

SPARTACUS

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The recent mass murder in Charleston may not have been the most obscene crime of the last few years – Sandy Hook Elementary can still claim that distinction – but it comes close. The victims were genuine Christians, people who had dedicated their lives to others, the polar opposite to the Westboro Baptist maniacs or the breast-beating political hypocrites who have so slandered the franchise – good people who welcomed their murderer into their midst, little suspecting that he was a psychopath, so cold and so vicious that he could sit among them for an hour before going for his gun.

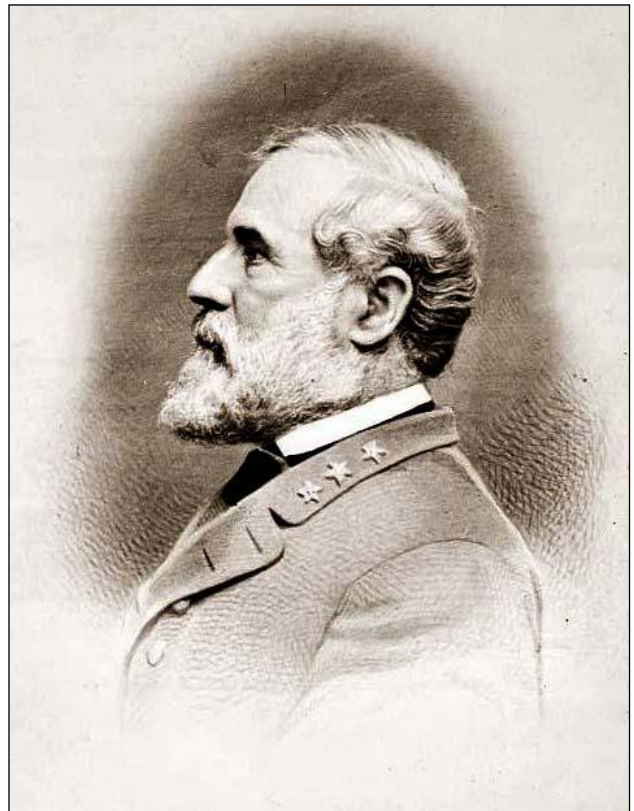
The fact that once again, a maniac had obtained a deadly weapon subsequently turned onto innocent people has passed without notice. The fact that the feeb had once been photographed carrying a Confederate battle flag, on the other hand, has caused an eruption.

On a cynical level, it's easy to dismiss the outcry. America has been through massacres before, and it's become obvious that fighting for sane gun laws is a fatuous exercise. That battle has been lost and lost and lost again. Condemning an obsolete symbol is more satisfying to those unwilling to fight the omnipotent NRA. Why not engage in an easy battle that can be easily won?

My obvious sarcasm aside, I have no objection to removing the Confederate battle emblem from state flags. It was only emblazoned there to bolster segregationist politics when Jim Crow, an American disgrace, began its inevitable collapse. But the wholesale hysteria against all things Confederate, which has followed, is foolish – and misses a bet.

It misses a bet because it denies the value of history – of the way in which men and women and their society grow and change and mature, It insists that an idea does not take root, or grow, or survive because it is a better idea than what has gone before – it insists that a moral stance must erupt full blown, as if from a god's forehead, and to say otherwise is unacceptable, racist, one with the psychopath and his crime.

I think otherwise.



How can we understand history if we deny that there *is* history – and a meaning to the changes that it's seen made in the ways of men? That's the great lesson of the Civil War. America won its right to see itself as a moral nation by blood and terror. How can we understand the struggle, and what came of it, without understanding the men and the times that they lived in? To say that such an investigation shouldn't be burdened with contemporary bias should go without saying.

There are a couple of ways to do adjudge that past. One is to contrast the two greatest men of the era, Lincoln and Lee – the man of radical vision and the man of conservative honor. But I also like to delve into the minds of common soldiers. That's possible with imagination and empathy. It's easier if you've ever been to Gettysburg. Something about that enormous valley between Seminary and Cemetery Ridges puts the question into perspective. The first time I saw it I had wandered to the Angle, the pivotal spot in the battle, from the Federal side. It was just after dawn, so the field was empty – except for a single guy walking towards me from Seminary, and the statue of Lee atop Traveler, observing the field. The guy had intricate curlicues cut into his hair – he couldn't have been less like the men who fought there 150 years ago. But when you come to that place, it's an almost irresistible act. You find yourself all but compelled to try that walk through the field, over the fence, across the Chambersburg Pike, up that little slope into Lee's copse of trees – the path of Pickett's Charge.

