

SPARTACUS

no. 5

Opinions & blather by
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Illo: detail from *Spartacus*,
sculpture by Denis Foyatier.



1

‘The drunkards, pilferers of public funds,
All the dishonest crowd I had driven away,
When my luck changed and they dared meet my face,
Crawled from obscurity, and set upon me
Those I had served and some that I had fed;
Yet never have I, now nor any time,
Complained of the people.’

From “The People”, W.B. Yeats

I keep mentally reciting Yeats’ thrilling poem “The People” and telling myself to listen to **Maud Gonne**: “Never have I complained of the people.” I wish that I could say the same.

If people vote according to fury over matters that have no basis, because of terror that has no reason, because of bigotry they display but never admit, then they will get exactly the skittish and corrupt government they deserve. Unfortunately, those of us in good faith will be stuck with the same government. At such times, I do admit, I doubt the faith of our fathers about our worthiness to govern ourselves.

I hate doubting democracy. Democratic faith is at the core of the American spirit and it has sustained us throughout times that have destroyed less committed countries. But dumb, damn it, is dumb. Willful ignorance is no way to conduct public responsibility. A country that grips its ignorance and its bigotry

and makes from them a policy of governing is not a country ready to serve its citizens or that is well-served by its citizens. Republican voters aligned themselves with the brutes who stoned children in Murrieta, fell into panic at the thought of Ebola, embraced willful ignorance. It's impossible to greet the judgment of such a people with anything but disgust.

But there are other voices one *can* respect. Republican pollster Frank Luntz' 11-5-14 *New York Times* editorial gives voters more credit than I do. He maintains that the election was a reaction to a squabbling, indifferent Congress more than a repudiation of a brilliant, distant President – that the electorate wants a government that works and gets things done, and is not a simple vehicle for a winger agenda. Like I say, I think he gives the electorate too much credit – I doubt those people know what they want – but one can hope, anyway, that he's right.

So what's the significance of this election? Two more years of gridlock. No judicial appointments approved. A few meaningless gestures from Republican legislators – like repeal of Obamacare – to impress Fox News and its stupefied viewers. A lot of noise when Obama vetoes the Congress' crazier actions. A slight possibility of an impeachment charade, but that backfired big time when these same creeps tried it before. More possibly, in my view, a resurgence in the moderate feather of the Republican party (it's too insignificant to call it a "wing") as jockeying for 2016 begins in earnest, and the focus shifts from arousing the honkies to trying to attract a majority. For the Democrats, deep work as the party seeks its post-Obama identity and hopefully finds a pair of testicles – uhh, metaphorically speaking (I *do* support Hillary). The left was disgraceful in this past election. They ran away from their accomplishments. They didn't fight – they acquiesced, apologized, refused to argue their unarguable success – and it cost them. Cue the man from Ireland again:

**The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.**

From "The Second Coming", W.B. Yeats

That pretty much sums it up.

2

If the recent election had any positive effect, it was that it banished Ebola from the nation's headlines – but methinks a redheaded nurse from Maine had done that already. **Kaci Hickox's** stand against ignorance and fear establishes her as the first of several heroines celebrated in this *Spartacus*. It just might be that in refusing to submit to draconian, unconstitutional and irrational efforts to lock her away, she's restored sanity to the Ebola issue. Certainly she's struck a blow for sense.

What happened, as everyone knows, is that Hickox came home to America from Sierra Leone, where she'd been treating Ebola patients. She wasn't ill when she came home, which means, according to every medical expert alive or dead or yet to be born, that she wasn't contagious, and indeed, never tested positive for Ebola. Nevertheless New Jersey, which regards Bill of Rights as a pretty posture, threw her into quarantine when she returned to US soil – an act based entirely on fears of contagion unconnected with medical knowledge. She sued her way out and went home to live her life as she saw fit.

The crowd went crazy, and it was predictable. The American people have met Africa's Ebola epidemic with panic, willful ignorance, and fear. The airline stewardess who called in a Hazmat team when a passenger joked about having Ebola (after sneezing) was typical. I've heard the idiocy myself. The other day I had brunch at a West Palm Beach diner. A blowhard a few stools down declaimed that the disease was now known to be airborne and he would soon be relying on the Second Amendment to defend his home against Ebola patients: the Zombie Apocalypse. I could but grimace over my omelette: there were

more people stuffing their chops at that counter than there have been active Ebola cases in the United States, and the only disease being airborne around there was his brainlessness.

The plain facts are these: Ebola is an all but negligible problem in the USA. It is a very difficult disease to catch. You must have contact with the bodily effluvia of a person who is not only infected, but sick and contagious. It's not carried by illegal immigrants. With but one exception, patients receiving treatment for the disease in American hospitals have recovered. Quarantining symptom-free doctors and nurses entering the US is a draconian foolishness; it will chill with the terror and hatred of a terror- and hate-filled populace anyone who wants to visit Africa and help those who are truly suffering.

Unless, like Kaci Hickox, they just won't put up with it.

The law – thank God and James Madison – came down on her side. The court found that the state had no excuse to forbid her a citizen's freedom based solely on fear and draconian caution. (Small matter called the Fifth Amendment: "no person shall ... be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.") The judge did order her to get a twice-daily check-up and advised her to understand the terror, no matter how irrational it was, but she stayed free. This one small citizen refused to buckle to mass stupidity and she *stayed free*.

