



SPARTACUS NO. 72

A zine of opinion and bluster from GUY LILLIAN III + 1390 Holly Avenue Merritt Island FL
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Greetings, all. March it is, 2024, Spring has sprung upon this household, freeing your humble, obedient field slave GHLLIII from the chill of 55-degree temperatures (yes, how Florida suffers) and the burden of a legion of doctors, lined up out the doorway and down the block, waiting to poke and provoke me according to their various specialties. As the month dawns, I have two to go, and I might not be able to afford my dentist until summer, at which time I'll just mail him my teeth.

Rosie and I have a trip to **Iceland** to look forward to in April, and a spiffy **Super Bowl** to look back on from January, which justifies the illustration on this issue's first page. For this was not really the Super Bowl of the first overtime in championship history or the heroism of the Chief's young QB, it was the Super Bowl of **Taylor Swift**.

Here she is depicted being blessed and protected by the God of Love in a parody of the mawkish portraits of Donald Trump *faux* evangelicals love to tout. Considering the compassionate fashion in which she spreads her fortune among worthy charities, I daresay she deserves a divine shoulder rub more than the swindler, predator and possible traitor normally so depicted.

Her running back boyfriend bellows like a boiled bull and I've never heard the woman sing, but hooray for her anyhow. And welcome to *Spartacus* #72, March 2024.

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Now that his squalid name has been mentioned, I might as well talk **Trump**. It's a depressing thing to do; I yearn for the day when I never have to do so again. He and his are a blight on the conscience of our country.

It's been a mixed month for the orange-hued monster. His campaign for the Republican presidential nomination glides effortlessly towards success, with primary after primary falling before him. His stooges on the Supreme Court cleverly helping him delay his criminal trials until after election day. Georgia wastes its time on a pointless investigation of a prosecutor's love life, the reptilian Republicans in Congress kowtows to the whims of the orange-utan and sits on their hands instead of voting on vital business – e.g. the Southern border and aid to Ukraine, their avowed purpose to make Joe Biden look ineffective. The media falls all over itself fretting about Biden's age and ignores the many psychiatrists who have opined that Trump himself is in the throes of dementia. Everyone hears about the *de facto* convictions in legitimate courts for rape and business fraud, but few seem to give a rat's patootie. Trump's greatest hope in this electoral season is the laziness of the average American intelligence.

But there is trouble in Trumpville, too. It comes from that "few" mentioned above, some of whom wear judges' robes or jurors' badges. Thanks to the law, Trump's alleged business empire is facing imminent collapse, burdened with financial judgments amounting to half a *billion* dollars. He must fork over a gigantic amount to appeal those civil decisions against him. Once the phony delays and distractions are shot, he has to face criminal charges he may well lose, barring him not only from holding office but also from breathing free air.

And there is the fundamental idea behind all of American civics, a faith that we the people are worthy of governing ourselves, that we're not the fools MAGAts hope we are and libtards *fear* we are.

I devoutly hope this is so. I hit three-quarters of a century on Moonday this July, and have no desire to spend what time this bod has left convinced of the mindlessness and soullessness of my fellow countrymen.

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It's old news now, but I must hail the magnificent **Bobbi Armbruster**, honored with SF Fandom's Big Heart Award for 2023. Having adored Bobbi since meeting her at Suncon in 1977, I can attest that no heart in fandom is bigger nor deserves the accolade more.

Not every honor bestowed at the last Worldcon is so uncontroversial. I refer all to the Chris Barkley/Jason Sanford article in *File:770* on or just before 2/14/24, and responses thereto, especially Adam Morgan's piece in no less a vehicle than *Esquire*. The subject: **Hugos**.

Here's my understanding. American members of the Chengdu Hugo committee, arbitrarily disqualified from competition several works that had received enough nominations to make the final ballot.

Why? No one would or could explain. But the optics were quite suggestive. Considering the authoritarian government in China, and the sense that the disqualifications were leveled against critics of the regime, it looked like the Hugo committee were either obeying surreptitious cautions from a dictatorial regime or denying SFnal artists and works to avoid causing political offense. Whether under serendipitous direction or on their own accord, such measures go completely against the grain of SF fandom, and are unacceptable.