When you do that, if you're at all like me, you wonder at the men who took that stroll on July 3, 1863. You try to match yourself against them. 13,000 men marching upslope into the mouths of cannons Could *we* ever do such a thing? What would move us to do so? What moved them? If the depth of your curiosity and compassion exceeds *Abraham Lincoln, Vampire Hunter* – where the entire Confederate army was depicted as ravaging bloodsuckers – you might find it a compelling question.

The easy answer is that those men were a disciplined and confident and motivated army, faithful to their “Marse Robert” and obedient to his orders. But why were they *there* – in that army – in the first place? It couldn't be for slavery, because very few of them had any stake in the issue. Few owned slaves – they were too poor. Does it make any sense to assume that the right of rich men to own human chattel was worth the sacrifice of their lives to ordinary rebel soldiers?

Not that slavery wasn't important to some Southerners. Anyone who has read of the Missouri/Kansas “pre-war war” – Bushwackers vs. Jayhawkers – has seen that. In that fracas, it was often worth a man's life whether or not he was “sound on the goose” – in favor of slavery. The atrocities committed by William Quantrill and Bloody Bill Anderson are still among the worst ever committed by one American upon another. (Matched when Sherman and Sheridan took it onto themselves to teach the South a lesson – and bitterly schism the country for a hundred and ten years – and surpassed only by the reaction to integration in the 20th Century and the rise of Labor.)

Nevertheless, I deny that the common soldier was hot on the issue. Those who scoff at the claim that the Civil War was “about” states' rights overlook the times – and the common man's loyalty. In the mid-1800s people did not travel widely. Other states and any overriding identity as an American was, for most, distant and irrelevant information. Men's loyalty was to what they knew and where they lived. The Union was just an Idea, and an unimportant one at that. Remember, in 1860 the Revolutionary War no more than 2 generations in the past. Many of the Southern soldiers knew genuine yankee doodles. The United States were (notice that I speak in the plural) a distant concept – an alien and, to many, oppressive government, just as Britain was. Home was close by. So when one's home state elected to sever its connections with a distant and alien government, the natural impulse of a man of the time was to follow that state.

This was true even for a sophisticated and much-traveled veteran like Lee. He was a disciplined soldier and engineer who had served the American government brilliantly in the Mexican War and been

superintendent of West Point. He was everybody's first choice to lead the Union forces when South Carolina began the domino fall of Southern secession. He was on record as opposing disunion – said in fact that it was the worst fate that could befall America, and to prevent it he would sacrifice everything ... but *honor*.

Honor is one of those big words that no one understands. I'd say it meant being true to one's self. Robert E. Lee was a very conservative man, a reserved and disciplined engineer to whom duty was personal, conscientious thing, and tied to the concept of *home*. Home was simply where he had grown. Despite his exemplary service to the American government, the United States of America were separate states to him, their Union an attractive but vague and unrealized concept. Virginia was real. Lee's sense of self was bound to his home, and that meant to Virginia, which had followed South Carolina into secession. Could he bear arms against his home? Not and look at himself in the mirror. He could no more fight against Virginia than he could shoot his own mother.

Once committed, Lee was in it – in it to win it. I doubt he cared a whit about slavery. Once the battle was grappled, he was there to kick ass. He was in his army, and “those people” were in theirs. His duty was to whup'em. And he was not a man to shirk his duty once he had decided on it.

What counted with Lee was honor. What counted with Lincoln was vision.

Lincoln had no problem pinning the point of the war on slavery – his second inaugural, the best speech ever made by an American, insisted that the Civil War was no less than divine retribution on America for tolerating the obscene institution in the first place. Making the war *about* slavery was a definite and deliberate change of focus on Lincoln's part, and a stunning political accomplishment. It gave moral force to what I'm convinced was his true motive, to unite the country into a nation based on ideas and ideals of the founders – specifically, on the stunning words of the Declaration of Independence. *All men are created equal*. That was America to Lincoln – an *idea*. His aim was to make that idea flesh.

The most interesting thing about Lee was that he *got* it. In the bitterness of defeat – and oh, was he *ever* bitter about it – Lee came to understand the war's purpose and effect. He advised furling the Confederate battle flag and putting it away. The United States once *were*. Now, the United States *was*. Knowing that everyone's identity had fundamentally changed, he told Southerners to teach their children to be good *Americans*. And there is the story of the church communion in Richmond, after the war, when a black man – quite irrationally – came to the front of the chapel and fell to his knees to pray. The congregation saw this as an insult and their murmurs were turning angry – until Robert E. Lee rose, went to the fore and knelt beside the former slave. He *got* it, all right.

So did those ordinary soldiers I mentioned before. As Shelby Foote pointed out in the Ken Burns documentary, for the first time most of them had *traveled*, seen other places besides their home turf. They were changed, they'd grown. True, they had to endure a century and more of estrangement from the country – contempt for the white poor is the only group prejudice still smiled on in this society – but they had begun the process of learning that the United States now was, not were.

