

SPARTACUS

no. 17 * Nov 2016

Opinions & general bloviation by Guy H. Lillian III

1390 Holly Avenue, Merritt Island FL 32952

GHLIII@yahoo.com / GHLIII Press Pub No. 1205

In the nightmare of the dark
All the dogs of Europe bark,
And the living nations wait,
Each sequestered in its hate;

Intellectual disgrace
Stares from every human face,
And the seas of pity lie
Locked and frozen in each eye.

Follow, poet, follow right
To the bottom of the night,
With your unconstraining voice
Still persuade us to rejoice;

With the farming of a verse
Make a vineyard of the curse,
Sing of human unsuccess
In a rapture of distress;

In the deserts of the heart
Let the healing fountain start,
In the prison of his days
Teach the free man how to praise.

W.H. Auden
"In Memory of W.B. Yeats"



Early on Election Day I knew what I wanted at day's end. I wanted to feel proud of a country which would erase an old prejudice and push the boundaries of tolerance and freedom. I thought that people like me might secure for my nephews, their contemporaries, and the kids born after them a compassionate society, secure in itself, willing to adapt, smart and resolute and unafraid of change. I thought I'd be proud of a humane people, contemptuous of fear and ignorance and prejudice, motivated by hope for the common good. Not to be, and not so. A revolution got in the way.

This isn't to say that I felt/feel ashamed – after all, Hillary Clinton got a million-plus more votes than Donald Trump; the right people still outnumber the wrong. What I find I feel, after the axe fell, is profound disappointment. The promise of an enlightened, progressive and strong-minded country and a bright, vibrant century to leave as the legacy of my generation is scotched. And that is not what most of us want.

With every newspaper and magazine endorsement possible against him, with men of quality like Khizr Khan against him, Trump won almost half the votes and a sweeping nationwide win in the electoral college. Hillary is blaming this catastrophe on the pointless letter released by the FBI Director announcing the reopening of the equally pointless e-mail investigation against her, but I think not. I think we're in the midst of an overlap of two revolutions, one of liberation and another of reaction and resentment, and those whom people like Hillary have been trying to liberate let her down.

What would Hillary's election have meant? Certainly it would have been America's apex of Feminism, a reduction of the infamous Glass Ceiling to metaphorical shards. It would have shown a solidification of progressive ideas and groups towards a common goal, kept the "Obama Coalition" alive – and meant a possible permanent change of perspective towards women, towards minorities, towards the whole idea of respecting one another and living together in society. It would have been a victory for *Hope* itself.

However. We liberals faced, almost unbeknownst to ourselves, a counter-revolution – a revolt from the allegedly neglected white working class. These are people who don't read newspapers, who resent and fear of better education or a different background – whose main quality is resilience and toughness. Trump, a superlative salesman if nothing else, knew his target audience. He knew that if riled up and terrified, and pointed at an enemy, real or imagined, resentful Americans would tear that enemy to bits. So he riled them up – he conducted a disgracefully racist, misogynistic, and divisive campaign. It was cynical to the core and fed with hyperbole, hypocrisy and outright lie, but, of course, it worked.

It'd be easy to assign the tenacity on the part of Trump's people to the obvious education gap between their side and ours, but that point of view trumpets the cultural elitism his people resent. Our differences do come from a schism in perspective. As far as I can gather, they were motivated by economic fear and the threat of the Other, the immigrant allegedly stealing all their jobs, the cheap corporations shipping them to sweatshops overseas. They heard the bellowed promises of a mountebank and they bought them. In time, they may come to regret their gullibility.

But our belief, in some ways, was just as gullible. We liberals put our faith in the perfectibility of man, in the value of justice and reason, and the overwhelming decency of the oppressed. What did we get for it? A story:

A few days after the election my shrink, who lives in Atlanta, called me in the middle of the night. She'd just awoken in tears. (I will leave it to the reader to appreciate this reversal in our classic roles, but understand we've been personal friends for two decades.) Haunting her mind was a remark by a millennial in a group therapy she runs. Brilliant – a scientist – and Hispanic, this 26-year-old had listened to what my therapist had said about the election and opined "You white people cannot know how oppression feels!" This to a woman active in civil rights and gay lib for forty-five years.