Disgust runs throughout the hobby. There is talk that our awards are forever besmirched. What should be done? The promised rules requiring that all disqualifications of potential Hugo finalists be justified with specifics is a necessary step. Furthermore, there has been talk of – and some action – removing committee members involved in this fiasco from all future authority in Worldcons. I think that a case-by-case evaluation process needs to be followed here, based on a full & complete accounting of the facts by the people concerned. I know some of those souls and enjoy their company; the first step in rehabilitating their reputations must be up to them: they have to come clean.

Also, in response to rumors that the 2023 Hugos should be recalled, or that winners now regard their trophies as dishonestly won, I maintain that the Hugo winners from Chengdu *are* the Hugo winners. No matter how flawed – or let's just say the word, *corrupt* – the nomination process, the works and names that went forth on the official Hugo ballot were *on* the official Hugo ballot, and they won because they received more votes *through* that ballot. None of the winners are alleged to be at fault in this debacle, and considering the popularity and quality of many of the victors – I think specifically of “Rabbit Test”, considered not only an excellent story but an *important* one – there is no reason to take away this seminal honor. Yes, future Worldcon publications may see fit to list the Chengdu winners with an asterix, and the cheated contenders which *should* have been nominated should be listed in footnotes that run in future convention souvenir/program books. But the Hugos that have been presented should stay with those who took them home. The winners should stand.

The Hugos brought me into organized fandom – with help from some kind and generous writers, who tolerated the attention of a pushy, dopy neofan. I'm proud of my 14 nominations. Even though that day has passed for me, I still enjoy the Hugos, follow the contests, collect the winners. Yes, the awards can go awry – the Jeanette Ng episode demonstrates that. But they can also entertain fans, honor excellence and profit professionals. They're integral to our hobby. Rescue is requisite.

Here's a perspective I respect s much as any other:

Some Thoughts on the Hugos – A Facebook post from **ASTRID BEAR**

I live in a house with a lot of Hugos. The oldest is from 1961, won by my dad, Poul Anderson, for “The Longest Voyage.” The newest is from 1987, won by my husband, Greg Bear, for “Tangents.” Hugo and me, we go way back.

Loosely inspired by the Oscars, the award was devised by the SF/F fans of 1953 to honor what the members of that year's Worldcon thought were the best works of the previous year. It's gone through a lot of refinements over the years; categories added, dropped, reinstated – they didn't even do it in 1954, but it's been continuous since 1955. Members of the convention nominate, a final ballot is compiled, members of the convention vote on the winners. Compare to the Locus Award (started in 1971, anyone can nominate, but subscribers' votes count double, and there is no voting on a final ballot) World Fantasy Award, (started in 1975; members nominate, judges add to the nominations, judges choose the final winners), The Dragon Award (started in 2016; people nominate, opaque process chooses, San Diego Comic Con's Inkpot Awards (started in 1974; even more opaque --they are just awarded). The Nebula Awards (started in 1965) are nominated by and voted on by the SFFWA members, and one has to meet professional qualifications to become a member, so it is a bit of a different kettle of fish.

So the Hugos are the longest running, fan based award recognizing written works in the SF/F field. The OG. It is known outside the field, thrills the winners, can give careers a boost, and helps sell books.

The Hugos have not been without controversy and hand-wringing before. There was a rumor that members of the con committee of the 1968 Baycon withheld their votes until it was clear that the hilarious hippy zeitgeist novel, *THE BUTTERFLY KID*, wasn't going to win and need their group votes for a different work to knock it to second place. The 1970 Heicon, the first Worldcon held outside of an Anglophone country, raised worries among some American fans that one could go to a Perry Rhodan novel, the wildly popular German space opera series, that according to Wikipedia, is even now the largest selling SF series in the world. But that did not happen. A little research shows that nominating ballots had to be mailed to a Heicon committee member in Germany, so I suspect the awards administration was completely German fan-run and the ballot and final results were exactly as cast and no shenanigans done. Then there was whole Sad Puppies debacle at 2015 Sasquan. But in none of those cases were vast swathes of nominating ballots completely thrown out.