But now, in the hysteria of the moment, we are to deny these events have resonance. We are to acquiesce in the fervid idea that the 1860s' struggle between men and within men had and has no value. The process of change and growth which recreated this country is meaningless. Statues are being torn down. Even New Orleans' Lee Circle – adorned with a huge statue of Lee on a pedestal since the 1880s – is being threatened. The mayor, Mitch Landrieu, backs the removal of all Confederate markings and monuments from his city. I know Mitch and like him, but no; if the idea is to relegate even the memory of the Confederacy to a museum, then that's accomplished. New Orleans *is* a museum. If not, why not



tear down the famous equestrian statue of Andrew Jackson in the Square named for him? Isn't Old Hickory detested as a racist by Native Americans? Why not mollify *that* ancient sin while we're at it?

How far do we go with this orgy of misdirected rage? Do we rewrite *Huckleberry Finn* again to rid it of the "n" word? Since William Faulkner also wrote in the vernacular, do we raid the libraries to burn copies of *Go Down, Moses* and "That Evening Sun"? Or do we find the political courage to eradicate drug addiction from the community? To face down the NRA and end its chokehold on American politics? To QFA and do some

real good in the real world?

I'm a fan of Neil deGrasse Tyson and his new *Star Talk* series; his is generally a voice of reason and clarity in support of the scientific method, invaluable in this time. However, he really blew it when he invited a Jesuit priest to appear with him – and a second guest, an acerbic comedian.

Tyson, the voice of science, claimed no hostility to faith, but in this show kept interspersing their conversation with an interview with the famous atheist Richard Dawkins, whose attitude towards religion is undeniably hostile. His obvious purpose was to goad and gore the priest – assisted, no doubt, by the comic – but the man was so intelligent and reasonable that he silenced the comedian and made the *Cosmos* host look like a chump.

I've always believed that there's no necessary conflict between religious faith and scientific inquiry, and like his boss, Pope Francis, this priest proved the point. (Francis, if you didn't know, has a Master's degree in Chemistry and used to teach it.) Religion deals with ethics and morality, the inchoate; science answers the empirical. The Jesuit got it; why didn't Tyson?

In recent decisions of the Supreme Court, OKing Obamacare and approving gay marriage, one can discern a very welcome hard national skein to the left. An action by Florida's Supreme Court signals an even more important development: a rejection of Republican gerrymandering of Congressional districts. As usual, their ascent to power brought no discipline with it, they went too far in trying to secure their position, and were called back. Let's hope other states follow suit.

But all of this fades to nothingness compared to the televised Rolling Stones concert I recently saw where Lady Gaga sang the girl's part in "Gimme Shelter". I was, in truth, put off. "Gimme Shelter" is about the antiwar era, about being tear-gassed and shot at and despised by one's elders, about Kent State and Vietnam and finding, suddenly, that the society where you grew up and felt safe was fully capable of slaughtering your whole generation for Richard Nixon's pleasure. It's one of *the* masterworks of the Stones when they *had* stones – and of the sixties. How can a twerp like Lady Gaga sing that song with any integrity?

Well, you can say, *the Stones were on stage with her— and it's their song. Aren't you just being an old fart, GHLIII?* Grouse grouse grumble ... probably so. Besides, Rosy says Lady Gaga has talent.

L-L-L-LETTERCOL

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I had known Peggie Rae Sapienza for a long time and will miss her. I only met Pat Adkins once, but he impressed me as a good person.

Re “Puppygate”: You are correct to point out that bloc voting is nothing new. Nor is politics new to fandom. Remember the first Worldcon when Sam Moscowitz locked out Donald Wollheim and Fred Pohl? Fandom not only survived, but flourished.

I have downloaded the Hugo Award packet to my Nook and plan read as many of the nominees as I can before the voting deadline and then vote on their merits. Next year, I'll try to have read more stories and novel that are Hugo-eligible before the nomination deadline. What I find appalling are people who nominate without having read, seen, or heard what they are nominating, but instead blindly follow a voting slate or even a recommendation list. I have no problem with those who nominate their five favorite works in any category that they have actually read in the previous year.

I thought *The Age of Adaline* was entertaining, but nothing special. *Ex Machina* was much more interesting, but the premise has been done better by other movies, such as *Blade Runner, 2001*, and *Her*. *Tomorrowland* was also interesting, but not really successful in restoring optimism to media SF.

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Yes, this year has been a bad one in terms of losing key members of the science fiction community, both professionally and fannishly. I never personally knew Pat Adkins, but had heard of the gentleman, so any time I hear of a fan's passing I get a bit sad that the fan community just grew a bit smaller. My condolences on his loss, and especially my deepest condolences on the passing of Rosie's mother. I am so sorry to hear of this. From all that I've heard, it sounds like Nita Green was a wonderful person. All of my thoughts are with Rosie and her family on Nita's death.