I think it is past time for liberals to recognize the beam in our own eye. The rights of people of color have long been one of our principal foci. Considering our national history and the resentment that surfaced so brutally in this election, it's clear that insuring their rights should remain one of our primary aims. Alas, in some pockets of black and latino population, this attention has produced not cohesive and political consciousness but a sense of entitlement and a resentment of being taken for granted. It's lazy, negligent and ungrateful. I call it the O.J. Syndrome. People Hillary worked for all her life, women and minorities, left her in the lurch.

More difficult – in fact, all but impossible – to understand than ethnic minorities are the majority of educated female voters, who supported Trump. Cynicism is an easy way out: “Every woman adores a fascist” wrote Sylvia Plath in her masterpiece, “Daddy”, and it's too too easy to find in Trump the bully-boy women always find compelling. But this feeling is adolescent bitterness and nonsense. I prefer to believe that economics was behind the female voters' idiocy, too – worry about immigrants and plant closings trumping, ha-bloody-ha, the insults and obvious misogyny of a spoiled, entitled toad. *Save our families' jobs and you can talk all the trash you want.*

Nor should we accept the explanations of those who ignored the clear choice they were offered and *did not vote*. Such numbers totaled out to almost half the voters. God rot them. I don't care about their reasons, I'm not impressed by their pretenses, their excuses are just noise. They were, to put it simply, bad citizens. Selfishness can be understood, laziness no. It is time we stopped giving such people a moral pass based on their bloc.

Add to these imbecilities a star-struck Media desperate to report on Trump and sink Hillary – who can deny they gave the impression of corruption for which there was no repeat no evidence (I underscore the e-mail nonsense)? – and polling that targeted the wrong America, and Tuesday shouldn't have been much of a shock. We really were at a pivotal moment between justice, competence and hope and bigotry, hackwork and feat. Injustice and fear triumphed. This country is screwed.

Reconciliation? No. This free man can't find much, Mr. Auden, to praise. Yes, the sun still shines and the sky is still blue and the cool breeze refreshes and the flowers till bloom in the spring, tra-la. And maybe most of the people who made the public mistake of their lives and voted for Trump aren't the lathered brutes we saw at his rallies. They're good parents, loyal friends, fine cooks, and able dancers. with sweet photos of their grandchildren framed on their walls. And they have butchered my country for the rest of my life. There is an oppression in the land. An ugliness. A vindictive selfishness and rejection of wit. And they voted for it. It makes sense to assume that voters who respond to a racist, misogynist message and messenger should be racist and misogynist themselves. The Evil championed in Trump's campaign is triumphant, thanks to them. A good heart cannot be generous towards that. I will love who I love and no vote will change that, but damn it, Trump voter, you really screwed the pooch.

Trump is acting calmly in these post-election days. As his body language betrayed in his first meeting with Obama, he is out of his depth and knows he has a lot to learn. The Republican hacks he beckons to his aid, however, provide no solace with professionalism, but throw their disgraced doctrines at our future. Where American law will be hamstrung by a winger SCOTUS ... American science will be crippled by irrelevant religious doctrine ... and American bureaucrats will register Muslims on their entry into the United States, citing Japanese relocation during World War II, the second most unAmerican action ever taken under our flag, as legitimate precedent. Bottom and permanent line: the American image will be maimed by tawdry and cheap standards of beauty and power. The country we will pass on to our successors will be tragically less than we have dreamed. It will be cynical, vulgar, bigoted, trivial, stupid, and mean.

So what do we do? Follow Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren. Fight with whatever law we have left, and relate one to one, being fair and being generous, resisting the tide washing over the land. *Be secret and exult. For of all things known, that is most difficult.*



A special shout-out to Greg Benford, by the way, who predicted the evaporation of the Obama Coalition as long ago as Sasquan, no less.



