



# **Spartacus** no. 18

A zine of opinion and whatnot from  
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“I am myself, alone.”  
*Richard, Earl of Gloucester, Henry VI, Part II*

And so, Donald Trump has been inaugurated. Pugnacious, not only un-diplomatic but anti-diplomatic, isolationist, ungracious and ungenerous, the man whose coat brand is made in Mexico and whose buildings are erected with Chinese steel told the rest of the world to bugger off and proclaimed “America first!” He set himself against the past so vehemently that even acquiescent NBC called his speech insulting to the Congress and former Presidents gathered behind him. Commentators said it was more like a campaign spiel than an inaugural address, instilling fury into his voters and dismissing and threatening the rest of mankind. It ended with a clenched fist.

The “movement” Trump proclaimed is terrifying. He was right to assure the lower middle class Americans that put him into office that they would never again be forgotten. You’ll find a similar sentiment in many *Spartacus* issues in the past year or two. But Trump comes into authority cloaked in anger, not in reconciliation nor in gracious pride, wrapped in *faux*-patriotism, determined to make America not great again, but to keep it isolated, welcoming few, rejecting most, servant to one will and one will ... alone.

*My kingdom for a horse.*

I wish I had the wit, means and spirit to fight the terrible ugly brutality and senselessness that is to come. It's obvious, though, that criticism – even simple debate – will not be brooked. The press is the enemy of the state – truth, and even fact, disregarded and disparaged. The CIA is damned as fascistic – there's irony for you – because it advances the truth about America's smug new master and his ties to Russia, his model for one-man rule. The bloodied saint of civil rights, John Lewis, is condemned for reading that truth and drawing the simple conclusion that this man's power was not rightly won. Meryl Streep recoils in horror from Trump's mockery of a disabled critic, and is laughably dismissed as over-praised. No contrary opinion will be considered. Opposition will be held tantamount to sedition.

In regarding Trump and his “new” America, I am reminded of Jacob Bronowski in *The Ascent of Man*. Standing by the pond at Auschwitz where the ashes of millions were flushed, he said that such is what happens when men behave with absolute certainty – with “no test in reality.” This is Trump's America and the one in which we now live. There is no test in reality, no regard for truth. We know another term for that phrase. America's governing principle is now *psychosis*. Truthlessness is rewarded. The mob cheers.

Obama's soaring optimism on the country's future, expressed in his farewell address, was wonderful but unconvincing, even to himself. As he left office, he was reduced to “I think we'll be okay.” Michelle Obama's expressions during the inauguration, which someone called the new standard for Shade, said otherwise, and more convincingly. The country and its future is in the hands of a mountebank revered by the mob. The 2016 election not only destroyed hope for itself, but destroyed hope for 2017 – and beyond. Yellowstone, do your stuff.

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Since the last *Spartacus*, the most profound event in this household has been the ghastly illness befalling Patty Green, Rosy's stepmother. A minor stroke at the beginning of December led to a diagnosis of bleeding on the brain. Further examination brought forth the horror of a tumor. Analysis of the growth produced the most horrible word someone can hear: *glioblastoma*. A spider the size of a half dollar had found purchase on the surface of her brain.

A funny and fierce fighter, Patty laid into cancer like the proverbial buzzsaw. She and Joe, accompanied by Rosy, traveled to Duke Medical Center in North Carolina for a “de-bulking” operation – just what it sounds like – and evaluation for some experimental treatments. Though the surgery left her with a scar on her scalp resembling a map of the Mississippi, it also left her far better off, and she will begin radiation and chemo in mid-February. Shortly thereafter, she'll take on the experimental virus treatment, with the hope and plan that it will kibosh what nastiness remains.

In the meantime, except for an occasional tiredness, she is our classic Patrice.