You know already how I felt about Peggy Rae Pavlat from the pages of *Askance* #33, which you reviewed in the latest *Zine Dump* (#34). By now you should have received the latest *Askew* (#12), and by mid-July the 34th *Askance* should be hitting the stands and may or may not include some thoughts about Leonard Nimoy and Grace Lee Whitney. And a couple weeks ago it was reported that Nichelle Nichols suffered a mild stroke. So I may write something about the Star Trek family for *Askance* or *Askew*. I need to think about this some more.

Like you and many other fans, the “depthless lunacy of the Republican party” (as you so perfectly described it) leaves me wondering why they're acting this way. It really doesn't make sense to those of us who like to think for ourselves and value rational debate and the free exchange of ideas, but nobody has accused the GOP in recent years of these qualities. I am sure there are some moderate conservatives who can't stand what has happened to their party, but whenever they speak their voices are constantly being shouted down by the loudmouths on the fringe. I don't expect a Republican to be elected President next year, but you never can tell: the GOP is very good at consolidating itself to push forward their standard bearer because its members know how to Work Together. That is something the Democrats need to learn.

In the meantime, I will continue to support Bernie Sanders, though it is doubtful that he, or any other challenger, can derail the Clinton Machine. We shall see what November 2016 will bring.

In the next issue of *Askance* I have expanded thoughts on this year's Hugo Award foofaraw, but I do agree with your basic proposal, Guy: vote for the quality works on the ballot instead of voting straight No Award. That would validate the position of the Rabid/Sad Puppies. David Gerrold's comments on Facebook continue to be my guideline on this subject. No, we need to get off this subject of ranting about these loudmouths and just hunker down and do what needs to be done: vote intelligently for the quality works, then get working on redefining the eligibility criteria for the written word Hugo Awards, including the Fan categories. People are using the system to get what they want, not what they deserve. It is past time to Fix What Is Broken instead of pissing into the wind about it.

Speaking of things that need attention, The Fan Funds need our support. I have long believed and supported DUFF and TAFF, even GUFF. They are very worthy and fine programs. Somewhere in the back of my mind lurk niggling thoughts of DUFF in 2018, or 2020. They bother me. But I dunno. I am not sure if this is a viable proposition. Then again... Waffling is distracting. Ooh! Waffles...

Not just the fan funds, but always World SF Conventions are worthy of our involvement. I sure wish I could be at Sasquan, but finances say no. Next year in Kansas City is a definite. In a couple weeks Valerie and I will be converting our supporting memberships to full attending. Valerie and I shall see you and Rosie then.

*Rosy and I met at the first MidAmeriCon in 1976, so we're adamant about getting to MAC II.
I've also all but pledged attendance to Ken Keller.*

Rodney Leighton is an interesting case study, as his letter reveals. He has this love/hate thing going on with fandom and fanzines, bashing and enjoying them often in the same sentence. Very confusing. Even so, I will keep sending him fanzines: he does send his in return, which is how the fannish conversation works, so there is hope for him, I believe.

The last page of your zine talks about recent movies, which is a topic Valerie and I would love to be more informed of, but we just don't go to movies these days. It's not really because we can't afford it; we simply can't stand the rudeness of modern movie theater audiences. It is hard to enjoy a movie when you're surrounded by people chatting or texting on their cellphones, kneeling the back of your chair, shushing their children, and other such nonsense. No fun at all.

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Finally, summer is here, outdoor heat, thunderstorms, and open patios and an ice cream cone late at night. That's summer for me, but that also means a little more time for writing, especially to get things caught up with, like fanzines. I have *Spartacus 8* here, and give it a whirl I shall.

I was shocked to see that Peggy Rae has passed away, too. I shake my head, and think that we are definitely at that age where it will happen. Bit by bit, the assemblage of people around us goes away. This very morning, Sir Christopher Lee was reported as having died at the age of 93, and Ron Moody, everyone's favorite Fagin from the late 60s, died at age 91.

I agree with you about the unimaginable idiocy of the Republican Party, but our own ruling Conservative Party is coming through with its own unimaginable legislation of monitoring the public. Bill C-51 basically allows immigrants to be sent packing for the least infractions, setting up two levels of citizenship. We could all use a lot less right-wing. As for the Hugos...we cannot go to Sasquan, and doubt we will ever get to another Worldcon, so I have no vote, and that's fine. With the mess the Puppies have left behind, I am glad not to be involved. Other awards have taken our attention... both Yvonne and I are nominees, in different fan categories, for this year's Aurora Awards. We're hoping for these ones.