This bi-month saw the loss of two leftist warriors and news about two others, one affirmative, the other not. I had personal encounters with three of them.



Tom Hayden died, the most articulate member of the Chicago 8 (or 7, after Bobby Seale's muzzling and severance →). Tom used to drop over to Barrington Hall at Berkeley to talk local politics. He was a fine fella and a dedicated friend to freedom, justice ... if not the American way. A chorus of Graham Nash's "Chicago" in his honor – and for Froines, Dellinger, Rubin, Hoffman, Davis and Weiner, shown here with Tom, going clockwise. I may have mixed up Weiner and Froines; everybody did.

Member of another *Magnificent 7*, and the last survivor of that crew, Robert Vaughn died. Far more than being *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, Vaughn had an Academy Award nom to his credit (*The Young Philadelphians*), a Ph.D. in Political Science and a long history of liberal activism. Saw him once on the street in Manhattan. The theme to *Magnificent 7* and *Man from U.N.C.L.E.* both play in my mental background.

The parole granted Leslie Van Houten, mentioned a couple of issues ago, was denied by California Governor Jerry Brown. That settles that. No ballet dresses or book tours for my onetime correspondent. She remains where she is. Film director John Waters wrote that she deserved release, and for a long time after our interview 20 years ago I felt the same. Don't know about that, now, but I do know that considering her wit, her intelligence, her savvy, and the rebellion Charles Manson twisted into his own brand of psychosis, the waste of her life is a damned shame.

I never saw Bob Dylan in person, although a crazy girl I knew walked up to his California estate with a portrait she'd painted of him and later married his gardener. He recently won the Nobel Prize for Literature. The moment marks a stunning departure for the guardians of mankind's highest honor, stepping away from the world of the printed word into the universe of song. Since the Nobel committee was willing to make this departure, I wish they'd instead gone into the cinema, and honored Ingmar Bergman before he died, but it's a welcome gesture of respect to our times, which were a'changing.



RATTLE ON ... READERS' RESPONSES TO THE LAST FEW ISSUES

Bill Plott

**190 Crestview Circle
Montevallo AL 35115
wjplott@aol.com**

What a delightful recollection of Muhammad Ali. I turned against him when he became a Muslim. I thought at the time he was merely draft-dodging. Also, at that time, I still had a conservative, supportive nature about the system. It wasn't until a few years later that I realized if you had power and money (are you listening, Donald?) you could easily get out of the draft through student deferments or through an opening suddenly appearing in a National Guard unit previously reported at capacity. I mourn his passing. When he lit the torch at the Atlanta Olympics, I cried like a baby. What an incredible moment in sports.

Although I think the punk swimmer got off light in the California rape case, I agree with you that the recall petition on the judge was ill advised. Defeat the judge in the polls, but don't set a precedent of recalling every judge who renders an opinion you don't like. That's an invitation to chaos.

Rich Lynch

rw_lynch@yahoo.com

Concerning David Truesdale's expulsion from MidAmeriCon 2, you mention that: "No one should be expelled from a science fiction convention unless he or she has done or said some physical injury to another person." The new era of codes of conduct have broadened offenses that result in being banned, including "significant interference with event operations and ... excessive discomfort to others." That's the stated reason, by the convention, for Truesdale's ousting. What he actually did, from various accounts, was to hijack a discussion panel he was moderating, taking it off-topic in an extended rant about (among other things) what he perceived as the evils of political correctness. It resulted, as you might have guessed, in a big verbal row between him and other panelists. But from my experience, if hijacking a panel is a ban-able sin, there are far more people at risk than just Truesdale. And rows among panelists have happened before without conventions taking any action. I do not in any way proscribe to any of what I understand was in Truesdale's screed, but I do think the convention took unwarranted action to toss him out. Just as I believe that, back in 1939, the committee of the very first Worldcon took unwarranted action to ban seven members of the Futurians fan club from attending.