Hooray for Hickox. Hers is a voice of intelligence directed to a people who have disclaimed it.

3

Brittany Maynard made the cover of *People* in October by announcing that, dying of brain cancer, she had elected to end her life herself before the disease could claim it. She had moved to Oregon, where state laws permit such an action. On November 1st (the day on which this *Spartacus* received its press publication number and thereby became "official"), she took the prescribed phenobarbs.

Without disparaging Ms. Maynard, it seems to me that the courage in her story is not the courage to die – she saw death as preferable to the fate she foresaw – but the courage to advocate a startling and fearsome point of view. Ms. Maynard's wish was to avoid suffering. It takes more bravery, it seems to me, to face and endure suffering, to last that *one more day*. As Hamlet said, and Yossarian after him, Ripeness is all.

But I get where she was coming from. She believed that the only worthwhile life was a life with dignity, and she felt pain would strip that dignity away. She did not want suffering to overwhelm the care she was feeling from others, for her last feeling to be agony, to have the last memory her family had of her to be one of a person in pain. Ripeness *is* all, but dignity is an essential part of that, and choice is an essential element of dignity. The whole point of American philosophy is to trust our fellow citizens not to mess up the world with their private decisions. Surely this is the most private decision a person can make.

I'd wish Ms. Maynard well, but she is beyond such sentiments. All we can do now is wish her family pride and peace of mind. If that includes pride in their daughter/sister/wife for claiming ultimate rights to her own life, then I am not one to deny it. I do admit, I would not have it so.

4

I am thoroughly confused – and just as thoroughly revolted – by the obscenities and threats being leveled against **Brianna Wu** and her family in the gamer fandom controversy identified, for brevity's sake, as *Gamergate*.

Brianna, partner and frau to the delightful and brilliant artist Frank Wu, is very active in gamer fandom and gamer journalism. She has addressed the issue of misogynistic violence in the gaming world and been excoriated for it by a movement within that community known as Gamergate. In recent weeks she's been hit with twitter-borne harassment from an anonymous cretin who identifies himself as part of that movement. I have no idea what Brianna said to p.o. this troll, but he waxed psychopathic, publishing (under the *nom-de-twitter* "Death to Brianna") insults replete with violent threats and sexist obscenities. Brianna and her family felt it necessary to notify authorities and leave their home, as the asshole posted their address in the midst of his diatribe and promised to come calling.

These guys didn't stop with Wu. Anita Sarkeesian, slated to speak at Utah State University, was forced to cancel an appearance by *death threats*. A well-known actress, Patricia Day, had personal info disseminated over the internet after simply expressing concern about the incident ... an act of outright terrorism.

Others connected to the Gamergate movement have denounced the threats, but no less a personality than John Scalzi has advised all fans of good will to sever themselves from it completely. He is obviously right. The dweeb at issue in Brianna's case has poisoned that well irreparably. He is obviously intelligent – there's none of the moronic misspelling and internet shorthand we're used to seeing on line, and seems to exercise a good deal of control over his expression. But the violence and extremity of his comments mark him as borderline psychopathic. The Wu's were right to take his savagery seriously.

Apparently the FBI has become involved, which is a comfort, and not just because I'm an aficionado of *Criminal Minds*. The Wu "unsub" left signatures all over his postings, so will not remain an unknown subject for long. The po-pos will find him and as threats are assault, and assault is criminal, on line or in person, the law will silence him. I wish I could offer Frank and Brianna more support than that confidence.

I refer all to *The Drink Tank* 390 on eFanzines.com, an excellent overview of #gamergate, Laura Resnick's Facebook posts on this nightmare and to Brianna's own comments on the blog, Polygon. I'll also point the interested at **Laura Mixon's** recent post on "Benjanun Sriduangkaew (who is also rage-blogger Requires Hate, who is also several other internet personalities including Winterfox, pyrofenec, acrackedmooon, and others) (oh yes, the list goes on)," the conclusion of which was that she "is VERY BAD NEWS." Apparently the correspondent in question specializes in abusive treatment of other writers.

I have no familiarity with Requires Hate, which sounds like adequate acquaintanceship to me. Once again, however, we're forced to acknowledge that in science fiction fandom *here there be trolls* – malcontents who take advantage of SFdom's openness to exercise and exorcise personal demons, and spew poison. We've all seen it, and we're far too tolerant of it. Every sane person who hears of the scurrilous attack on the Wu's will of course recoil from it in disgust. That disgust should be voiced whenever bullying and contempt coarsen our interplay, whenever the common line of civility and decency is crossed.

I must also note that **Nalini Haynes** has brought forth another issue of *Dark Matter Zine*. A short issue for her, thank God, at 12 pages, it's her unique, personal expression of joy in the genre, available as a PDF from her website. Considering the vitriol visited upon her when a senior fan-ed – a gentleman I very much admire under all other circumstances – attacked her for following her own instincts in earlier numbers, and the glee with which others of his generation swarmed in to castigate a "neo" for daring to annoy a "trufan," her dedication is heartening to see. Not a bad zine, either.

Show me someone, anyone, outside of ISIS who isn't delighted by **Malala Yousafzai's** Nobel Peace Prize. The young lady openly advocates education for Muslim girls like herself. Her impertinence earned her a bullet from an Islamist fanatic. She sports an insouciance that would cheer the darkest day and inspire the most dejected spirit – and put the lie to her enemies.