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John Glenn left this world three times, twice when he rode rockets into orbit, and finally, in December. It was an inevitable loss – the man was well into his 90s – but for Americans and SFers alive and aware on February 20, 1962, the memories and reveries came rushing. I remembered the deep, rather crazy shame I felt when Gagarin beat our guys into space (you should see the anguished cartoon I drew that week) ... the pride Alan Shepard and Gus Grissom brought with their suborbital flights ... the deep confidence Glenn showed and restored riding his Mercury capsule aloft. Two men boosted American prestige more than any others in that time, JFK and John Glenn. No one ever forgot it.

Shortly after Glenn's death, the charming film *Hidden Figures* opened, hailing the black women whose mathematical skill and creativity put our earliest astronauts, including Glenn, into space. In fact, John Glenn is a character in the film, which borrows immeasurably from *The Right Stuff* – and repeats one of that movie's most grating errors. I was 12 when Glenn flew, and remember that, both flicks to the contrary, *Friendship 7* was never supposed to make more than three orbits. He was not brought down early when the heat shield light beeped on. Telling it square does nothing to diminish the heroism of the astronaut, nor the genius of the mathematicians who launched him.

Eugene Cernan died in January, the 11<sup>th</sup> man on the moon and the last to set foot on her surface. “The last man on the moon” ... It was possibly his most profound regret that he went to Valhalla bearing that distinction: he always urged America to return to Luna. A few days after his death, another night launch – enlivened by a shooting star cutting across its path – glorified the sky to our northeast. This will be an active year at Cape Canaveral, two launches or more every month. Every time a rocket arches skyward, I hope John Glenn’s courage and Gene Cernan’s dream are remembered.

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I’d hoped to comment on the Hugo nominations in this issue, but will have to settle for a few items from my own ballot: I’m naming *Death’s End* and *Arabella of Mars* among the Best Novels and wonder if Alan Moore’s monstrous *Jerusalem* will be named, if only out of respect for the man. I hate what he did with his Nolacon II Hugo. *Arrival* – of course – and *10 Cloverfield Lane* will be named as long-form Dramatic Presentations. *GoT*’s “Battle of the Bastards” is a natural for the short form Drama award. As usual, neglected fan artists, writers and zines will be named, and as usual, I’ll bet none make the ballot. Marc Schirmeister, Alan White, Joe Major, *Trap Door* and *Reluctant Famulus*, and many others unnamed, I tried.

Here, some thoughts on a lesser award by far, but one I have followed since 1957: the Oscar. In fact, I’ve seen all the winners in the five major categories, and \*ahem\* consider myself an expert. So: my **preferences** among this year’s nominees are bold-faced, my predictions underlined.

Best Picture: ***Arrival***, of course, though toe-tapping *La La Land* has this one booked. *Hell or High Water* is my second choice, if only for that great final face-off. I haven’t seen *Lion*. *Hidden Figures* was sweet but a little slight. *Moonlight* seemed incomplete – its three chapters needed to be four. SPOILER As the first two chapters showed the hero’s painful development, and the third his inspiring redemption, a jail sequence would have shown his hitting *le bas*, and made that redemption much more fulfilling and meaningful. Like *Fences*, say.

Best Actor: Casey Affleck in *Manchester by the Sea* is a clear fave for this Oscar, but we found the picture meandering. I would prefer **Denzel Washington**’s self-directed turn in *Fences*, an intense and honest evocation, or **Viggo Mortensen** in *Captain Fantastic*, one of those quirky “little” films that glowed in 2016.

Best Actress: I haven’t seen Isabelle Huppert in *Elle* but she’s odds-on. Haven’t seen any of the nominees except the delightful Emma Stone in *La La*. Since the beyond-divine *Chastain* wasn’t tapped, my interest is entirely academic.

Supporting performances: Viola Davis is *Fences*, Mahershala Ali in *Moonlight*. Jeff Bridges was cool – as always – in *Hell or High Water*, but the character was a bit of a trope.

Awards are February 26. Don’t call me.