Warren Buff

warrenbuff@gmail.com

Since I'm probably the only person involved in the decision to boot Truesdale who reads your zine, I figure that if someone is going to speak in defense of the con in any informed manner, it's me. Granted, this is my opinion of the matter, not the convention's (which is already out in the public, since Truesdale made the email correspondence public), and not everything I know is something I can share publicly.

What's not clear from much of the discussion of the panel, or from the audio Truesdale provides, is that an audience member, from what I understand a friend of Dave's, became quite loud and menacing when the other panelists reacted to Truesdale's diatribe with disgust. This large dude loomed over another member of the audience as he shouted and shook his finger at those he disagreed with. As this went on, Truesdale nodded and laughed, only to suddenly wake up to his role as moderator when other members of the audience tried to call this man to task, saying that they'd have time for questions from the audience later.

Also significantly, Truesdale came to the panel with his remarks prepared, and a prop -- a (fake?) pearl necklace he brought out to denigrate those he disagreed with as "clutching their pearls". That sort of sexist abuse shouldn't be coming from the head table, let alone as a planned remark from the purported moderator. Nothing in the panel title or description gave the impression of a political item -- to all appearances, this was a discussion of the wealth of markets for short fiction in the field today.

So put all that together -- Truesdale used a position of (modest) authority to derail a panel into an attack on those he disagreed with right from the get-go, complete with props and prepared remarks. He then egged on an audience member whose aggression was way out of line. And he waited until his last program item, and the only one he was moderating, to do this. That all adds up to a deliberate effort to disrupt the convention by insulting its members in attendance.

Given your background in criminal defense, I expect you're familiar with the idea that deliberate and planned misbehavior is judged more harshly than misbehavior that arises in the heat of the moment. I'd also expect you're familiar with the idea that misbehavior by someone who has a duty to others is judged more harshly than misbehavior by someone without such a duty. Accepting the moderator's chair means taking on a duty to lead the panel in a (hopefully interesting and entertaining) discussion as close to the intended topic as is reasonable. It's not a grave and sacred duty, perhaps, but it is a duty to our community. Dave Truesdale came to that panel with an elaborate plan to violate that duty, and proceeded to carry it out.

He wasn't sanctioned for his opinions, but for using a position of authority to deliberately insult the convention's membership, in clear violation of the convention's published rules. Ultimately, this decision rested with our Chair, who agreed with the recommended course of action from the con's Incident Response Team. I don't expect everyone to agree with the convention's decision, but I do firmly believe that we have been far too lax in the past in allowing abusive behavior at our conventions, and that it's cost us members I'd probably love to hang out with. Maybe, eventually, taking a stand against deliberate fuggheadedness will reverse that process.

John Purcell
3744 Marielene Circle
College Station, TX 77845
Askance73@gmail.com

Well how about that? I just realized that you and I each have a small personalzine with 15 issues out at present. There's a bit of synchronicity, eh? Or just coinky-dink. Either way, I just thought I would point that out.

I envy you having the chance to meet Muhammad Ali, albeit briefly, and while at a DeepSouthCon, no less. Okay, so Ali wasn't attending the convention, but still: how cool is that? You had the chance to mug with The Champ, arguably one of the greatest boxers/athletes of all time. Ali's presence in this world is missed, no doubt about that, and I have always admired his devotion to principles and peace. Godspeed, Champ. We thank you for showing us how to live our lives through your selfless acts of respect, dignity, and grace.

As for the Pulse nightclub massacre, this tragic, sad event only proves that both federal and state governments must do all they can to enforce stricter gun laws and enforce them. By this, I do not advocate taking guns away from people: far from it. The types and amounts of arms need to be limited, and more thorough background checks must be implemented. The wrong people are getting guns too easily, and that is the key to stemming the tide of gun violence washing over America. Just this morning (Saturday, July 23rd) I was reading an article that stated 2/3rds of Americans recently surveyed are in favor of restricting the sale of semi-automatic AR-15 rifles, plus limiting the sale of ammo magazines holding over 10 rounds per clip. Not surprisingly, more Republican respondents are not in favor of these measures, but it was pointed out that even those numbers are declining to slide more in the direction of what is considered reasonable gun regulation. An interesting trend that obviously will play strongly in November.

