



## SPARTACUS

NO.15 JUNE 2016

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GHLIII Press Publication #1197  
Illo by Neal Adams

The black girl behind the pizza counter said, “Him? Oh, I grew up with him! His daddy painted all the signs out there! I know all the Clays!”

That was agonizing. I was in Louisville, Kentucky, for DeepSouthCon 1975. I’d gone out for lunch with Joe Celko and a cute girl he had just met, a lady with a sharp chin and curly hair – Liz Schwarzin called herself Beth back then. Having just learned that I was at the same hotel as the undisputed Heavyweight Champion of the World, for some reason I was convinced I would miss him.

Walking back to the hotel, we ran into Penny Frierson, still a decade from Confederation, wheeling her youngest, Eric, in a stroller. While we said hello (and introduced Liz, who was at her first convention) I noticed a bus parked in front of the hotel, some guys standing on the sidewalk before it. One was a big,

tall dude in sleek black clothing, gesturing happily, unmistakable. I grabbed Eric. “C’mon,” I shouted, “let’s go see the Champ!” We ran down to meet Muhammad Ali.



What stands out in memory is Ali’s smile. When he saw Eric he beamed and goosed Eric’s baby belly. The champ’s face was open and happy, and the man was indeed, huge and graceful. The word I used for him was *sleek* – and indeed he was, a master of motion, powerful, elegant.

Inside the hotel, he walked past where Liz and I sat with Eric. Ali leapt down beside him and faked a fist. “Get that!” he said to me. “Get that!” And I got that. I heard later that a certain SF pro, who had had a stroke and wasn’t at his friendliest, moved Ali out of the way in an elevator by slapping his leg with his cane. Ali just goggled at him and laughed.

I wished Ali good luck in the fight he had coming up that fall. He scoffed, “Joe Frazier?” as if saying, he’s no big deal. An act: he loved and respected Frazier – and the two great rivals nearly beat each other to death in the Thrilla in Manila that October. In his autobiography, Ali wrote that at the end of that fight, both he and Joe were flat on their backs in the ring, busted to pieces, and he looked across the canvas and said, in his thoughts, *Joe, we don’t crawl to nobody*.

They certainly did not. Many sportswriters have compared prizefighters to Roman gladiators. If so, Ali stood apart, the boxer who spoke out and counseled peace in Vietnam and dignity for his people and the grace of power, and freedom. Many claim the name, but he deserved it: Spartacus.

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At the very moment the Orlando “Pulse” massacre was taking place, I was dreaming about Vietnam. As Charlie Sheen in *Platoon*, I fired my M1 at a swarm of VC who had invaded a “club” in the middle of the jungle. With whom or with what was I in psychic rapport at that moment? It’s frightening to consider.

But there are other matters to consider regarding the horror, matters of motivation. Everything about this killer, this Mateen, shouts “self-loathing homosexual.” Social hatred is terrible to deal with; hatred directed inward is far more difficult. But what was the source of his loathing? A lifelong American, did he absorb his homophobia from the skittish society around him? Or did he seize on ISIS’ murderous perversion of Islam to justify his personal act?

Something akin to defensive patriotism argues against the semi-automatic blame visited on us. I don’t think America taught that creep the hatred and the self-hatred which motivated him. America gave him stability and a future. If he had listened to the diverse voices that fill the American land, he would have heard a call to respect himself, forgive himself his frailties, and learn hope from the future in the person of his beautiful child. Instead, he seized on a savage and life-hating doctrine from afar that enabled his self-hatred and taught him to turn that hatred against the objects of a desire it had declared unholy.

What is heartening in the Pulse story is a goodness in the American spirit: genuine public sympathy for the victims. The general dismay for the slaughtered gays is very real – a response almost as heartfelt as that for the babies of Sandy Hook, where the horror remains just too great to bear. While I find the usual argument over gun rights beside the point, there is dignity in our anguish – a welcome sense that we really are better than this.

The massacre provoked a renewed call to curtail gun availability, and a Republican quash of the efforts, as usual, almost – pun a’comin’ – automatic. Democratic disgust with the NRA stooges in the GOP provoked a sit-in in the House of Representatives that was great fun to watch, but also rather goofy – I felt simultaneous affection for the demonstrating politicians – especially Carl Lewis – approval of their aim, and embarrassment. Elizabeth Warren belongs behind a podium, making spirited speeches, not parked on a carpet singing old civil rights anthems. But who am I to argue with such courageous people? Especially when, fundamentally, they’re right?