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And while we’re dealing with trivial, non-SFnal subjects, I find to my infinite shame and self-disgust that I must cheer for the reprehensible Atlanta Falcons in the Super Bowl this year. The New England Patriots have enough damned rings. Nevertheless, I’ll bet Brady’s experience overwhelms the Dirty Birds.

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When I was a callow youth in Walnut Creek, California, before Berkeley and New Orleans freed me from the paranoia of high school and its Astrobean judgments (read your *Past Master*), I would find succor from my lonely despair in a used book store near my home. I searched through its stacks for out-of-print Hugo winners and Pulitzer winners ... and books from the paperback houses *Beacon* and *Midwood*.

Beacon and Midwood were publishers of softcore porn, lurid but unclinical stuff which avoided dirty words but did its best to stoke the imagination and inspire teenage tumescence. They relied on sexy situations and juicy descriptions to get their point across. Well, far from the gaze of the lady in charge of the store, I found such a tome – *The Fling*, by Jud Blaine.

*The Fling* stars Lou Ann, a 16-year-old blonde babe with big cantaloupes and the sexual expertise of a pro going for her 20-year pin. In the course of the novel she becomes involved with a thirtyish realtor who plows her like the south 40 and “[f]or a matter of minutes ... [is] a total and unafraid male.” Being myself 16 and as far from “a total and unafraid male” as is possible, I figured I needed pointers, and scanned the Beacon novel avidly.

I made dozens of trips back to that bookstore. I’ve often wondered if I made the smiling clerk suspicious. Whether I did or I didn’t, the day came when either the book disappeared or the store closed and *The Fling* disappeared from my life.

But not from my memory or imagination. There Lou Ann lived on.

Of course, I managed to live *some* in real life. My first real girlfriend was also 16, but she was complex, deep, troubled, smart, full of secrets, blest with dignity. And red hair. My *next* real girlfriend was 26, and a brunette, but this article isn’t a catalogue of my real life, but the opposite.

In the fevered pits of my lizard brain, girls like Lou Ann found a stubborn niche – and as I grew older, I wondered about the squalid source of that fascination. I began an occasional search for *The Fling* ... and for years and years, it never showed up. Not on eBay, where its title instead produced all sorts of Harlequin romances, not on lists of Beacon Books, not on Amazon ... until last month. Suddenly, there it was. Six bucks, and my pimply youth was back again.

When the plain-brown-wrapped package came in, I stole out of wifely view and perused the volume. Yes, all the huffapuffa stuffa was as I remembered it – some phrases verbatim. But that was about all that impressed me. The book itself was a yawner. Childe GHLIII may have rendered breathless and engorged by this gooey concoction – but GHLIII the ancient mariner was, fifty years down the line, bored by it. And a little *worried*.

Lou Ann was a precocious 16-year-old. Was I reading – or worse, in possession of – *kiddie porn*? Was that why I could never find it? Wiser heads had realized that holding *The Fling* was a crime, and pitched it?

Google produces the following line: *any sexualized images of children will be considered child pornography*, and the law seems to restrict the ramifications of that law to sexualized *visual* depictions of children. Written ones may well be ... well, if not OK, then not illegal. 18 U.S. Code § 2251 seems to be the relevant article, and over and over again it emphasizes “visual.” So in that wise, the book is safe.

But a thought – if visual depictions of the under aged in sexual situations is considered child porn, what about *drawings*? What about the *cover* to this masterpiece?

I shouldn’t worry. The girl isn’t even a blonde.

## LOCsBOCs

**John Purcell**

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I certainly can understand your deep disappointment and disillusionment following the November 8th election. Of all the candidates, the least qualified one came out on top, but it certainly was not a mandate. It definitely was no landslide victory, either. Secretary Clinton received 2.9 million more popular votes than Donald Trump, who scored very surprising wins in the all-important swing states. What that tells me is, more than anything, that the electoral college must be abolished. That won’t happen very soon, but the steps to make it happen can at least be started. The revolution has only just begun.