On a related side topic, by the time the next *Spartacus* comes out we will know if Hillary Clinton's VP pick will actually be her choice of Senator Tim Kaine of Virginia. Personally, I would have preferred a more progressive choice, such as Housing Secretary Julian Castro or New Jersey Senator Cory Booker. Kaine is a centrist, one whose views closely align with Secretary Clinton's, and this could be a problem. She needs to prove that her positions are going to be much more progressive and constructive towards a multicultural nation with an economic vision to attack the massive income disparities that exist in America. This country is run by a two-party oligarchy, and that must be stopped. In my mind - and I know you disagree with me on this, Guy - I see Hillary Clinton as part of the problem, not a solution. I

cannot fully support her as President, but the alternative is far worse. The Republican National Convention just ended - with the ticket of Trump-Pence the end result - and I will do everything I can to ensure that what's left of the GOP to not take up residence at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, in Washington, DC. My fear is that should Donald Trump win this election, there are three potential scenarios which all result in the same outcome: (1) Trump is assassinated within the first six months, promoting the traditional, GOP conservative Pence to President; (2) Trump is impeached, elevating Pence to President; (3) under threat of impeachment, Trump resigns, which again puts Pence in the White House. In all three scenarios, the preferred Republican traditionalist of the GOP establishment becomes President. Not good because Pence will adhere to party lines, not be an unpredictable megalomaniac like Trump, and help the GOP tighten its reigns around the neck of America. Hate to say this, but all three scenarios are extremely likely.

In a lighter vein, Valerie and I have not seen any new movies yet this year, and probably won't. Also, our finances are such that attending MidAmeriCon II in Kansas City, MO is out. Should my wife land a better paying job in the near future, there would be a positive effect on convention and event attendance plans. Keep your fingers crossed.

John has announced his TAFF candidacy!

Al Bouchard
586 Kinglet Street (NEW ADDRESS!)
Rochester Hills MI 48309
ajlbouchard@gmail.com
RE: *Spartacus* #15

I have been very disheartened by the political feeding frenzy of the past year and a half; sloughing aside the most-mentioned "third-party" candidates, and I mean that sincerely, we are left with a person who has undergone for approximately thirty-some years the most searching, brutal, and partisan inquiries since Tomas de Torquemada led the Spanish Inquisition, and has acquitted herself handily, and Donald J. Trump.

(As an aside, many of my "friends" [a/k/a people I know] on Facebook have come up with extremely creative and insulting epithets to rename/describe/insult Candidate Trump; I read them, I find them amusing, but I will not quote any here. Do your own research.)

Is it just me, or is Trump living up to the definition in the Constitution of the United States (Article III) which reads in part:

Treason against the United States, shall consist only in levying War against them, or in adhering to their Enemies, giving them Aid and Comfort. No Person shall be convicted of Treason unless on the Testimony of two Witnesses to the same overt Act, or on Confession in open Court.

I have been through enough *sturm und drang* in my life to not need more when it comes to trying to decide who runs my country. The last member of the Republican party I would even consider voting for (on a regional or national level) was Charles Matthias, the former Senator from Maryland during my high school years. He was a decent man, a principled man, and the only Republican on Richard Nixon's enemies list.

In my mind, a high distinction indeed.

Lloyd Penney
1706-24 Eva Rd.
Etobicoke, ON
Canada M9C 2B2
penneys@allstream.net

Thank you for a real paper copy of *Spartacus* 15. I watch the news, and it's been horrific, so I can see so much that will probably be going into issue 16. However, let's deal with the issue at hand...

I will be honest, I never thought much of Mohammed Ali, I thought he was a blowhard. Besides, being Canadian, I knew more about George Chuvalo, who fought with Ali, and nearly won. But you are

correct, it was all an act, and he was a gentleman to the end. It was a shame disease took his voice and thoughts away from him.