ISIS is remarkable for the sophistication and effectiveness of its appeals for converts. Its pitch to western misfits and loners offers them what they crave the most: a place to belong, comradeship, and noble work – it says. The maniacs even call out to the most disaffected creatures in our species: teenaged girls. Why any such would be attracted to an ideology that promotes their virtual enslavement is baffling to me, but apparently peer approval is more important to such people than their own self-respect. No wonder radical fundamentalist Islam despises Malala: her message represents hope and pride and promise for her sisterhood and is in every way, ISIS' antithesis.



Speaking of lunatics, observe the tragedy in Ottawa – where a disaffected psychopath killed an innocent soldier, assaulted the Canadian Parliament, and wounded Canada to its core. He could not alter that core. Rex Murphy's splendid televised editorial on the subject – and the editorial cartoon I reprint above – made it clear: Canada is a brave, united, calm, worthy society we Americans should admire, envy, and in many ways, emulate. Maniacs cannot destroy its heart, and that heart is true.

SPOILERS FOLLOW / *Gone Girl* is a *funny* film. By this I do not mean at all that David Fincher's latest incursion into the darkness of the soul is light-hearted; its tale of murder and media paints far too savage a portrait of human nature for that. But the flick is rife with satire, and that satire is deliciously *wicked*.

The film deals with the alleged murder of a missing young woman, and the media response to the crime forms its satirical base. A blistering Nancy Grace parody prejudges the case, stridently assuming the guilt of Affleck's character. Her passion is all commercial, of course – it flips on and off with the flow of mass appeal. When the public, not the evidence, feels Affleck guilty, he's a monster from Hell. When opinion changes – she follows suit, as do her loyal, witless viewers. It's telling social commentary.

But *Gone Girl* is less a diatribe against warped journalistic mores than it is a story, and were a man to have written it, instead of a woman, many would be screaming "Misogyny!" If *Gone Girl's* female protagonist is this society's true idea of a strong, independent woman, our species would be better off with parthenogenesis. The woman is a pure psychopath. *But*, in another sharp parody, her attempts to destroy Affleck only intensify his attraction and devotion. What does *that* tell us about confusion and contradiction in human sexual behavior? In seeking life partners, do we seek destruction? Is hatred attractive?

Not the director, David Fincher's best movie; he would have to paint the stars to better *Seven*. But *Gone Girl* is effective and pointed, and it does provoke humor, horror, and thought.

LETTERS FROM OUR BETTERS (or at least our “FRETTERS”)

*A bit of background for this first piece. “Uncle Timmy” Bolgeo is the lead player in SF fandom in Chattanooga, Tennessee. For many years he has hosted the very successful regional convention, LibertyCon, and also published a weekly fanzine of jokes, gossip and right-wing politics called **The Revenge of Hump Day**.*

Bolgeo is a recipient of Southern fandom’s Rebel Award for fannish achievement in the South.

*While I also am a Rebel Award winner, Tim’s politics and mine are – within the context of American opinion – almost diametrically opposed. But I’ve enjoyed the two Bolgeo-run cons I’ve attended and, though I read **The Revenge** every week, have only been seriously outraged once by something printed there, a diatribe mocking Katrina victims that Tim quoted. We get along well personally.*

Aside from the Rebel, Tim and I share the distinction of being asked to be Fan Guests of Honor at Archon, a vibrant cosplay- and media-oriented convention organized by St. Louis fandom. Rosy and I went in 2013, and greatly enjoyed ourselves. As you will see, Tim and his family didn’t get that chance.

*After the controversy Bolgeo describes erupted, I asked him for an account. Except for improving, where possible, his dreadful punctuation, and excluding Ann Robards’ essay on the “Rabbits” who practice “literary” science fiction (available on her Facebook page) I am printing Tim’s statement exactly as he posted it. (If anyone wonders, the capitalization of the entire second section is his.) I’ll add no further comment other than to express the strongest possible disagreement with Robards. No further argument is necessary beyond a mention of **The Left Hand of Darkness**. “Rabbits,” indeed!*

However, Bolgeo’s Archon experience is upsetting. Last issue I posed some questions; I repeat them now: Should a convention dis-invite a Guest based on such accusations as described here? What is proper behavior for the parties in such a situation?

What went on at Archon

Tim Bolgeo

Some person on the left who is not on the committee started a complete Facebook war on the Archon Facebook page and said that I was a racist because of what I printed in the *Revenge*. They cherry picked through 2 years’ worth of the *Revenge* to find any ethnic joke I made to prove their point. I think the final straw was when I was I printed the article that I thoroughly vetted about the retired Detroit Teacher’s point of view about what was going in the Detroit Schools.

On May 21st I wrote: “Today has been one very interesting day for me. I woke up only to find out that I am a Racist. Honest Injun. Evidently “Em Jay See Ess,” who I have never met, posted on the Archon Page that I was a Racist and has taken excerpts from different editions of the *Revenge* to prove his point. I freely admit that I am Politically Incorrect, Fat, Opinionated, Strong-Willed, etc. But Racist, Nah.