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The “Rape Culture” enjoyed a lot of exposure in the late spring.

I had a lot of questions about the Stanford swimmer case. All we knew at first was that a promising young athlete was caught doing *something* to a drunken girl behind a dumpster after a party, was pulled off the girl by a pair of passing Swedes, tried, convicted of sexual battery and given a sentence feminists thought too light. My questions were legal ones. What did the dude do? Did he have a previous relationship with the lady? Did she consent? Given that he was convicted in criminal court, what of? How did the judge decide on the sentence and did it fall within legal guidelines?

I didn’t get any answers until I read the victim’s letter, which told the story from her point of view. Even then I wondered if her account was entirely trustworthy, seeing that she was unconscious, but the fact of the conviction means that the prosecution’s version of events, i.e. *her* version of events, should be taken as true. Anyway, this letter painted a predictable if repulsive picture of an asshole who dragged a girl who drank too much at a party outside and began to maul her. The Swedish guys were heroes when they stopped him, the jury was right-minded when they convicted him.

But was the judge right when he *sentenced* him? The whole outcry resonated from that question. The kid drew a light sentence, mostly probated. The judge said that to go harder on him would have caused him undue hardship. A write-in movement to recall the jurist from the bench drew over a million signatures, although every professional attorney group in the relevant county – the D.A.’s office, the public defender’s – objected. As do I.

The basic reason is that apparently this judge ordered a pre-sentence investigation, or PSI, when the defendant was convicted. That meant that a probation officer was assigned to investigate the case, check out the kid’s record, and make a recommendation about sentencing to the court. The judge relied on the PSI, just as busy judges do dozens of times a day all across the country. And his sentence was within the law.

Recall of this judge would be extremely unwise. This judge is facing election. Vote him out if you wish. But in this society there must be no political punishment against a jurist for his imposition of a legal sentence. no matter how good it feels to exact vigilante justice on an obvious creep like this swimmer, and to subject a court to that sort of retribution would threaten the independence and the integrity of the law itself. The law never gives you everything you want, but it does bring finality. Mess with that principle at peril of arbitrary popular dictatorship – which is just what law is designed to prevent.

In another controversial case, the high school jocks who sodomized a younger team member deserve several descriptive adjectives, among them *entitled*, *sadistic*, and *latent*. Except for the last term, they remind me of the rich boys at the heart of the book *Our Guys*, which dealt with the assault by a clique of such scumbags on a retarded girl. Of course, those twerps used persuasion and lies to convince her to perform sex on herself, and the thugs in question actually raped their victim, showing themselves to be violent homosexual predators, but the entitlement and purposeful blindness to the humanity of their victim were the same.

The crime merits adult prosecution, the perps – if convicted – adult sentences, the school and its coaches enormous civil damages, the team suspension until the school proves that what can be done to correct the “culture” has been done.

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Some commentator – the word reminds me of a terrible joke my father told about “common ‘tators” – opined recently that we’d soon be entering a quiescent period of the presidential campaign. The public would be distracted by the Olympics and the delights of summertime and, except for the conventions, would have no time for the paranoid *Marat/Sade* orgy that is the American political theatre. Perhaps so, but not yet.

The last primaries of the season were nowhere near as dramatic as the ‘tators thought they’d be, perhaps because the late endorsements of certain superdelegates decided the thing days before. Hillary has the Democratic nomination sewn. She celebrated by eviscerating Donald Trump with a brilliant speech attacking his positions on foreign affairs – followed up by a very good one on the economy – which left the Donald curled and blackened in a greasy gutter. He didn’t help his case with his incessant, and profoundly contemptuous, prattle on the Mexican heritage of the judge in a lawsuit. I found it amusing that the poor man had been born in Indiana.

Hillary was joined in her excoriation of Trump by Obama, the great Elizabeth Warren and Dan Rather, invoking the spirit of his mentor Edward R. Murrow and his obliteration of Joseph McCarthy sixty years ago, and wonderfully, a host of establishment Republicans, many of whom are splitting off from the party over Trump’s sloppiness and vituperations. Clinton, it is said, has in mind an eminently ambitious campaign to rebuild the Democratic Party – and destroy the GOP – through a 50-state campaign.

