



Spartacus #23

A ZINE OF OPINIONS AND BLATHER BY
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NOVEMBER 2017 * GHLIII PRESS Publication #1225

Sometimes I think that I'm in vibrational touch with the great harmonies of the universe. Or at least that I somehow write about the right stuff at the right time. Last issue I mentioned a recent fannish survey about sexual harassment, specifically at SF conventions. Two months later, with different specifics, it's a subject roiling across the world.

As it should be. As it long should have been. Stories about the casting couch have forever haunted the movie business. One gets the feeling – as professional after professional emerges to reveal the humiliation she had to endure from Harvey Weinstein to pursue her career – that sexual harassment is a wound that has suppurated in film for decades. Even Marilyn Monroe gossiped about lecherous studio bosses when she was just starting out.

Harvey Weinstein just doffed his bathrobe at a time when actresses discovered that such trashiness was *not* obligatory – that, as for every other woman alive, their dignity was sacrosanct. The man is a scumbag.

As I do for Weinstein, I have naught but contempt for the gymnastics doctor who molested members of the women's Olympic team – including the smartassed charmer whose disgusted smirk at the medal ceremony won her more fame than her epic performance. The guy is on trial now and, if convicted, I hope they string him up by his *caduceus*. Authority over others is a privilege no decent human being would abuse. These two did.

As did Roy Moore, the vile Republican senatorial candidate – and likely Senator-Elect – from Alabama. Ordinarily I'd harbor doubts about accusations of "misconduct" going back a lifetime, as the complaints about Moore do, but this is pedophilia, abuse of barely nubile girls, by a man of authority (he was district attorney at the time) over helpless children. It involves actual battery. It's physical crime. There are too many tales of too believable a collection of complainants to ignore. The defenses mounted by Trump, Evangelicals and state Republicans are both idiotic and horrifying. The attempt to besmirch the media pursuing the story with anti-Semitic "Bernie Bernstein" robocalls are obvious insults to truth and decency. Moore is a monster; like Weinstein, like the Olympic doctor, he should be driven from the public world with rocks. Instead, he will undoubtedly end up in the United States Senate.

Of course, these creeps are not the only public figures muddled by the current brouhaha over sexual impropriety. In politics, figures no less revered than George H.W. Bush and John Conyers have been branded. Entertainment has taken more hits. Dustin Hoffman has been chided for nasty jibes made in the presence of tender female ears. Another brilliant thespian with two Oscars, Kevin Spacey, has been practically driven out of the profession because of accusations of ancient homosexual lechery. Straddling the two fields is Al Franken, pilloried because he clowning around with – and planted an unwanted smooch upon – a model who was performing in a USO show he was co-hosting, long before he moved into statecraft. It's on these last two guys, especially, that we need to focus.

There is one significant difference between Spacey, Franken and those mentioned above. Spacey and Franken has owned up to his past misbehavior and apologized, sincerely and profusely. Setting aside the obvious observation that the slurs against Franken are a Bannon/GOP payback, I think it only fair to put the first accusation in context == as part of a goofy USO show. The girl Franken apparently smooched without permission and pretended to grope had herself leapt upon Robin Williams and straddled him, by surprise, as part of the same event. The vibe was the same: crass comedy. It took place years before Franken changed his persona from comic to public servant. Most importantly, he apologized for any insult and the woman accepted his apology.

I'd like to suggest a coda for all of this. We should judge a man who has committed a non-violent sexual imposition by the responsibility he has accepted, by who he is now and by what he has done to correct his mistakes and carry on for the good guys. Otherwise we'd be ceding the debate to hysterics – who settle for nothing less than blood – and fascists who will turn righteous anger and fervor to the own cynical advantage.

And to repeat what I said last time: ladies, if our paths have ever crossed and I've been aggressive or crude, I do regret it, am older now and more mature, and I have fought occasionally on the side of the angels.

Joining the side of the angels in the last few weeks were Republican Senators Jeff Flake and Bob Corker, who quit the Senate in protest over the reprehensibility of Donald Trump. I rather wish they'd chosen to run for another term, and kept up their fight, but their gesture was still welcome.

The Texas shooting (actually was a mental health issue – and enforcement of existing law). The New York bike path massacre. CA blue-eyed maniac. Trump is the perfect President for this spastic apocalypse.

No thanks, said I to my fellow Wal-Martian, a septuagenarian Trumpy who advised me, during a check-out line conversation, to “Get with the program.” That’s not a program decent people care to join.

Here’s a controversial note regarding 2016 – Why has no one asked aloud why the black community deserted Hillary Clinton?

“Sore bones” – “That’s that Fuh-renc university, ain’t it?”

Yes, I know: *Blade Runner 2049* bombed the box office like a B-52. At 2 hours and 43 minutes it was too long, its story was too convoluted, its audience too old. One sassy reviewer said its viewers were almost entirely nerdy guys over 30. *Esquire*, a magazine I trust more than any other, opined that the sequel to *Blade Runner* had no chance, none, at the Oscar.