I have really tried my best to be color blind all my life. I think what torques me off the most is that *The Revenge of Hump Day* was called a Racist Rag by that dude. He even put one of the jokes on the page but left out the “Tacky Alert” point that I always put on something that is of a sensitive nature. Hell guys, I poke fun at Blacks, Whites, Indians, Baptists, Catholics, Italians, Irish, Jews, etc. I was raised with ethnic humor and I still enjoy it. He also cut and pasted all kinds of scandalous stuff from the *Revenge* only to leave out the headings on where it was or the complete article. I have always depended on the readership of the *Revenge* to keep me straight and balanced and I had thought that y’all had done a pretty good job of it. Yes, *The Revenge of Hump Day* is Politically Incorrect, but it is presented with tongue firmly planted in my cheek and hopefully will make people think about the ideas that are presented in it. A place where people can agree to disagree.

It’s awful easy to accuse somebody of Racism and no matter what I say will probably fall on deaf ears. But, I have been in Fandom for over 40 years and there are a lot of people who know me. I would

suggest that you ask one of them what I am truly like. You can judge a person by the people who they surround themselves with and I am proud of my friends.

After that, Archon DISINVITED ME AS THE FAN GUEST OF HONOR. I'm right up there with Elizabeth Moon now. But, All of the Friends I have made over 40 years got pissed and started firing back and the Fan/Pro wars kicked in. Guy, even after that I really didn't know what was going on in the overall fannish/pro community. Until Ann Robards found an article on this.

[Tim quotes Ann Robards' Facebook Page, SF AND THE DAMAGING EFFECTS OF LITERARY STATUS ENVY, posted on 2014-07-30]

ABOUT 3 MONTHS AGO I WAS ATTACKED IN PRINT FOR BEING A RACIST, HOMOPHOBIC, MISOGYNISTIC, ANTI-SCIENCE SCUM BAG BECAUSE OF SOME OF THE JOKES AND ARTICLES I HAD PRINTED OVER A TWO YEAR PERIOD IN THE REVENGE. THE DEMAND WAS FROM THESE PEOPLE THAT I BE DISINVITED AS BEING THE FAN GUEST FOR ARCHON. FOR A LONG TIME I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT I HAD DONE TO ANYONE TO BRING THIS LEVEL OF VITRIOL AGAINST ME. FOR I HAVE BEEN AN SF READER FOR OVER 60 YEARS AND HAVE WORKED ON CONVENTIONS FOR ALMOST 40 YEARS. TO MY KNOWLEDGE I HAVE NEVER BEEN GUILTY OF ANY OF THE THINGS THAT I WAS ACCUSED OF. I WAS TOTALLY CLUELESS ABOUT WHAT WAS GOING ON. A LARGE NUMBER OF MY FRIENDS RALLIED AROUND ME IN PRINT AND IN PERSONAL CONTACTS TO TELL EVERYONE THAT WOULD LISTEN THAT WAS A TOTAL LOAD OF CRAP ALL THE STUFF THEY WERE SAYING ABOUT ME. AND FOR THIS I WILL BE ETERNALLY GRATEFUL FOR THEIR LOVE AND CARE BECAUSE IT HELPED ME GET THROUGH THE WHOLE BAD TRIP.

I HAVE STAYED PRETTY MUCH NEUTRAL IN ALL OF THE THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN GOING ON IN THE SF&F LITERARY COMMUNITY BECAUSE I HAVE ALWAYS TRIED TO BE FRIENDS WITH EVERYONE. ALSO I HAVE NEVER HAD ANY THOUGHTS OF WRITING PROFESSIONALLY BECAUSE I DON'T HAVE THE PATIENCE AND BECAUSE I PERSONALLY DO NOT THINK THAT I COULD COME UP WITH A GREAT SPACE YARN THAT WOULD CAPTURE THE IMAGINATION OF THE READERS. BUT I HAVE ALWAYS APPRECIATED THE AUTHORS WHO CAN AND HAVE BEEN VERY FORTUNATE OVER THE YEARS TO HAVE MET AND BECOME FRIENDS WITH A GREAT NUMBER OF THEM. (CHAIRING CONVENTIONS FOR 30 YEARS HAS A TENDENCY TO BRING YOU INTO CONTACT WITH A LARGE NUMBER OF WRITERS, ARTISTS AND TRULY WONDERFUL PEOPLE.)

ANYWAY, I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT WAS TRULY GOING ON UNTIL ANN ROBARDS PUBLISHED THE LINK ON FACEBOOK. THE ARTICLE PRINTED ABOVE PRETTY MUCH EXPLAINS WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE LATEST LITERARY WARS AND I HAVE COME TO REALIZE THAT TO SOME PEOPLE I AM A "DANGER" THAT HAD TO BE DEALT WITH. MY REPUTATION HAD TO BE DESTROYED IN THE EYES OF THE 'RABBITS' BECAUSE I MIGHT HAVE BROUGHT OTHER OVER TO THE DARK SIDE OF "THINKING THOUGHTS" THAT WERE NOT ON THEIR APPROVED LIST. THAT HAVE BRANDED ME 'AN ENEMY OF THE STATE' WHO DOESN'T FIT IN THEIR WORLD. WELL, I GUESS I'M GUILTY AS CHARGED IN THEIR EYES. AT 65 I AM A LITTLE TOO OLD TO CHANGE. MY THOUGHTS WILL CONTINUE TO EVOLVE UNTIL THE DAY I DIE, BUT I REFUSE TO GIVE UP MY CORE PRINCIPLES JUST TO BE LIKED BY PEOPLE. IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME, THEN JUST RUN DOWN ANYBODY WHO TRULY KNOWS ME AND THEY WILL TELL YOU THIS IS SO. I WANT TO THANK ANN ROBARDS FOR PUBLISHING THE LINK. AND I WANT TO THANK ALL OF THE LADIES AND GENTLEMEN WHO BELONG TO THE 'EVIL LEAGUE OF EVIL' FOR ADOPTING ME AND MAKING ME ONE OF THEIR OWN. AND YES, I AM ASSOCIATED

WITH BAEN BOOKS ALSO. I BARTENDER FOR THEM AT WORLDCONS AND OTHER PARTIES AND I AM HAPPY TO BE OF SERVICE TO THE COMPANY WHO PRINTS THE BOOKS THAT I BUY SO MANY OF.