Rodney Leighton's letter does show that while nearly all of us are online and can contact the rest of the fanzine world electronically with instant LOCs and e-zines, there are still a few who can't or won't. I am glad eFanzines does serve as a distribution point for zines, there's where I get a lot of downloaded

zines. Some zines I get in my e-mail (a link to Tom Sadler's *The Reluctant Famulus* arrived just today), but eFanzines gives me my regular required dose of fannish communications every few days. I can barely keep up.

The death penalty...I can't help but feel that taking away a life as a punishment punishes the surviving family more. With your death, there is nothing to learn. A life sentence might even be more cruel than a death sentence, for the person punished is still around to absorb the lessons of his deeds.

I think I have done what I can for the time being. Off it goes. Thank you for this one, and I hope there's another soon. I pray the mess the Puppies left on the floor can be cleaned up soon.

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Thanks for *Spartacus*. I am sorry that so many of your friends and family have died recently, and I hope your family problems have been solved in time for Sasquan.

As for the Puppies. First off, I have been a right-wing libertarian in fandom for 40 years. The Puppies in either form do not represent me, and I wish you wouldn't say that "conservatives" were responsible for their launch. As far as I can tell, there are about six writers involved in their launch. No election was held to see if these people represent me. I don't feel particularly threatened by a liberal "culture war" against conservatives in SF.

The problem with the Puppies' efforts is that they will not help them in the long run. Publishers won't feel particularly compelled to reach out to authors involved in launching a culture war. I don't feel particularly eager to read John Wright or Larry Correia because of their continuing culture war activities. And Theodore Beale seems to be a pity vampire who wants everyone in fandom to feel sorry for him.

But the reason why I am neutral in the Puppy Wars and not anti-puppy is that there ARE "social justice warriors" out there—such as Catherynne Valente, K. Tempest Bradford, and Kameron Hurley—who see me as part of the White Male Patriarchy, even though I make my living sitting at home, editing, writing, and not oppressing anyone. There were reams of people on the left mindlessly blasting, say, Barry Malzberg and Mike Resnick for Crimes Against Women. Their activities made the Puppies possible. The right-wing culture warriors are a direct consequence of the left-wing culture warriors. The two groups deserve each other.

What we need is for everyone in fandom who get up every morning and spends their day mindlessly battling The People Who Are Wrong on the Internet. To find other people to scream at. They persuade no one.

Finally, John Scalzi seems to me to be a predictable liberal who has sharp and effective things to say about being a professional writer. If Tor gave Scalzi \$3.6 million for 10 books, they did it because his books sell. I don't care much for Scalzi's politics, but he is making a good living writing books people enjoy, and if Tor wants to give him a seven-figure contract, more power to him.

DALE SPEIRS

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I am not likely to be nominated for a Hugo, much less win one, so I pay little attention to the awards. It is impossible not to hear about the Sad Puppies controversy though, even if one does not dwell on all the is-not-is-too blogs. Canada had a similar problem with the Aurora Awards when a Star Trek clubzine began winning Best Fanzine because the members bloc-voted. I do think that Gamergate and the Sad Puppies would be a great name for a rock band.

By the way, let me congratulate you on correctly spelling the word as "bloc", not "block" as most bloggers seem to be doing. It is one of my many lost causes, another being trying to convince people that it is "alternative history", not "alternate history".

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I suppose if there's a bright side to my largely isolated position in the fandom-I-knew, it's that I don't feel most of the losses very keenly. I either never knew the people at all, or had only met them a handful of times, thirty years before, and don't have much feeling about it. Now and then, though, the dart hits home ... as it did when Dave Locke died, and, more recently, Stu Shiffman. Inevitably, the growing list of the deceased is going to grow ever longer, even for relative shut-ins like me. And inevitably, I expect to be a couple of lines in File 770 myself someday ... assuming Mike is still around to update it.

With those cheery thoughts, we pass to a subject I find far more depressing – Sad Puppies. I ran out of things to say on the subject of block voting, right wing culture wars, SF snobbery, space opera and Hugo reforms after about three days. I mean, how much *was* there to say, really? Yet people are still yammering about Sad Puppies, three weeks or more later. Evidently, everyone wants to speak his or her piece even though that may have nothing new to add to the controversy. This has clearly been far and away the most popular excuse for fans to argue since Richard Bergeron and Topic A, in the early 1980s.

Having entered one of my long-term phases, in which my irritation with fandom has grown greater than the satisfaction fandom gives me, I have for the most part withheld comment on the Sad Puppy Papers. My instinct is just to say, "Fuck it. Let them have it. What does the bloody Hugo mean anyway? All the Sad Puppies do is point the way to the future of all fannish institutions. We wanted everyone to accept SF. Now they have and SF is irredeemably mainstream. Are we all happy, now? But me; I wash my hands of it." I have no doubt how well *that* would go over with most readers...