And that last sentence reminds me of these last few days. As if 2016 wasn’t bad enough, to cap it off with the sudden deaths of Carrie Fisher and her mother Debbie Reynolds one day apart is heart-breaking. Sadly the death wave of celebrities, scientists, artists, and significant politicians will only increase next year as the generation born between the years of 1927 to 1947 all begun to hit the critical age bracket of 70 to 90. It is sobering to think that in a year and a half I will have reached my father's age when he died. \*sigh\* That sure makes me stop and think. This has truly been a year for the ages, hasn't it?

I think I shall skip past the letter column – except to note your mention of my candidacy for the 2017 TAFF race – and briefly dive into some media comments.

*Westworld* I have not yet seen because we don't subscribe to HBO, but Valerie and I regularly watch *Timeless*, *Lucifer*, *Gotham*, *Z-Nation*, *The Flash*, *The Expanse*, *Incorporated*, *The Librarians*, and other science fiction and fantasy television shows. Our reasons are many, but the bottom line is entertainment value plus good storylines and solid acting. Having character development and chemistry helps out a lot, too. I know a lot of the readers of this fanzine will have different tastes, but that's okay. This I expect and accept.

Movie-wise I have only seen *Rogue One* so far and enjoyed it. I predict its sequel should be a hit. We also want to see *Passengers* (despite the controversial stalker plot line), *Arrival*, and *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*. The way I figure it, should I win the TAFF vote, I'll need to be an informed voter. As for the fiction... I am so far behind on current SF novels and all the short fiction markets its ridiculous. Yeah, gotta make my votes count.

Thankfully the Hugos aren't decided by a body of separate electors.

*Nor the TAFF election, in which I wish you victory.*

### **Roy Eugene Coker**

On Facebook

Perhaps this quote sums it up? "Stupidity is a more dangerous enemy of the good than malice. One may protest against evil; it can be exposed and, if need be, prevented by use of force. Evil always carries within itself the germ of its own subversion in that it leaves behind in human beings at least a sense of unease. Against stupidity we are defenseless; reasons fall on deaf ears; facts that contradict one's prejudgment simply need not be believed – in such moments the stupid person even becomes critical – and when facts are irrefutable they are just pushed aside as inconsequential, as incidental. In all this the stupid person, in contrast to the malicious one, is utterly self-satisfied and, being easily irritated, becomes dangerous by going on the attack". (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters & Papers from Prison*, 43).

### **Lloyd Penney**

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I am on the other side of the northern border, looking across, and still shaking my head. America always said it stood for the best in humanity ... well, what happened here? America chose racism, sexism and isolationism over a flawed, but qualified and lucid candidate. The rest of the world is staring and shaking its collective head, too. Not even the electoral college did its job, so the world is stuck with Donald Trump, and the head of the free world is a truculent six-year-old in an adult's body. No wonder Putin interfered with your election ... he saw that if Trump were elected, he'd do so many bad things, Russia could seize the moral high ground, and look like the good guy for a change, and let America look like the bad guys. He seems pretty successful right now.

I suppose it is easy for me to complain, but Trump, when he is feeling particularly vengeful, could do so many horrific things to countries formerly known as America's allies. The bull is in the china shop, to be sure, and Fear did win over Hope. I can't say more than you have here, but all I will say is that I hope all the rules and regs in place to ensure that one person can't change long-legislated policies will come into effect, and Trump can't do all he wants to do. Eventually, if it isn't already happening, Trump will look like a little monster in the eyes of the world, and the rest of us will have to hope that the next four years will go by quickly. As Trump himself said, you've got to love the poorly educated, for they are the ones who were easily fooled, and who voted him into office.

2016 seemed like a deadly year, and then along came so many more deaths...George Michael, Carrie Fisher, and mom Debbie Reynolds the day after. I imagine the year is no more deadly than others, but it sure feels worse, especially for those of us in our 50s who grew up with all the folks who died.