She has every opportunity to affect the country itself, not just her party. Soon the SCOTUS will see its empty seat filled – hopefully by Merrick Garland – and more will follow. Clarence Thomas is said to be ready to resign. “The G” herself, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, is facing the only foe she cannot dash into pieces with a word: time. The Supremes made a monumentally important decision on abortion rights in June, and because of their abbreviated number, failed to decide a question of national law on immigration. Hillary’s appointments there could set America’s course for the rest of this century.

Or they could be Trump’s. The fact that Clinton is infinitely better qualified by character and experience to be President and leads in the polls doesn’t mean that she’ll win. No matter his clumsiness or missteps, Trump is the man on a white horse to a lot of people who consider themselves forgotten and disenfranchised and cheated. He speaks their simplicities and desperate thoughts – and they make him dangerous.

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Some movie notes ...

*The Witch* Damnedest movie I've seen in years – a pioneer family confronts Satan in all his seductive power. Beautiful production values, artful acting (that dialect must have been super-challenging, and all handle it well), great tension, terrific mood ... and a story as baffling as the dark side of Ceres.

*10 Cloverfield Lane* A unique and effective take on horror tropes, very well-acted (John Goodman is phenomenal), quite suspenseful, paced like an Olympic footrace, and surprising to the point of astonishing. We loved it: a worthy if very different successor to the original *Cloverfield*.

*The Lobster* It's the season for quirk in the movie theatres. Perhaps the oddest science fiction film I've seen since forever, a dystopian satire in which societal fascism takes as its object ... marriage. Literally, people who find themselves alone and cannot secure a mate are reduced to the inhuman – transformed into an animal if they cannot find a love-mate within a certain time. In this ghastly but drily hilarious world, Love is the oppressor. Reminiscent of the incredibly sad clone drama *Never Let Me Go*, it's well-acted, very funny, occasionally compelling and touching, and damned strange.

*Independence Day: Resurgence* Popcorn-munchin' alien-crunchin' nonsense and fun, foolish and sloppy as it is. Perfect way to waste a summer afternoon, and best in IMAX 3-D, of course. Warning: if you're looking for *Spotlight* or *Chinatown*, you'll hate it. Otherwise, check your brains at the door and cheer for Brent Spiner.

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## ***LET ME CALL YOU LETTERCOL, I'M IN LUV, WITH YOU ...***

***Dale Speirs***

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Normally I don't pay much attention to American elections, but this year the 2016 primaries were of interest to Calgarians. Ted Cruz was born here and spent the first four years of his life in Cowtown.

When I learned of that, I did some research in the Local History Room of the Calgary Public Library and easily found the address of the house where he grew up. The details are in my zine *Opuntia* #267, available at efanazines.com or fanac.org. It turned out that the house is on a major street and I've driven past it hundreds of times.

Cruz has since renounced his Canadian citizenship and was later knocked out of the race, so it looks like Chester Arthur will remain the only Canadian-born American President.

***John Purcell***

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I really enjoyed reading your recollection/reflection on that Leslie van Houten interview you had back in 1996 and reprinted your article about it in *Challenger* #32. Part of me is very impressed that you were able to conduct this interview in the first place. What I would like to know is how you managed to get that set up. Was it part of your lawyer training? Research on a legal article you were writing? I could peruse efanazines for that issue and look it up, but just for the record - and for those like me with a sudden attack of the lazies - how did you go about requesting and getting this interview? It sounds like a massive coup on your part. Other than that, great reflection writing, and an even greater question to end it on: how long should a person serve in prison before someone/someones arbitrarily decided that the criminal has been suitably rehabilitated? Is that even a real possibility? How can such a decision be determined? An interesting question, to be sure. I do like your conclusion, that society needs to show faith in that person just as much, if not more than, that person must have faith in himself/herself. An intriguing ethical question.

I agree with your general conclusion about this year's presidential election, but even though I generally accept Secretary Clinton as the Democratic nominee over Senator Sanders, I have serious reservations about her integrity. What bothers me the most is how the DNC, especially the machinations