I know Lloyd nurses a grudge over the poor reception he feels he received as a *Trek* fan back in the 1970s. My perspective, though, was from the other end – the one who was supposedly yanking the welcome mat out from under the arriving flood of Trekkies. My memory of the time that was that *Star Trek* was a controversy *within* fanzine fandom. Myself, I watched the show religiously in first run. I only missed a single episode – I think it was "Plato's Children," which took a number of years to see in re-run. I was typical enough in that many other fans also like the show. But I also knew some who were indifferent toward *Star Trek*. Yes, it was science fiction to them, but it was written word that they liked. *Trek* was all right, but it was not especially different from *Mission Impossible* or *Man From U.N.C.L.E.* To them, it had the same lack of subtlety, sketchy characterization, and contrived endings of any TV show. Then there were the outright deniers, who insisted *Star Trek* was nothing but warmed over space opera, using SF gimmicks to pursue an entirely non-SF purpose. To them, *Trek* was really *bad* SF.

The arguments over those positions went on for years, until *Star Trek: the Motionless Picture* made its debut, which re-ignited the issue. Oddly, I think most of SF fandom has grown to accept SF as legitimate SF, adapted to a different media, and shaped by commercial considerations, to be sure, but possessed of considerable merits of its own.

The real problem with Trekkies in the 1970s was their numbers ... and their commitment. What sort of an SF club would you have if 50% or more of the members only wanted to talk about Kirk, Spock and McCoy, the stipulations in the Organian treaty, or under exactly which circumstances you could use the transporters while in warp? As a TV program, *Star Trek* was easily able to reach out to ten times the number of viewers as would ever read an SF novel. It was feared that SF fandom would cease to exist as its own interest group if the influx of *Trek* fans was too great. *They* would absorb *us* into *their* fandom.

As it happened, Trekkies learned to run their own cons and formed their own fandom ... so there was never any real problem with their numbers. But that was the fear of the time. It was never really about whether people should like *Star Trek* or not.

Again, I want to go on record as one who liked it, bought the James Blish adaptations, built the AMT model of the Enterprise and Klingon Warbird. But the horizons of SF fandom were much wider, and a narrow focus on one TV program was inappropriate. It was the same concern behind the tepid welcome offered by SF fans to fans of Dr. Who, horror films, comics and other genres.

As with zombies, the age of the omni-fan had yet to dawn.

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Thanks for sending *Spartacus 8*. I read a lot of fanzines via downloads from efanzines.com these days but it's very nice indeed to have a *real* fanzine arrive in my mailbox now and then. Holding a paper fanzine in my hands as I read simply feels like a better fanzine-reading experience to me. But *Spartacus 8* would have made me click "print" even if I had only seen it on-line. It's a very solid zine with great depth and variety; and its contents have moved me to comment thus...

I have stopped reading most of the discussions pertaining to the 2015 Hugo Awards and their hijacking by puppy-jihadis who lacked the courtesy to have presented their grievances with even the pretense of some measure of respect for the rest of us, and worse, who have thus far lacked any trace of wit in their various rantings. It was bad enough that they've peed all over the Hugos but why do they all have to be so relentlessly boring? Although I suppose that if they - as a group - had been able to rise above the level of boring then they might have been able to write books and stories entertaining enough to have possibly contended for the Hugo Awards honestly instead of having to cravenly steal the nominations that rightfully belonged to better writers. It must eat at the very souls of some of those nominees to know that even if they do find those awards placed in their hands at Sasquan, all they'll walk off the stage with is a rocket. They'll never be able to steal the respect that should have gone with that rocket.

That being said I enjoyed your statement in *Spartacus 8* about the situation and I cannot disagree with any of it, although I'd have to say that you've accorded the "Puppies" more civility and fairness than they seem able to recognize or appreciate. But then it's rarely a bad thing to take the higher road. Still, I must declare that I never thought that I'd ever see the day when a small group of self-professed racists, homophobes, and out and out loons would so dominate the fannish discussion. As Laney would have certainly said, "What unbelievable fuggheads!"

You are probably quite right that Teddy Beale's sins are no fault of the Helsinki in '17 Worldcon bid, but I strongly suspect that the fannish backlash against that whack-a-mole Beale will sink any chance that Helsinki might have had for advancing their bid simply because too many fans will fail to make the distinction between the Finnish Castalia House and the Helsinki bid. I feel certain that Teddy will be the nail that seals the Helsinki coffin, which is manifestly unfair to those who worked so hard to build that Helsinki bid. But then, Teddy Beale has been manifestly unfair to just about everyone in the SF world who doesn't think just like Teddy Beale.