So Guy, you know as much as I do. I was very disappointed about being disinvited as FGOH for Archon. But I have broad shoulders and I have been supported by a great number of friends from all over the world. Those who know me know that the charges are BS. Those who don't and won't do any research on the subject will believe what they will believe and there is nothing I can do about it except keep on being the same person that I am until called to a higher place. I've got me family and friends who take good care of me. Thanks for asking.

*Here's a LOC to **Spartacus #1** that got lost in electronic transit. Thanks to David for re-sending it along.*

David E Romm
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Hi.

In just a few pages, you cover a lot of ground. If this were online, you'd have trolls up the wazoo. I'm just going to comment on two sections, one with a bit of personal history, one with a bit of a rant.

We didn't have gays when I was growing up. To be sure, they were around, but no one talked about it. The good part about this sort of under-the-table looking askance is that I never developed a feeling about homosexuality, one way or the other. My knowledge of them (no, not "them") was a comedic foils, a la Paul Lynde and Charles Nelson Reilly, or Jonathan Winters making humorous asides, "you're not one of them funny boys, are you?" As such, homosexuals were on a par with mothers-in-law, husbands, or maiden aunts. Not really in my world, but I knew they were out there.

In the 80s, after the Internet but before the World Wide Web, there were various things we would now call Social Networks, notably FidoNet. These were worldwide in scope, but the heaviest traffic and most frequent comments came from dial-up locals.

Visiting my aunt in San Francisco, I got into one conversation with a well-known FidoNet presence whose name I have merciful forgotten but who was well known in certain circles. He went on and on about two things: Being gay, and that Nazis were running the US government. Not "neo-Nazis," you understand, actual WWII *heiling* Nazis.

Well, everyone sympathized with the plight surrounding his sexual orientation. Being nice to him wasn't enough, and he would lash out at people who didn't agree with him strongly enough. While hardly endearing, most of us were supportive and cut him lots of slack.

But I don't suffer fools gladly, no matter how much I think they've been dumped on in their personal life. At one point I asked him point blank: "What proof do you have that Nazis are running the government?" He replied with a story about top US brass and top Nazi brass meeting in Switzerland to discuss the ramifications of Italy surrendering in WWII. I pointed out that even if true (which I think it is), that didn't prove that anyone was pulling the strings here in the US forty years later.

So he accused me of being anti-gay.

This kind of blew his whole credibility, as far as I was concerned, and colored how I felt about other gays coming out. I don't really care about your sexual orientation, one way or the other – it's not a minus, but it's not a plus. You don't get a pass on unrelated issues just because you're an oppressed minority.

I'm very pleased that all people who love one another can have the legal rights of a marriage contract. Most I know who are in same-sex marriages are wonderful people who are finally allowed to be in a recognized union. But if you say something stupid, I'm going to call you on it.

Meanwhile ... I came of age when being "politically correct" was a good thing. It was shorthand for "I didn't spend days in encounter groups learning to be sensitive, but I know what to say to be nice."

Sometimes it was said by those who had gone through the culture wars of those who hadn't, but always with a smile.

Then the right took it over. Too many conservatives are just nasty bullies who would rather sling playground insults than get anything accomplished. They tossed out "What Would Jesus Do?" while forgetting that the main teaching of Jesus is be nice to people. Jesus would be PC. He's that good.

I don't think Jesus would be PC. Remember the moneylenders in the temple. He'd tell us to love one another, love ourselves, forgive our enemies, feed the hungry, clothe the naked and generally do good works. And He'd burn our butts if we didn't.

Along the way, the ultra-right developed their own political correctness. Too many didn't go through the battles that generated the insults, but just kept slinging them as if the playground taunts WERE the political talking points. Too many can't pronounce all the syllables in the word "democratic." Too many think that Obamacare, requiring commercial insurance coverage, is "socialist." Too many are deniers, birthers, forced-birthers, creationists and can't tell the difference between an American and a Kenyan. Heck, some large percentage of people blame Obama for Katrina. These people are morons.

Anyone who has spent thousands of hours listening to the lies of Rush, Beck, Drudge, Fox "News" or any of the conservative news media and conservative blogosphere is simply never going to get it. They have been trained in the politically correct mindset as dictated by special interests, and they can't think anymore. George Orwell in *1984* and Samuel R. Delany in *Babel-17* both predicted that the language used would affect your politics ... and gullibility.

Maybe Ted Cruz reading *Green Eggs and Ham* on the Senate floor is above the reading level of the GOP and he was trying to be PC, pretending the playground taunts *were* the political debate. But I doubt it. He was just being a nasty, childish, bully. He's an example of the right wing PC mindset. What Sarah Palin called "playing to the base." In other words, Cruz was lying to gullible morons who *like* being lied to.