of Debra Wasserman-Schultz, has essentially acted in collusion with the Clintons and other deep-pocket donors to ensure that she becomes the nominee and railroad out Sanders. There has been a lot of underhanded, sneaky, and possibly fraudulent balloting going on in places like Puerto Rico, Washington state, Ohio, and elsewhere that I find troubling. Even if only five percent of these reports are true, that is still too high, in my humble opinion. Like you, I dislike the rising rancor in the democratic rank and file between the Clinton and Sanders supporters - much to the delight of the GOP elite - and these die-hard Clinton and Sanders supporters need to stop. Now. The Republican party, even with Donald Trump as its presumptive nominee, is beginning to reluctantly coalesce around him. This is what the GOP has always done so well: they know how to pull together, organize, and get their people to the polls to vote. My suspicion is that the Republican party power brokers will put forth a running mate for Trump who will follow the GOP establishment's orders and run the executive branch for the party, much how the Reagan administration operated during his second term, and also how Dick Cheney pulled the strings tied to George W. Bush. We really need to be careful here. It is not over by a long shot. I like Senator Sanders - in fact, I identify more with his positions than anyone else - and the issues he has raised must be incorporated into the democratic platform this year. If not, Trump will be elected President. The DNC cannot afford to lose those millions of young, energetic voters who have turned out in droves for Sanders. His voice, his vision must be prominent for the democrats to win in November. They honestly will not be able to do it without him.

Now I know you will disagree with me - go ahead; that's cool; reasoned dialogue and debate means everything to me - citing Secretary Clinton's lengthy experience in government (almost 30 years of it now, and I acknowledge that completely. In fact, her experience and coolness under fire are two of her biggest assets. So is her intelligence. I have full confidence in her ability to be President. But I so want to see some serious reforms begun on how America's government operates: term limits across the board, repeal the bill that created Super PACs, drastically reduce the impact of deep pocket donors on politics, and minimize the effects that lobby interests have on elected officials. And above all, institute reasonable gun laws. Not eliminate gun purchases, but somehow bring common sense into gun ownership in America. No individual or organization needs to be armed better than the national militaries of nations in Africa or South America. Remember how many arms and munitions were in the Branch Dravidian compound on the outskirts of Waco, Texas? How about the apartment of James Holmes in Aurora, Colorado? Or Adam Lanza, the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooter? I could go on, but won't. The bottom line is that gun sales in this country are out of control, and so is the government. Change must be made, and Hillary Clinton had better make a concerted effort to begin making these changes.

End of rant. Back to your lives, citizens.

Yeah, a good issue, Guy. I look forward to seeing a new *Challenger* this summer.

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While I was at Corflu, I heard that *Uprooted* had won the Nebula. I hope it wins the Hugo as well. It's a good fantasy novel, and the best of the novels which are on the ballot. I thought there were five other novels that were better, but they didn't make the ballot. I've had to wrap my brain around the idea that many of the people who join worldcons don't like science fiction. That's like discovering that most of the College of Cardinals in Rome are atheists.

We now have the question of what to do about the Hugos. EPH may be a perfectly legitimate plan, but it looks fishy. This may be a case where looking fishy is worse than being fishy. The 4/6 idea might be a step in the right direction. I think fans would feel deprived if you took away one of their nomination slots. It might be better to go 5/8 or 5/10. I wouldn't mind looking at more nominees, and some of my favorites might even make it to the ballot. An objection to this idea is that some categories don't have eight or ten likely nominees. Maybe those categories aren't all that necessary.

I wouldn't object to limiting nominations and voting to members of the current worldcon. I wouldn't object to getting rid of supporting memberships. It's sort of a case of doing one or the other. I don't think there is much reason for doing both. I think I'd start by getting rid of supporting memberships and see what happens. If that doesn't work, then limit the process to members of the current worldcon only.

In response to spite nominations, there have been several suggestions for a three step Hugo process. That way lies madness. I think it would be more sensible to give the Hugo Administrator the power to remove works which are in exceedingly bad taste. Since we don't wish our sensibilities to be offended, the Administrator does not have to mention such actions. Trying to make the Hugos look bad is certainly within the limits of exceedingly bad taste.

**David B. Williams**  
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Are you sitting down? I voted for Trump in the May 3 Indiana primary. Have I lost my mind? No, I still intend to vote for Hillary in November. But I developed a raging revulsion for Ted Cruz. Don't like his looks, don't like his sound, probably wouldn't like his smell if I ever got close enough to find out. So I voted for Trump to help knock Cruz out of the race, and it worked!

I have a plan. Trump wins Republican nomination, then Hillary wins general election. Trump deserves the Republican nomination, he earned it. And the Republican party deserves Trump as its nominee. Some have prognosticated that Trump will shatter the party. I wonder, What's so bad about that? The Republican party actually imploded some time ago. Today, it is merely an alliance of convenience of varied fringe and crank groups, the flat earthers, the climate deniers, the pro-lifers, the gay bashers, and on and on - basically, anyone who is afraid of some kind of change. Getting the Republican party out of the way will open space for a new party, just as the collapse of the Whigs opened up the space for the new Republican party 150 years ago, when the Republican party faced forward and fought for change.