I like your Hugo recommendations and can endorse most of them. I can't really endorse the *Flash* pilot since I haven't seen it, but *Interstellar* was a stunning film and an extraordinary science fiction story. I drove from Abingdon to Knoxville one evening just so that I could see the film in 70 mm IMAX, and it was well worth the time and expense. And TONI WEISSKOPF is absolutely the best choice for Best Editor. I fear that because Baen Books publishes writers like Larry Correia and others favored by the puppies that Toni might get caught in an anti-puppy voting backlash. This would be just as unfair and unjust as any other aspect of this year's Hugo madness for Toni Weisskopf has been one of the best friends that science fiction readers have ever had in the entire publishing industry since Hugo Gernsback first got off the boat. Her work as an editor and publisher have been monumental in making SF in the 21st Century what it's become, and I state without reservation that Toni Weisskopf has well-earned the acclaim of winning a Hugo Award for her work. Likewise STEVE STILES is without question the artist to choose for Best Fan Artist. He embodies the best of the fan artist tradition and his work has adorned the field for decades. When I needed an artist to do a cover for the fanthology of my own work (a promotional project for my TAFF campaign last year assembled and published by Randy Byers and Claire Brialey). It was Steve Stiles I turned to and he provided a wonderful cover that probably did more towards winning TAFF for me than I did on my own. Steve Stiles and Toni Weisskopf, are the kind of Hugo nominees who make me proud of the Hugos in this time when others are working so hard to tear those awards down.

I am glad that Julian Warner and Justin Ackroyd stepped forward to take over the running of DUFF when it seemed to be floundering. I am not, however, at all satisfied that suspending the DUFF election for 2015 was the right thing to do. I myself - as the TAFF delegate at Loncon 3 - had helped identify and promote two excellent fans who were not only well qualified stand for DUFF but who were actually excited about the prospect of running, and they were just the two I had located. There might well have been others who were ready to run, but as far as I know they never had the chance to make their feeling known. I inquired and was told that money was not the issue, but no one has been willing to explain to me or to fandom exactly what the problem actually was. And although Fandom owes a debt of gratitude to those who have stepped forward to rescue DUFF, I think that most of us can see the 800 pound gorilla who's been swept under the rug. Eventually, somebody's going come along and start asking what that gorilla's name is. What - I wonder - will they be told, and who is going to decide to tell it?

*I screwed up my reprint of Jeff Copeland's comment in **Spartacus** no. 5, and he has graciously permitted me to run the following correction.*

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Thanks for attempting to give Tim Bolgeo the opportunity to tell his side of being disinvited from being the guest of honor at Archon. However, two pages of all caps is impossible to read. Given your *precis* in introduction, Tim's being disinvited for unpopular political opinions is beyond the pale. If the committee didn't understand his opinions when they invited him, they weren't doing their job. If they buckled under to criticism after the fact, they weren't doing their job. That said, what we've got abroad is too much extreme sensitivity to anything *anyone* might find objectionable. Don't dare criticize Christians because Fox News will be all over your ass. Don't dare criticize Muslims because al Qaeda will send folks with AK-47s to shoot up your office. Don't point out that the third ranking Republican in the House speaks at Klan rallies or have your internet connection physically destroyed. My sense from the parts of Tim's article I was able to read are that he – like those Parisian gentlemen attacked this month – is politically incorrect for sport.

*Some comments from the Southern Fandom Press Alliance on **Spartacus** no. 7 ...*

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I'd say that even the original series of *Star Trek* had its infusion of humor if not as "prominent" as in some of the movies and certainly having a more comfortable and secure relationship to the show and the characters would make it easier to stick that tongue into the cheek a bit.

I won't disagree about the letter from the 47 senators (is that like Mitt's 49 %?) to Iran. Idiotic. Disrespectful. Nigh unto treasonous if you want to push a point. I still want to know what Fox, etc., would have said if the shoes and feet had been reversed – actually I don't since they did all that bitching about any complaints about GWB before turning around and tripling the volume and the width of it.

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Your pointy-eared second banana [*in my adolescent masterpiece, **The Hole in Space***] predated Spock if you thought of it in 1961. *Star Trek* started in 1966. So maybe it was the other way around and you inspired Gene Roddenberry to come up with Spock. You never can tell. It's possible.

*Since no one read **The Hole in Space** – I’m still embarrassed by that title – except my friend Steve Sullivan before I ran the first chapter through SFPA in the early seventies, I seriously doubt a lawsuit for plagiarism would get very far.*

Some actions have felicitous consequences unknown to ourselves. On the other hand, other actions, you can tell their consequences immediately, like campaigning for DUFF or TAFF. The rule you have to follow is campaign, but not too much or it’s considered vulgar. It’s a fine line, but you can tell when have stepped way the hell over it.