But I loved it. The thoughtfulness and compassion of the first film – at least in its final, most adult edition – lives on. Its point, carried over here, is the meaning of humanity – a meaning Phil Dick attempted to delineate in his notes for a story. *The measure of how human you are is how kind you are.*

At another time I’ll go into the depths of *Blade Runner 2049*. There are plenty of depths to plumb.

The new *Murder on the Orient Express* is pretty good and stands up well in the mass of Agatha Christie adaptations. Kenneth Branagh is a fine director and actor, and if his version lacks the humor and zest of Albert Finney’s turn as Poirot in 1974, at least it avoids the anger of David Suchet’s version and the unbearable miscasting of Alfred Molina’s. Rosy was wild about it and I enjoyed the outing – particularly the *Last Supper* gag you’ll spot near the end. And just as the

Suchet *Express* featured *Chastain* in a supporting role, so this one sports the divine **Pfeiffer**. A story that attracts such class deserves multiple reboots.

Deserving of no such respect is the miniseries *11.22.63*, a dramatization of Stephen King's time-travel novel of the same name. The story is ostensibly about the efforts of a modern-day music-lover to prevent the Kennedy assassination. His time travel method is to step into a closet of a diner. In the past, o he runs into people who notice the as-yet-unwritten tunes he's humming and deduce that he's from the future, a fact he willingly divulges and which, imbecilically, they instantly accept. Can you imagine the reception such an assertion would receive in the real world?

It'd resemble in large part that reaction expounded in *Sound of My Voice*, a small, brilliant SF film from 2011. Contrast Brit Marling's brilliant, simple film with Stephen King's clichéd potboiler. One is tight, creative, original, thought-provoking. The other – though blessed with a fine turn by Daniel Webber as Lee Harvey Oswald – is a pot you keep waiting to boil.

Another contrast for the “King thing”: *Mindhunter*. This miniseries about the founding of the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit is very well done; we look forward to the second season. True, the obligatory gratuitous sex is annoying, but the performances – especially by the actors portraying the killers the BAU interviewed – are extraordinary. The actor invoking Richard Speck looks nothing like him, but captures his convulsive subhumanity, and I *dreamed* about Ed Kemper after seeing him on screen. Overall, very very good.

Milt Stevens: an appreciation -- by *Tim Marion*

It's been a couple of weeks since Milt Stevens passed on, and I wanted to write a few words about what that meant to me. I realize there have probably been several other obituaries and tributes written already, but honestly, I have not read them, aside from a few words Matthew B. Tepper wrote shortly following Milt's death.

In my opinion, Milt Stevens was one of the Fannish Elder Ghods of Los Angeles fandom. He was a well-rounded, all-around fan, by which I mean, in this case, he was a club fan, a convention fan, a fanzine fan, and an apa fan. Indeed, in 1972 he chaired the World Science Fiction Convention in Los Angeles (LACon 2), which is surely a claim to fame just by itself. Milt was also a multi-apan, was a regular contributor to FAPA during a time in which that was not fashionable, and even wrote mailing comments in FAPA (something else which was unfashionable at that time, it seems). As Milt never went out of his way to embellish his apazines that much, sometimes his writing came out deceptively dry. It was at that point that Milt could send the reader howling with a real zinger — Milt actually had a dynamite wit which he would roll out on occasion.

Milt was also a prodigious writer of locs. Altho his letters may not have been as famed or as lengthy as Harry Warner's were, certainly Milt could have matched Harry, or even exceeded his output, during any given year in which they were both alive. During times in which I despaired of receiving very many locs, I could always count on good ol' Milt to write a nice letter, with at least one zinger. “Your zines are renowned for their elegance,” he once kindly told me (and no, I don't think that was one of his jokes).

But surely what will *really* always make Milt stand out in my memory, and hopefully in the annals of FAPA at the very least, were the long lists he made of FAPA members — who joined, when, how long they were a member, etc. Considering FAPA was started in 1937, this was quite a bit of work on Milt's part both to assemble and publish! I admit I found his list fascinating, and poured over it in excitement, recognizing all the names in various time periods. It seems I have been a member twice, and I'm sure Milt's membership overlapped with mine each time (and no doubt continued in between as well). This labor of love of his should never be forgotten.

I'm sorry Milt is no longer with us, but, altho I didn't know him that well, I suspect I can safely say that, at least in term of his fannish accomplishments, he had a full life, and was well-liked. There are few like you still around, Milt.

FROM THE LANDS OF HINTER ... locs

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While Valerie and I saw a lot of mighty fine statues, sculptures, and artwork in assorted museums during my TAFF trip, nothing really compares to Michelangelo's David. On the other hand, we did see a lot of August Rodin's work in the Louvre, and so many other fine works by countless other artists. When I get into the London, Paris, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, and Prague sections of my report, be prepared for a lot of museum natter. When you're married to an artist, this is what to expect on such a trip. At least I'm not complaining because I have always been a great appreciator of fine art.