Hopefully, the new party will be a conservative party that embraces change.

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It seems many people my age [*Isaac is in his early 20s*] use Facebook and social media as the primary source of easily accessed biased information. Furthermore I have no doubt that Facebook has protocols in place in the website to show you ads and pages related to the things you've been searching, similar to Amazon.com. I am saying these things because of the comment you made related to the "original intent" vs "living Constitution." I make the connection because many of the items that people soak up, tidbits of BS, through social media are legal issues. What then happens is you've got a slew of devices connected to a website that literally feeds you what you want to see, arguing about topics they are tragically misinformed about. I suppose the only effective counter to such would be to continue to filter what I take in as much as possible and do whatever I can to stop the spread of ignorance.

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I knew little of the Manson crimes as I grew up, seeing I was 10 years old when they happened, but later, I had to wonder how they did these things, and I figured it was simply charisma that got her into Manson's group, and charisma that still makes her someone you wanted to meet and interview and write about. Forty-five years of imprisonment...is that sufficient punishment? I think so, and I hope she can find some measure of life before she passes.

I have to wonder...who are all these people who the Puppies know and are willing to buy expensive Worldcon memberships just to stuff a ballot box? Who's paying for all those memberships? This is worth an investigation to see how a particular group can overwhelm the regular voters, and skew what appears on the final ballot. They will continue to do this as long as they can get away with it, so I think it's worth investigating to see what's happening.

I believe the number of Syrian refugees in Canada has gone above 25,000, and may be extended to 10,000 more. I haven't heard much about that lately, as conduct in our Parliament recently descended to the schoolyard level, and that teacup tempest has pushed real news off the front page and lead report on the evening news.

I certainly agree on retiring elephant acts, but still, having an elephant at the zoo shows the younger set what these animals are all about. The Toronto Zoo had several elephants, but thanks to the meddling of self-styled animal welfare expert Bob Barker, our elephants are now in California at a retirement farm there. I haven't seen Joy Moreau in many years, but then, we rarely cross the border now.

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When I was working for *The Anniston Star* in the late 1960s, I encountered a Methodist minister who was convinced that Quantrill had secretly left Missouri and settled in the area of Gadsden, Alabama. As I recall – that's been more than 50 years ago – there was no solid documentation, just circumstantial and hearsay evidence. You have awakened in me the sense of loss I had for never pursuing that further. It would have been a fun story to write, no matter the outcome.

*Of course you're referring to the fiction I talked about in an earlier **Spartacus**, "Cross Cypress", in which Quantrill is a character. I'm still tweaking the thing, enjoying the reactions and advice of several I've let read it – including my shrink, who is also a writer, and Steve Sullivan, a boyhood friend with whom I used to write Hardy Boys pastiches, and who may soon have a film made of one of his stories. Next reader may well be Fred Chappell, my MFA teacher and former Poet Laureate of North Carolina. Or my wife. Gulp.*

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The ongoing spectacle of Mitch McConnell & Co. refusing to consider the nomination of Merrick Garland as a Justice of the Supreme Court demonstrates that these people aren't even trying to look plausible anymore. The Senate's intransigence on the subject doesn't even have the support of a majority of *Republicans* in the country, let alone the citizenry as a whole. The level of damage these supposed elected-servants of the people are willing to do just to deny Barack Obama one more victory is truly incomprehensible.

The truly joyous thing about the detection of gravitational waves is that they were discovered 100 years ago by Albert Einstein. It's taken this long to build a telescope sensitive enough to actually detect them! The idea of something making the leap from equations on a chalkboard to an observed reality has only been approached once before with the fifty-year lag between the theoretical prediction of the Higgs Boson and its detection by CERN instruments last year!