Less and less as I grow older, do I suffer fools gladly ...

And on Spartacus no. 4 ...

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Many thanks for *Spartacus* 4. Blather? Opinion? With luck, a combination of both, with help from your readers.

I don't remember much about the Mary Martin *Peter Pan*, not having seen it on television or in a theatre. I think this is a story we all know, thanks to Walt Disney, but one version I always did like was the Robin Williams version, *Hook*. *You're Peter? No.... You're Peter?*

What little I see of Republican lies to prop up their own opinions and prejudices continues to amaze me. This kind of attitude is starting to creep into Canadian politics and our own government, so I am hopeful that our next federal election in a year will fix things, and we will have a government we can be proud of again. You might have seen it...the war drums are beating yet again, and our conservative prime minister is sending in troops and CF-18s. Sigh. Can't wait for that election.

The SCOTUS is refusing to hear any more cases against same-sex marriage. It's coming, folks, and now, it's become unstoppable. Time to let everyone marry the person they love, no matter the gender. The government I don't trust has failed miserably when it comes to its Kyoto agreement, muzzled its scientists when they find scientific truths that contradict government policy, and is a total failure when it comes to ecological common sense. Traitors come in different stripes and colours. One man turned traitor, and give his secrets about rocketry to the enemy...of course, I am thinking of Wernher von Braun. One man's traitor is another's visionary.

Yvonne's mother Gabrielle is in an assisted-living facility, but there, most of the people there, even with Alzheimer's or dementia, are living fairly independent lives. Yvonne's sister is now having her

own health crisis, so it may fall upon Yvonne to become her mother's prime caregiver. I have promised I would help her all I can.

It may come through the extreme magnifying effect of the Internet, but I keep reading how police officers, through some version of carrying out their duties, are injuring, maiming and killing people through meetings on the street, or on the road. Serving and protecting seems to have been forgotten. Some of that power comes through the police being given old military equipment, and their using it. Police tanks? Both the police and the public are out of control.

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Based on *Spartacus* #4, it seems that you spend quite a bit of time thinking about things that disturb your digestion. From personal experience, I know doing that is a bad idea. Your digestion is central to your well-being. Whether you think about it or whether you don't, the world is likely to go to hell. However, if your digestion is sound, you will feel so much better about the whole thing.

There is a simple reason why police act like occupying armies. They are occupying armies. Joe Wambaugh described the situation in *The New Centurions*. At the street level, everybody hates everybody. In Los Angeles, there are 10,000 police officers and 100,000 gangbangers. The only strategy for survival is complete aggressiveness.

77th Street AM watch has a motto in Latin. It translates as "Let Them Hate So Long As They Fear." I was analytical officer at 77th in 1970 and 1971. At that time, there were about 400 homicides a year in Los Angeles. The three black divisions had about 100 each, and the other 14 divisions had about 100. Residents of South-Central had little to worry about from the police but a whole lot to worry about from each other.

"People of Color" is a phrase that is meant to imply that everybody is one big happy family except for folks from northwestern Europe. People of Color should naturally unite against nasty old white people. This outlook has the defect of being total nonsense. As I mentioned, everybody hates everybody. At one point, Harbor Division had a Samoan street gang at war with a Filipino street gang.

I was captain's adjutant at Southwest in 1984 and 1985. Every day, I made the morning report to the geographic bureau. If nothing was going on, I started reporting it as "All quiet on the southern front." They told me to stop doing it because it was insensitive. Southwest was mostly black but with the entire range of social classes. It was an area of intense class hatred. The rich blacks who lived up in the Dons had their own private police to prevent visits from the wrong sort of blacks. Down is the area known as The Jungle some of the residents set up road blocks to make mugging easier. The Black Muslims had neighborhoods they had declared as their safe zones. If you were a black guy and messed around in a Muslim safe zone, they would give you one warning. If they saw you again, they would kill you. As you can see, Southwest was a fun place.

I ran Spartacus no. 4 through the Southern Fandom Press Alliance, the great amateur press association, and here be some of the fine mailing comments it drew.

Sheila Strickland
6204 Molino Dr.
Baker LA 70714

Thanks for the nice words about Christians who to actually live like Christians rather than posturing as Christians.

You doubt that a six year old child can be transgender; do you prefer to believe that his parents are using him to prove a point? Do you think they are willing to subject their child to ridicule and possible abuse just to "affect some silly political posture"? I realize parents don't always have their child's best interest at heart and are willing to do some silly/cruel things, but I wouldn't assume this is the

case here. You think it could be child abuse? Maybe, but I'm hoping the child has gone through counseling about identity and this isn't just about the parents.

The Archon mess was a nasty one. I don't read Tim Bolgeo's e-zine, but I saw the "jokes" that were reprinted and found them appalling. I can't blame someone who read them and assumed that the person who printed them was a racist. I don't know the man well enough to say one way or another, but I keep hearing people who do know him what a good guy he is. Just as you are known by the company you keep, so you are known (by those who haven't met you) by what you print in your zine. That being said, I think Archon made a complete mess of it – either vet your guests and don't invite someone you think will reflect badly on your con or back up your choices when you are criticized.