However, I do get what you are getting at in your opening monologue: this nation needs its population to be like *Davids*, where people are filled with the "courage, character and fortitude" you mentioned to take down the theocratic oligarchy that wants to run this country - has been running this country, for that matter. As Inspector Klempt said to the gathered mob in Young Frankenstein, "A riot ist an ugly thingk, and I think it'z about time ve had vun!" Metaphorically speaking, I mean. Let the revolution begin anew!

The incident at Charlottesville, Virginia, serves as yet another example of the mob mentality that has swept over this nation in the past few years. I see it as the dying last breaths of White Americans who have had their run of the store since it opened and can't stand the thought of handing the keys to the till to people of different skin color, gender, religious beliefs, or sexual orientation. They are, to put it simply, scared of losing control of the United States, which in my experience of growing up in Minnesota and living for periods of time in Iowa (seven years), California (one year), and Texas (15 years and counting) gave me the experience of how saner regions of America take care of things. I am hoping that the recent examples of Senators McCain, Corker, and Flake will be a return to some form of normalcy for the Republican Party so that cooler heads - the adults in the room, so to speak - can take over and start fixing this messed up government. And our society, too, for that matter. As a culture, Americans need to pull their collective heads out of their collective asses and start thinking like problem solvers again. We've done it before, and I would love to see that kind of "can do" attitude again. "Make America Great Again"? Give me a break. This has always been a great nation: we need to learn from our history to refresh our memory banks, not rewrite history to wipe our memory banks clean.

End of one personal screed, now onto another about sexual predators in the science fiction community.

You know as well as I do, Guy, that all it takes to mess things up for the majority of us kind, caring, open-minded fen is for a handful of selfish numbnuts to spoil it all. While I do applaud the responsible actions of convention committees taking the bull by the horns and setting forth guidelines of acceptable behavior - which I have seen from my earliest days of attending cons - for convention attendees to follow, it seems as though the worst of this behavior became more prevalent and noticeable as sf fandom grew to Brobdingnagian proportions in the late 70s and on through the 80s and up to the mega-cons like San Diego Comic Con and DragonCon, and have attracted sexual predators who see these gigantic crowds, often populated with scantily clad young ladies, as an open feast. It really makes me sad to think like this, but fandom is often seen as a microcosm reflecting the larger culture from which it is

derived. More's the pity. It gets me depressed, so I once again hope that we can grow out of this phase and become more open-minded, respectful, and receptive of others again. That's the fandom I came to know and love; still do. The people I hang out with at cons feel and act like this practically all the time, and that is why I am still here.

You are not going to like this next admission, my friend, but I have never seen *Chinatown*. Why, I really can't explain, unless I fall back on the old "I've never really been interested in seeing it" rationale. Truth is I would like to watch it someday. I guess I'm not as serious a cinephile as you or other folks I know, like Chris Garcia, who is a gigantic movie buff. Some year ...

I am glad you're enjoying your teaching job. It can be a lot of fun, but don't let your students' lack of writing skills get you down. Enlighten them, guide them, kick them in the academic derriere. They will be okay, and so will you.

Rich Lynch

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Your view of the August solar eclipse was a bit better than mine here in Maryland – it was only about 80% total from where I live. But that didn't stop the local media from going all-in on it – the television stations here all had three hours of coverage as the eclipse traversed across the continent. Like Rosy, I did have one of those eclipse viewing glasses, purchased from a vendor at the county fair a week earlier, but I found an even better way to see it. Nicki alerted me that we still had some medical X-ray images that were taken a few years back and it turned out that one layer of that, from a section where no body parts had intruded into the image, was *perfect* for solar viewing. I'll have to make sure we still have some of that seven years from now, when the next solar eclipse crosses the country.

The New York Times made a good point about **Charles Manson** when he died on November 20. They said that he was *not* a product of the counterculture. According to their lights, his ideas – if you can call them that – were more in tune with the neo-Nazis.

To an extent, I think that's true. The counterculture *I* knew was anti-authoritarian, dedicated to personal peace, and aspired to non-violence. Charlie spoke of none of these. The only traits he and his shared with the hippy culture were alienation from straight society, sexual inebriation and dope. It's awful to realize that his cult's killing spree followed Woodstock, the summit of that culture, by just a week, and that the murders fell in the same summer as People's Park.

I've written a lot about the Park in the past. People's Park represented the *real* counterculture: creative, non-materialistic, communal, and determinedly non-violent. As I told Leslie van Houten about the Park, "I wish you'd seen it. My God, I wish you'd seen it."

Manson was a blight on the counterculture and the world, a faker, full of posture, a cheap seducer. The times of my youth were much more than that.

Farewell, farewell to my cousin Hank, carried off November 27 by a metastasized throat cancer. He is the first of our generation to pass. We hadn't gotten along in many years, but there were bridges – most truly my cousin Roger, who spoke when he informed me of how he'd visited his comatose brother, sat beside him and imitated our grandfather, calling him over for a hug. Roger swore Hank smiled. Make a place for us, Hank.