The amount of information that could be deduced from that little blip on the LIGO instruments is staggering! The fact that both instruments detected the waves at slightly different times demonstrates that gravitational waves travel at the speed of light. Consider what that means. Gravity is the manifestation of the interaction of mass and the Universe, and yet the ripples in space-time made by interactive massive objects propagate through the Universe at the speed of light, which by definition, can only be achieved by mass-less wave particles! Then there's the observation that the black hole collision that generated the



waves converted the mass of several suns directly into energy which could only be expressed as gravitational waves. Think about it. The twin observations of the LIGO gravitational waves could be used to indicate some directionality to the signal. As of yet no signal in the electromagnetic spectrum has been found that corresponds to the event! All of that mass converted directly to gravitational waves *and nothing else!*

Then there's the remarkable coincidence of the observation itself. The LIGO detector in Louisiana hadn't even officially come on-line when the signal was detected. A few weeks later the Washington detector would have seen it, but the critical second matching observation wouldn't have happened. What does this say for the now-created branch of gravitational astronomy? Are these sorts of signals coming frequently, or were we just extremely lucky? Who'd have said even a year ago that we'd be contemplating building gravitational wave telescopes in space? Yea for Science Fiction!

*I'm glad you science guys are so happy. I have no idea whatsoever what we're even talking about.*

I absolutely agree with you about the non-issue of racial discrimination in the Academy Awards. The Oscars were doing just fine in the area of racial inclusion until this whole brouhaha erupted. I think you called it correctly that the whole thing was fueled by Mrs. [Jada Pinkett] Smith's protests that her husband wasn't automatically given the award. What I don't like is the trend that so many of our best black actors are being consigned to voice-over and CGI parts. I'm happy that Lupita Nyong'o got cast as Moz in *The Force Awakens*, but I really wanted to see more of her, not a CGI avatar. Same thing goes for Zoe Saldana, Chiwetel Ejiofer, and so many others. It's like Hollywood is going out of its way to cast black actors in key roles, but not to let us see them!

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For someone with an opinion on just about everything, I admit that my reaction to Brexit – the UK vote to leave the European Union – is woefully uninformed. I understand that most of the voters who wanted to keep the United Kingdom tied economically to the rest of Europe were younger, better educated, more professionally employed. Than those who did not were moved by sentiments of anti-immigrant nationalism. I'm sure this is a shallow comprehension of the situation. I hope so, because the whole kerfluffle is pretty scary.

Isolationism is taking hold in Europe. It could well take us. Of course, their crises are different from ours, or at least several quanta more intense. Immigration, for instance ... They have refugees from the atrocities of Syria pressing by the hundreds of thousands against their border fences. We have a few thousand Mexicans sneaking through border fences to find work. I hardly think the problems equivalent.

But I don't count. I'm not young but I am well-educated and have a professional background. On such as me, the paranoid quasi-racist appeals of a mountebank like Trump make no impression but revulsion. Nor will these appeals penetrate the pride Hispanic voters have in themselves and their heritage. But I do worry about others without my good fortune and educated outlook. I do worry about those who believe they need protection against those from without, who are jealous of America's promise and believe it crushable – take-able. From this distance, Brexit seems like a terrifying lurch backwards. Its potential here would be worse.

I have only offhand ideas. Protect American-based production with steep costs to companies moving overseas. Regulate trade with the same purpose. Win back our bitter, fearful people to faith that we're all in this tub together. And *let people in*, keep our country's essential freshening heritage of immigrant welcome. I don't think such actions are contradictory.

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And then there's Turkey, and the Istanbul airport attack. ISIS murders 40-50 innocent travelers, mostly Turks and Muslims, and the most remarkable thing I can find to comment on is the video of a suicide bomber blowing himself to Kingdom Come after being dropped by police fire. His leg goes flying across the screen.

There's more, of course, and it's heartening. We've seen this before, we'll see it again, but the Turks showed the world how to fight it. They showed us the courage of the local police in taking on the maniacs, and the resilience of the city in reopening the airport almost immediately. ISIS caused horrible pain – but that's all it did. It didn't stop the world. It didn't win.

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There is good astronomical news, in that the Hubble telescope has been saved for the next five years. Personally, James Webb 'Scope or no, I wish they'd just keep it going for as long as it works. With the exception of the moon landings, no other space venture has so excited the public imagination, and without exception, no other attempt at understanding the universe has so increased people's appreciation of the glory we inhabit.

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I'm distressed that, with the exception of mentioning Muhammad Ali's visit to a DeepSouthCon hotel 41 years ago, a couple of movie notes and some Hugo chat – VOTE STEVE STILES! – in the lettercol, there's nothing fannish or SFnal in this *Spartacus*. What can I say? Float like a butterfly, sting like a frog. (It makes sense on this side of the keyboard.)