Others who grasp at fame and fortune are more deserving. Despite her appearance in *Alien 3*, I think Sigourney Weaver has deserved some sort of award. The last role I remember her in, *Avatar*, she did well. Of course, it wasn’t a star role.

Sigourney is still keeping characterization alive in American movies ... Some people still care about characterization. Some people care about merit as well. Others do not care a fig about merit. Like the 47 Republican senators who signed the letter against a deal with Iran. It has reverse merit, if anything they may yet have encouraged Iran to build an atomic bomb. Instead, they much preferred to pander to their constituents’ prejudices. A sizable portion of the country believes that any treaty with the enemy is selling the country down the river, and most of them are Republicans.

Now on to your letters section, and Lloyd Penney, where he discusses the merits of the cartoon of Mohammed in *Charlie*. He is correct. The whole idea is to have the right to make a fool of yourself, and not get shot at. In the US and Canada, we wince at ridiculing religion, but death as a punishment is not out of the question.

On the other hand, I agree with Eric Mayer that all Arabs are not terrorists. While Islam is going through its period of religious fanaticism, like Christianity did, terrorism violates the law in practically all Arab states, except maybe ISIS.

It being summer, the era of the big-ticket large-FX science fiction extravaganza is upon the movie theatres, and since I haven’t the stomach to remember, let alone discuss that insipid mess *Tomorrowland*, I’ll mention *Jurassic World* and *Terminator: Genesis*. Each was diverting, worth the sacrifice of an afternoon, but the *Terminator* film was *really* diverting, a major success. Arnold was a hoot, the other actors worthy, the FX unique – I’d never seen some of those tricks before – and the time-travel story delightfully incomprehensible. Great stuff.

The most successful SF movie of 2015, emotionally and viscerally, remains *Mad Max: Fury Road*, but the most ambitious is still *Ex Machina*. Successfully or not, the film really did try to push the genre’s envelope in intellectual resonance and depth. I talked about its failings in that regard last time, but the flick is sticking with me, so something about it must have clicked.

There’s a lot of scope, but not much depth, to *Seveneves*, the huge but not hugely successful Neal Stephenson novel I read since last *Spartacus*. The 900-page novel is in two parts, the first too long by half, the second equivalently too short and underdeveloped. It’s a strange dichotomy: the first section – 2/3 of the book – is like a Hal Clement problem-solving story, and the second part resembles little as much as a Larry Niven “giant prop” construct, and as such is both promising and fascinating, but is woefully underdeveloped and exploited. Stephenson’s storytelling isn’t at fault: *Seveneves* is an accessible and readable book, probably the easiest scan of any of his novels to date. But where do those 900 pages of accessible prose take us? Not much of anywhere.

One overwhelming annoyance: the MacGuffin disaster propelling the tale is the destruction of the Moon, a catastrophe for which we’re never given adequate explanation. I kept waiting for someone to tell me what the Hell really happened. No one does. Maybe the book is part one of a series. Maybe Stephenson just forgot to edit.

The Water Knife on the other hand, is brisk, brutal, and direct, Paolo Bacigalupi's first adult novel since his marvelous awards magnet, *The Windup Girl*. It's a near-future thriller about an American southwest crippled by an environmental catastrophe – decades of severe drought – and a political nightmare to go with it. Water is the prize in a veritable civil war among the states fed and sustained by the Colorado River; the “Water Knife” of the title is a thug employed by one of the warring states. The book is too much of a thriller to qualify as Hugo material, I'd guess, but it's still the best *new* SF I've read this year.

Well, there it is at last, Pluto, god of the underworld, gateway to the void. If planets were conscious, what would Pluto, and its companion Charon, think of New Horizons, the tiny beeping visitor sweeping past on July 14, Probably something like, *Well, that was different ...*

The fundamental mystery of Pluto is popped – we've seen it. But the questions about it are wildly multiplied. The astronomy guys are going to be going ape about this for decades.

The coolest aspect of this mission is the least scientific. Clyde Tombaugh discovered “Planet X”, as it was first called, through a blink test in 1930. The 24-year-old caused quite the excitement; I read the story in *Time*. (Our friend and fellow fanziner Steven H Silver has often published a photo of his adolescent self with Tombaugh.) As you've heard, some of Tombaugh's ashes rode New Horizons on its decade-long journey. There's an inscription on the canister which contains them:

"Interned herein are remains of American Clyde W. Tombaugh, discoverer of Pluto and the solar system's 'third zone.' Adelle and Muron's boy, Patricia's husband, Annette and Alden's father, astronomer, teacher, punster, and friend: Clyde Tombaugh (1906-1997)"

Having passed the planet the man discovered, they now head out, eventually to become the first human remains to leave the solar system and invade the cosmos. Someday, this being the universe of science fiction and SF being the stuff our dreams are made of, living people will follow.

