victim, beyond even justice or rank vengeance – will be in abeyance while the appeals process works its way. A life sentence would have parked Tsarnaev in a solitary supermax cell in Colorado, where he would rot. He could be forgotten. With him there, the victims or their survivors could move on. That necessary advance will be much more difficult now.

Still – there is one perspective on the death penalty that I've always found inarguable: Justice John Paul Stevens' characterization of the death penalty as "the expression of society's ultimate outrage." There are crimes which no social order can tolerate. Our nature as a society is defined by what we will not allow, and how seriously we deal with it. There are simply crimes – and criminals – for which no other punishment will do. I would have voted for life imprisonment, but I can't criticize those who could not. Not here.



As this *Spartacus* goes to press and pixel in mid-May, 2015, some SF – or *SFish* – films are being splashed against local silver screens.

The Age of Adaline stars the gorgeous Blake Lively as a woman who blunders into immortality in 1930-something. It's a concept that could have gone places, illuminating the fascinating times from then till now and how an intelligent woman would live and grow through them. Imagine what that could have meant. A teenaged flapper in the '20s morphs into a Rosie the Riveter or WAC during WWII, a suburban housewife in the '50s finds women's lib and new responsibilities and empowerment in the decades that follow. We could have seen her society mature and change, watched it wrest itself from the grip of industrialists, endure poverty, find its feet during the war and explode with possibility and accomplishment in the growth of the middle class, struggle for civil rights, find itself racked with questions and doubts after JFK and Vietnam, seek steadiness – try to grow up and be what it could be. Just like its protagonist.

Instead, we're given a heroine without curiosity or ambition in a world that's all bright lights – we fly over nighttime San Francisco time and again – and swank cafes, and a movie without heart. Adaline is a caring best-friend-to-her-aging-daughter but otherwise a short-sighted, self-absorbed UMC cipher, engaging others only through gossip and insipid romance. Not that the film couldn't have done a lot even with that classic chick-flick trope ... What's more romantic for a lady than dancing? Wouldn't it have been cool to have seen Adaline cutting a rug to the big bands, to the Stones, to disco? More seriously,

wouldn't it have been valuable to have seen her in the real world, at a soup kitchen, at Belsen, at a civil rights march? We'd like to know what's she seen, what she's learned – but apparently all she's seen is socialite triviality and all she's learned is to go for hunky guys with lots of money – and to vet his father first. Phooey. Got to admit, though, and here goes that invitation to Wiscon: Ms. Lively is built like blue bejasus. That'd be true no matter what the decade.

I've had some compelling discussions about *Ex Machina*, an interesting but ultimately frustrating “small” SF film. It's blest with gorgeous and subtle FX, decent acting, particularly by the young female lead, Alicia Vikander, and its script, here and there, proffers a profound idea or two. (I love its take on Jackson Pollock.) The film posits a warped genius testing an android to see if it, she, possesses true artificial intelligence – consciousness – or if it, she, is merely mimicking the humans she (I give up) encounters. Its questions of the nature of intelligence and self-awareness are indeed compelling, but I was disappointed in the answers we're shown.

Consider *Her*, another movie involving the interaction of an organic mind with an electrical one. *Her* posited an artificial intelligence that would develop into a mind totally different from man's. *Ex Machina* gives us an AI that starts out duplicitous and ends up sociopathic, using and then dooming a sympathetic human to obtain its fundamental desire – autonomy. The AI in *Ex Machina*, Ava, although she grasps and desires the concept of freedom – learning it where, one wonders, and perhaps conjecturing individuality as a fundament of consciousness – lacks empathy and conscience. Empathy and conscience, I would argue, are themselves fundamentals of self-awareness – at least of the *human* sort. Ava is a HAL, smart, self-aware, able to communicate – but unable to make the leap of empathy to understanding that *other beings matter*. That seems like a depressing, and almost trite, definition of artificial intelligence. Anyway, worth another view, if only for Nathan's Jackson Pollock riff.

Mad Max: Fury Road: Mel Gibson is missed. They substituted a younger man in his role – without need – and the actor makes little impression. But the fourth Mad Max installment, and the first in more than 30 years, succeeds. This post-apocalyptic film is, like all of George Miller's Mad Max *oeuvre*, shot through with a berserk, kooky nihilism – as if the nukes that reduced the world to a barren waste did the same to everyone's wits. But like all of the films, as best shown in the stunning last half of *Beyond Thunderdome*, that pessimism falls hard against a defiant, affirmative optimism. The world is a desert, but human dignity – in new and weird forms, but human nonetheless – abides. It's like Pappagallo insists in *The Road Warrior*: “We're still human beings – with dignity.” That remains true in *Fury Road*, as Charlize Theron, in her roughest role since *Monster*, tries to save a group of ripe nubile “breeders” from the creepy warlord who wants them all to himself. Beaten down, blistered, her own femininity smashed and calloused, she's tougher than Max himself – because, like the best of Miller's characters, she won't stop believing in and acting on what it means to be human: Love thy neighbor. Ava could use her lesson.

I thought to contrast *Fury Road*, a movie fighting nihilism and despair, with *Tomorrowland*, which promises indefatigable Disneyfied optimism, but frankly, the ghastly reviews are driving me away. “*Tomorrowland* comes across as a grinning rictus of a movie, a desperate door-to-door evangelist trying to force its foot into the door and push its salvation by any means possible.” That's from critic Tasha Robinson. Who could force themselves across a theatre threshold after reading that?

And that fills my space for this issue. Vote for the Hugos, people. With joy if at all.

Very possible change of address
pending – please check with me at
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