The public has weak recall. Even the most horrific of stories like the shootings at the Pulse club in Orlando fade quickly off the front page, and fade from the public's collective minds. And then, there's shootings in Baton Rouge (twice, now), and another shooting in Minnesota...when does it end? It just gets worse, and is so because of the love of the gun. Not being American, I am like many who see such madness, and the love of the semi-sacred gun will ensure that the interpretation of your Second Amendment will continue to let people be killed, either by criminals, or worse, by police officers who seem terrified in the commission of their jobs. Seeing Lewis and Warren having a sit-in just showed me how little these two parties do not talk to one another, and how single-minded they are.

Hillary Clinton is the better of the two party candidates, but Trump mirrors how many people exude hatred and racism and misogyny. Seeing how much the American presidency affects the entire world, much of the world will be watching that fateful day in November, and fearing a relapse into fascism.

Trump is a horrific candidate, and so was Ted Cruz. I am so glad Cruz proved so distasteful to all voters. I do wonder if it's time for the US to have at least one new party. I think it is needed. As for the Brexit, I don't think anyone truly knew what the reaction to this would be, and now that billions of pounds sterling has been lost, they sadly know, and all those who led the campaign have quietly walked away, except for the idiot Boris Johnson, who I expect will embarrass himself on the world stage.

A little something fannish from us...we will be going to England in less than a month. We will be tourists in London, we will see the Harry Potter facilities in Watford, and spend the August bank holiday weekend in Lincoln, attending the Asylum, the biggest steampunk event in the world. It all makes up for the fact we couldn't be at the London Worldcon in 2014. Should be great fun.

Rich Dengrove
2651 Arlington Dr. #302
Alexandria VA 22306
RichD22426@aol.com

Does politics invade the courtroom? It sounds like it does too much. However, I expect judges are more resistant to it than an average person. For an average person, our constitutional rights mean nothing unless they're the ones being railroaded.

There are some advantages to a light sentence. For one thing, juries will be more willing to convict. Years ago, an ex-con was advocating that people guilty of sexual harassment be convicted of indecent exposure. That way, the accused were more likely to be convicted and, in addition, they would suffer embarrassment. Of course [this] would hard to sell to a hardliner.

Or to an attorney, determined to have a defendant convicted only of the appropriate crime of which he could be proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. No other consideration should matter.



In this era of sickening politics, **science fiction** has been a welcome diversion.

In the universe of **books**: *Death's End*. From my review on Facebook: The epic *Three-Body Problem* trilogy comes to an end. You may recall that I cheered – deliriously – when the first installment won the Hugo, and nominated the second, *The Dark Forest*, the following year. *Death's End*, like the others, is reminiscent of Arthur C. Clarke and E.E. Smith, universe-spanning, physics-stretching, sun-popping, rife with cosmic ideas and a story that warps time and creation. I got the feeling that some of its concepts were introduced and then abandoned without development, but Cixin seems to be trying to encompass the whole of the universe in his story, and that is an admirable vision. SPOILER ALERT: it's a dark vision, some might say paranoid, but love wins out. To other readers, a challenge: what does the first chapter have to do with the rest of the huge novel?

Wildside Press has published my father-in-law Joe Green's newest collection of short stories – his first of this century – *Running Wild*. Reprinted from *F&SF*, *Analog* and on-line publications, there's a huge variety of material, but I must admit that my favorite writing in this terrific book are the introductions Joe's penned for the stories. They sound just like the guy I sit around with, watching TV and every so often discussing science fiction. They reflect his long life, his varied career – construction worker to NASA writer – and the intelligence and professionalism that have always marked his life and still blaze in him. 85 years old, and every morning, he's in his office, writing. These stories are all well-turned, classic in tone, and lessons in economy and power. It isn't just because I sleep in his house that I highly recommend this one.