Gary Brown
6306 Tall Cypress Circle
Greenacres FL 33463

Fred Phelps personified everything that is wrong with religion and the people who insist on sticking their beliefs in everyone else's lives.

After claiming that *Hobby Lobby* was a narrow interpretation of the law, the next day the Supreme Court said that it wasn't narrow, but involved all contraceptives. How's that for being two-faced liars?

I don't know, Guy, I rather liked jacobjii555's response. Agree with him or not, he certainly put the guy in his place. You gotta hand it to him.

I'll hand it to him, but I'll pee on it first.

David Schlosser
2041 N St.
Eureka CA 95501

Can you get a massage at SPA RTACUS? [*You wish!*]

I'd be curious about this assertion that "our crowd" has little regard for believers. I'd say that many fen are ... suspicious ... of Religion and intolerant of fundamentalists but I don't think that's the same thing (albeit a subset). I would, of course, point out the subset of believers who have little regard for science (if it doesn't fit in with their dogma). I do fully agree that A and B are non-interfering sets.

In an odd way ... Satan could be considered as fitting nicely as an overlay on Prometheus, bringing fire/knowledge to humans.

Another major law with [the Supreme Court's decision in] *Hobby Lobby* was pointed out to me recently – most employer health plans include an employee contribution. So why can't *that* money be the part that pays for contraceptives? No employer should have a say in what that gets used for.

Rich Dengrove
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Alexandria VA 22306

Christianity might preach love but anger is a constant in the human heart. In fact anger, and not doctrine, is what religion is often moved by. Anger that can reach a very high level. Not only what we can see in the world today, but it years past. It has hardly mattered whether a religion has preached love or not. I agree that science and religion are two different things. Science tells us what we observe. Religion tells us what's in our heart.

I'm afraid you're right. What's in the hearts of many is anger, frustration, and the emotion at the core of both, a feeling of rejection and of being despised.

I agree the ruling that Donald Sterling had to divest himself of the Los Angeles Clippers basketball team was the triumph of political correctness. I wouldn't doubt either that the motive was greed far more than Grundyism.

*I believe that crooks wanting to snare the team at a bargain rate **used** political correctness to force the sale, and I wouldn't be surprised to learn that Sterling's girlfriend was paid for her part in the whole sleazy, bogus charade.*

Unlike you, I have no doubt that Uncle Timmy Bolgeo has crossed several lines in *Hump Day* regarding race. But that shouldn't discount his yeoman work at cons, or that he can be a great guy. At least the latter was my experience with him.

There is tendency to find credible the invective of strangers, like jacobjii555, and that is why it is so horrifying. Of course, he doesn't know you from Adam. Even the comment about the Zapruder film says very little about you. This is not to say that such turds in a punchbowl should not be avoided like the plague.

8

I chanced upon this old piece from my SFPazine ...

My most rewarding movie experience of late came one Saturday morning when, insanely considering the hour, one of the movie channels decided to show *Psycho*. While Rosy slept on, I sank for the thousandth time into the tale of Norman Bates and Marion Crane, and if I do say so, came out with some new insight, mostly about Hitchcock's use of *set décor*. From first to last, he uses *stuff* to underscore and strengthen his story and theme of parental oppression and decided fate. And the central metaphor of his entire *oeuvre*: birds.

It's through *décor* that the director subliminally tells *Psycho*'s story. Sometimes these are things in the environment: the rakes in Sam Loomis' hardware store which, from the moment she appears, *threaten* Lila Crane and thereby engage our concern for her – the “NFB” license plate on the car Marion buys on the morning she meets the man with (we can assume) those initials – the many mirrors, signaling changes in the film's focus to whomever is reflected (Marion → Norman → Arbogast, very briefly → Lila). There is a delicate but definite emphasis on *shoes* that I haven't yet translated from cinematic language into English – are they (as I suspect) a metaphor for morality? What about *safes*? Norman's is open and empty – Sam's is closed. A meaningless detail or another clue as to who these people are? (John Gavin *was* hired because he shared Anthony Perkins' coloring. We are *supposed* to identify them ... in some fashion.)

There's the stuff with which Norman Bates *chooses* to surround himself – and his mother surrogate – revealed in the wonderful scenes in which Lila explores their rooms. The faded toys – the worn, bleak bunny – “Eroica” on the turntable, antique pornography on the shelves. In Mrs. Bates' room, the jewelry box fashioned to resemble folded hands, its antiqueness a sad and sinister and terrifying note, as much a clue to the character's deadness as the permanent indentation in her bed. We can't forget the stuffed birds staring at Norman and dominating the motel's parlor, created and placed there by Bates himself in helpless complicity with his own captivity.

Mostly, though, there are the pictures on the walls, a shorthand clue throughout *Psycho* of the lives that play out before them. Sam Loomis' bitter comment in the first scene – “Shall we turn mother's picture to the wall?” – is a precursor to a metaphor sustained throughout the film. The pictures on the walls frame the lives that play out before them. Sam Loomis himself is laboring to pay off his father's debts. In Marion's bedroom we see on her walls photos of her parents and of herself as a child.

My favorite scene in *Psycho* takes place in Marion's office, where her frustration and despair is imaged by the huge photograph of a desert posted behind her desk. Next to it is a pastoral scene of a forest's peace and greenery ... and a deep, peaceful lake. The rich customer – controlling his daughter by buying her a house – who stupidly drops \$40,000 in cash onto Marion's desk is posed before this scene, symbolizing the bounty in which this scumbag lives. Deciding to steal the money, Marion crosses from her desert into his paradise – not realizing that her act is taking her not to the bucolic forest but to the Bates Motel, and thence to the bottom of that lake. Marion's life, crime, and fate – all encapsulated in the stuff on the wall.