Indeed, Yvonne and I are two of John Purcell's TAFF nominees, and we'd be pleased to send him to Finland. And bring him back, too. This may be the only way some of us will ever travel like that, and I can say that about myself, in spite of our two weeks in England in August. Most of that \$\$ came from Yvonne's thriftiness.

Based on Al Bouchard's reading of the US Constitution, has President Turnip been treasonous? If the answer is yes, who can act as accuser and prosecutor?

My letter ... our two weeks in England was a great time. One week was spent in London, being tourists, and seeing many of the sights, like Big Ben, the London Eye, and so much more. The second week was spent in Lincoln, north of the big city, for The Asylum, the biggest steampunk event in the world. Our vacation was hella expensive, and if we had the cash, we'd do it all over again.

You're right, SF would be a great diversion from these horrific politics, but I wonder what most people are doing ... as for us, we are actually avoiding the news, and we are regularly downloading episodes of the British archaeology programme *Time Team*. Tony Robinson's disdainful attitude is a much better choice than having to deal with President Turnip, and who he's insulted recently. And, except for Murdoch Mysteries, there isn't much more television we're watching.

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I notice most of *Spartacus* #17 is about politics. In the recent past. I've skipped locking on some issues of some fanzines because I didn't feel like talking about politics. I've noticed that political discussions aren't any fun and never accomplish anything. What's worse, they upset the digestion. If we are going to hell, I don't want arrive there with an upset stomach.

Of course, I have opinions. Humans have opinions in the same way dogs have fleas. Dogs are more effective at dealing with fleas than humans are at dealing with opinions. Dogs have hind legs.

In about 1990, I attended a government meeting at which the speaker said "By 2050, Los Angeles will be the Calcutta of the new world." In 1992, I decided to get out of Los Angeles altogether. By that time, I was the t to the last English speaker on the block where I lived. I certainly didn't want to be the last English speaker. Before I left, a halfway house for illegals had moved in next door. On any given day, there were 6 to 8 adults and 6 to 8 children staying there. The actual individuals changed from week to week. "Fuck" was the only English word they all seemed to know.

Los Angeles is a so-called sanctuary city. That means you can't do anything about illegal aliens at all. Back before I retired, it was estimated that 200 to 300 illegal aliens were entering Los Angeles every day. There are areas in Los Angeles where every garage has one or more families of illegals living there. Of course, there is no sanitation in such facilities. If Hillary had won, there would have been four more years of totally unrestricted immigration. I don't think the results would have been good.

There was a time when civil disobedience was supposed to be directed at bad laws. Nobody has said that our existing immigration laws are particularly bad or even unreasonable. The Democrats have disregarded immigration laws because they thought it was to their advantage to do so. Naturally, all the illegals will vote for the Democrats. This is particularly true if the Democrats are the ones who round them up, put them on buses, and send them to the polls. Who cares if they can't even read the ballots.

*The worldwide revulsion against immigrants stemmed from the Syrian crisis, pitching job worries against humanitarian issues. These concerns overwhelm most else to me. Is there evidence to support the claim of immigrant-based voter fraud? Does it outweigh the need to feed?*

**Ray Palm**

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Re: your essay in *Spartacus* #17. I agree your points about Donald Rump winning the election except your demonizing of non-voters. You said you didn't care what reasons they had for not voting.

I had a good reason not to vote. Back in 2000 the math worked out like this:

500,000+ votes = 0.

Now let's check out the math this time around:

2.5 million+ votes = 0.

The system is rigged. Hillary is the fifth candidate in US history to be screwed by the Electoral College. People say we live in a democracy or that we have to get back our democracy. We don't live in a democracy, we never did. We live in a rigged set up called a republic.

One step towards a democracy – a big one – is abolishing the Electoral College.