The TV season is a bulge with science fiction shows, most pretty terrible, some fairly good, a couple really interesting. I understand *Walking Dead* is losing viewers as the story of uber-fascist Negan and his beloved Lucille gets swinging. This decline could come from the first episode of the season, denounced as simple "torture porn" which may have pushed the envelope too far. Or perhaps Negan's storyline is just too nihilistic for a fan base used to people conquering hideous odds and foes to bear. I can handle it, but boy, do I want that asshole to Get His, and I understand that doesn't happen in the graphic novels until way down the line.



It's fairly generic eyewash, but *Timeless* has had its moments, some good fx, and Rosy – an expert – says they've mostly done well with the period costuming (if not the makeup and hairstyles). Time travel is a difficult subject to do well, but *Timeless* has rather ably touched on the changes wrought by interference in the past, and I like the clever ways they've used the black character. The guy wouldn't Fit In the same way in 1942 Germany, say, as in 2016 America. Dammit, though, I wish the male lead would shave. Enough with the hairy heroes.

The major new SF event on the tube is, of course, *Westworld*. I cannot decide if the show is promising or if it will end up like *Lost*, a pointless meandering mess. The premise is Phil Dickian and strong: robot "Hosts" at a future adult amusement park begin to gain consciousness and conscience. But what of the subplots, the mysterious maze Ed Harris' "man in black" is seeking, the influence of the presumably deceased Arnold, co-founder of the Westworld park. And what **SPOILER ALERT** could possibly justify the ridiculous plot twist where the park's most inquisitive and sensitive employee turns out to be a Host himself? Reminiscent of the theme-destroying idea considered and thankfully discarded by the creators of *Bladerunner*, who thought it might be *really cool* to make Rick Deckard a replicant too. Never mind that the idea would destroy the whole point of the movie ... Well, we'll hang on and see where *Westworld* goes. I just hope it goes somewhere.

Movies: They're not SF, but I need to mention *Deepwater Horizon* and *Hacksaw Ridge*. Non-Louisianans might not be reduced to tears by *Deepwater*, which deals with terrifying realism with the explosion on a Gulf of Mexico oil rig, but I was. It's my past: I used to take unemployment claims from oil rig workers and I felt like I knew those guys. *Hacksaw Ridge*, Mel Gibson's return to form and to movieland approval, is the amazing story of a conscientious objector medic who hauled 75-100 injured GIs off an Okinawa ridge bombarded by friendly fire and occupied by merciless Japanese. The war in the South Pacific was as close to Total War as America has ever fought – no quarter, no mercy, and damn few prisoners (a third of our POWs died in Japanese hands; the Germans lost a tenth that percentage). Desmond Doss, a little guy whose religion forbade him to carry a weapon, took it on and came home a titan – and with a Congressional. Epic stuff.

SPOILERS FOLLOW. The most thoughtful and moving film – not just science fiction film – of this entire year, *Arrival* utilizes the science fiction form to convey a personal and profoundly human tale. Its subject is the value of love. It's a wonderful film, challenging, steeped in SFnal ideas but not restricted to them. The title of the Ted Chiang tale which gave rise to this movie tells much about its eventual theme: "The Story of Your Life". Like all of Chiang's work, it is SF as Art, but Art without pretense – accessible, touching, and compelling. It's definitely on tap for my Hugo ballot, not that I give it a chance against *Deadpool*, but this *Spartacus* is bitter enough. I celebrate *Arrival* as a thing triumphant in the universe of science fiction film.

And now farewell. A good Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's to you all.



To a Friend Whose Work Has Come to Nothing

Now all the truth is out,
Be secret and take defeat
From any brazen throat,
For how can you compete,
Being honor bred, with one
Who were it proved he lies
Were neither shamed in his own
Nor in his neighbors' eyes;
Bred to a harder thing
Than Triumph, turn away
And like a laughing string
Whereon mad fingers play
Amid a place of stone,
Be secret and exult,
Because of all things known
That is most difficult.

- -- William Butler Yeats