(Later, we see a similar lake painting in Sheriff Chambers' stairwell. How does that fit in? Methinks we're simply being reminded of the earlier scene and assured that yes, this is the place where Marion was fated to land ... *here* is the paradise she was fated for.)

In Norman's office, Bates moves a copy of *Susannah and the Elders* (a story of voyeurism and violation) off the wall to spy on Marion. Cabin 1, where Marion Crane will shortly shower and die, is decorated with pictures of birds, one of which Norman knocks off (hahaha) when he spots Marion's corpse. (Room 12, where Lila and Sam hole up prior to the denouement, is bedecked with hopeful flowers, as if reflecting the usual activity in that no-tell motel.) But up in the weird old 2/3-scale Bates mansion, Norman's creepy man cave is wall-decorated with definitely uncreepy *ships*! What th-? Symbolic of the freedom Norman has never known?

Clearly, my theory on décor as symbolism in *Psycho* needs a little work – but I think it *does* work. The central metaphors in Alfred Hitchcock's greatest film are people as birds, and birds as chaos, and therefore the ways in which people are trapped in chaos and, most tragically, cooperate in that entrapment. Décor is the feathering with which we cloak our nests, and they are clues to our nature.

There's so much else to enjoy in *Psycho*. Norman's gleaming eyes – a Hitchcock signature, reminiscent of Jimmy Stewart eying Kim Novak in *Vertigo*. The desperate way Marion clutches her purse with the stolen money to her bosom. And there is Norman's terrible epigram, spoken to the detective he will presently assassinate: "People just come and go, you know." And Norman resents it. What he does to try to hold onto people is the heart of *Psycho*'s tragedy. People are prisoners not only of the traps they stumble into – as with Marion's theft, her "private trap" – but of their own existences. You can't choose your parents, you can't choose your nature, you can't change your fate – that seems the bleak and horrific message of *Psycho*.

9

Women are at the center of most of the topics I've blathered about in this *Spartacus*. Following that topic, I'd like to refer you to the latest issue of *The Zine Dump*, #32, which begins with my thoughts on Kameron Hurley and her award-gobbling piece, "We Have Always Fought: Challenging the 'Women, Cattle and Slaves' Narrative". A bit surprising for me, who used to get into fights all the time about feminist touchiness and my use of the word "girl" and so forth, but ... I agreed with it. What I did not agree with – what impressed me as downright savage – was the proclamation of Rage she expressed through her Hugo acceptor.

Rage. Anger. Hatred. Hostility. Almost everything I've addressed in this *Spartacus* has screamed of these. Something wicked is going on. Everywhere we see ferocity. We see it in the election and in our little shadow world as well. The energy is up, and it is all red. Anger rules. Abuse is not only acceptable, it's accepted as the norm. We are not speaking. Instead we are plunging headlong towards a catharsis, and I'm not a little afraid.

...

**somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.**

I'm hoping the election will drain off some of that ugly energy, just as the failed (and ridiculous) impeachment of Bill Clinton did 20 years ago. But not I you kid, the previous time this country felt this furious, we saw Kent State. The time before, we saw Dallas.

**And what rough beast, its hour come round at last
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?**

From "The Second Coming", W.B. Yeats

So to the **bold** ladies cited – thanks for giving us courage and grace to cling to.

Let's lift our eyes a little. Again a referral, this time to A.O. Scott in *The New York Times*, 11-4-14 – on *Interstellar*. He pegs it. *Interstellar* is a stunning work of cinema, but not just because of its epic FX. Christopher Nolan's marvelous film – and it *is* a film, shot with an IMAX camera on celluloid – manages to add believable emotion to its spectacle. When it waxes into metaphysics, it successfully skirts the edge of pretense to bring home a point about the power of feeling.

It pushes the SF boundary as no movie has done well since *2001*. But where *2001* had as its subtext a message of hope through exploration – a rebirth of mankind through our expansion into the universe – *Interstellar* goes inward to find affirmation. Mankind, stranded on a dying, literally Blighted Earth, saves itself through *love*. It *works*.

How many times have filmmakers sought to emulate *2001*? The most obvious answer is *too* many. One example is *Solaris*, both the long, preternaturally dull Russian imitation (down to the sound of breaking crystal) – and its numbing American remake. Also, the first – and worst – *Star Trek* movie, with its muddled and pointless coda of mankind merging itself with machinery to achieve some sort of new beingness and so forth and that way and upsy-doodle ... How smart of the *Trek* franchise to abandon such pretentiousness and return to character-driven space opera. No, *Interstellar* is the first time since Kubrick's day that a moviemaker has used SF to take on a huge artistic theme and done so wisely, and effectively.

And yes, my adored Jessica Chastain is excellent, but I must admit that she is outshone by **Mackenzie Foy**, the *really* young actress who plays her character as a child. Her intelligence, which we see in the process of forming, her developing passion, her burgeoning wonder are miraculous to behold. The FX of *Interstellar* are epic, the plot intriguing, but she is all of these and more: the moral and emotional heart of a truly timeless story.