People say "But the founders didn't want mob rule; we need the college." Trump's victory still means the "mob" is now going to rule. The other justification for the EC is it was set up to keep rogues out of office. How many electors will vote against Trump? Great rogue control.

I don't participate in empty gestures. That's why I didn't vote. Being informed and standing up for the truth is more important.

I am concerned what will happen especially with the incidents so far of people blindly believing fake news and racists bullying minorities. This time instead of brown shirts it could be red caps.

If you want to stereotype me as a "bad citizen" feel free. But now more than ever unity against a common enemy is needed.

*Voting is hardly an empty gesture.*

*With all due respect – and the publisher of such a neat perzine deserves respect a'plenty – let me point out that Trump won Pennsylvania by 44,000 votes. How many of those would have been made up had people too cynical or busy to cast a ballot not been so cynical or busy? Would we now be celebrating the new America instead of facing it with dread?*

**Jeff Copeland**  
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You have, old friend, chosen the wrong Auden poem to begin this issue. You wanted not "In Memory of W B Yeats", but "September 1, 1939":

*I sit in one of the dives  
On Fifty-second Street  
Uncertain and afraid  
As the clever hopes expire  
Of a low dishonest decade:  
Waves of anger and fear  
Circulate over the bright  
And darkened lands of the earth,  
Obsessing our private lives;  
The unmentionable odour of death  
Offends the September night.*

I have years since given up on the hyperactive blather of television news, which delivers sound and fury, but no information. I have spent much of the past month avoiding the newspapers and even the usually-calming reportage of NPR. Each new pronouncement from our President-elect is so outrageous, so frightening, that I cannot listen to them all. I have never used Facebook, but those who do seem to be hyping themselves into a frenzy – panicking over the each and every fragment from the Palace of Lies on Fifth Avenue. It is the same result caused by the fake stories from Breitbart and Fox "News", save from the other direction.

I think careful titration of the information stream is keeping my blood pressure down. Certainly, there is reason to be concerned for what the future holds. But this charlatan is not yet in power. What will we do when he – or rather those controlling him – start making these decrees for real? We need to maintain some energy to fight against real threats, not imagined ones, to be prepared to fight against impingements on our freedom of religion, and attacks against racial equality, civil rights, our voting rights.

Any conclusions I draw about the *reasons* for this electoral result are going to be simplistic and wrong. And I think the many different explanations I've seen are all correct in their way, but don't capture the whole picture. However, I will note that it wasn't just white working class voters that caused these results, but the failure of black and hispanic voters to show up. You are correct that a large part of the blame here lies with the half of the electorate – uninformed and disengaged – who simply failed to exercise their hard-won franchise.

Tomorrow the Electoral College will meet, no doubt to confirm the will of less than a quarter of the voters and anoint an incurious, uninterested, ill-prepared, reality television star, and con man as our next President. Meanwhile, I take comfort in Auden's closing of that same poem:

*Defenceless under the night  
our world in stupor lies;  
yet dotted everywhere,  
ironic points of light  
flash out wherever the Just  
exchange their messages.  
May I, composed like them  
of Eros and of dust,  
beleaguered by the same  
negation and despair,  
show an affirming flame.*

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Speaking of that “affirming flame” ... it’s important to note that there are those who still have the gumption to fight back against the triumph of Trump.

Take a look at Mike Lofgren’s article in Bill Moyer’s blog of 1-11-17. Observe the Senate hearings wherein Democrats roasted unqualified Cabinet nominees. And note, a zillionfold stronger, the *real* revolution that came a’calling the day after the inauguration ...

Three million women, strong and funny and immovable, on every continent, whose march on January 21st completely o’ershadowed Trump’s Gestapo rally the day before. (Melissa Benoist, you are the princess of light.) They chide me to keep heart, keep humor, stay defiant, and remember that though Richard III is now interred in a beautiful church, for hundreds of years his bones were buried under a parking lot.