The Chinese fans who eagerly looked at the works on the recommended reading list put out by *SF World* (monthly circulation currently about 130,000, which is most likely is greater than the combined circulation of all US SF/F magazines) nominated in large numbers. And why not? They played by the rules, bought their memberships, joined our community. Their votes deserved to be counted as much as that of someone who's been going to cons since the Hugos were first awarded, or anyone else. The writers they hoped to honor deserve to be celebrated and read widely outside of China. The fans deserve to have their voices heard.

We should be better than this. I think that most of us are. We need to figure out how to go forward with institutional transparency and integrity.

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The most positive SFnal event to occur of late has been the release of *Dune part II*. Reviews are ecstatic, not only in our community of kooks but throughout the cinematic world. I understand that, for a time, the film had a higher approval rate among both critics and audience than *The Shawshank Redemption* or *The Godfather*,

It merits praise, all right. Although the second half of the Frank Herbert novel is less interesting by far than the first half, being dominated by battles and knife fights instead of imperial politics, it is also more brute *fun* – and so is this film. (I single out Austin Butler's inspired portrayal of Feyd au-Rautha and Rebecca Ferguson, who has my permission to kick me to death any time she feels the urge. I believe the politically correct Woke term is *Hotter than six badgers in a steel pot*.) I wish that one of the two current films or one of their inferior predecessors had filmed the ecologist's death in the desert – it's the novel's best scene – but sequels are promised.

Speaking of movies, we had the **Oscars**, an annual ritual I've followed religiously for decades and enjoyed much this year. Quick, crisp, funny ... and mostly just. Every honor handed to *Oppenheimer* was well-deserved, and occasionally moving. It was a howl to hear Robert Downey Jr. reference his "hoosegow" time when he picked up his award, and a tear-jerker moment when Cillian Murphy assumed the heights of the acting profession by dedicating his Oscar to peacekeepers. Only the winner from Ukraine hit harder, invoking the suffering of his people under Russia's assault. I would have preferred Sandra Huller in *Anatomy of a Fall* as Best Actress to Emma Stone's wacko antics in *Poor Things*, a movie I found mean-spirited, but hey: this was the first year America's met the *fraulein*. She'll be around.

But there was fun, too – The Japanese crew for *Godzilla Minus One* carrying little Godzillas – and going batshit – as they fetched the big brute's first Oscar. Jimmy Kimmel's reluctant streaker. Noble Messi, the award-winning sheepdog from *Anatomy of a Fall*, pretending to pee on Matt Damon's Hollywood star. (Damon and Kimmel have a *faux* feud going.) Ryan Gosling singing "I'm Just Ken" into Margot Robbie's ear – and what an ear – and arguing with the divine Emily Blunt over the effects of "Barbenheimer," the lucky accident of release dates that so profited both of their blockbuster films. Anya Taylor-Joy's golden hair cascading like molten sunlight down the flawless slope of her alabaster back ... huh? Oh yeah. 74-year-old married man, right.

Any bets on next year?

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IN THE DAYS OF THE COMMENT reactions to recent issues

Indy Bill Cavalier

Via Facebook through Curt Phillips

The Best News of All!

Rusty Burke will leave rehab and be coming home on Tuesday March 12!!!

His progress continues to be steady and amazing. He is still unsteady for walking by himself, but he is using a walker. He is standing better as his legs strengthen and he has been practicing on stairs with the aid of a handrail. (Something we can all relate to!) He has said, "My gait is like Lurch!"

His voice is still a bit hoarse and he says "My cadence is off." But his communication and speech is better every day. This is particularly noted by friends who only see him once or twice a week.

Rusty's vitals are good and he feels even better now that the feeding tube port has been removed.

His obscure references really show how much he's coming back. While taking a card memory test, where one needs to describe something written on a card without using the words on the card (EG: Fireman); his card said BUS STOP, to which Rusty replied: "Please share my umbrella". (He was referring to the Hollies' song from the 60's and had to explain his answer to some in the group.)

Coming home to a familiar environment will make things immeasurably better. I'm sure he would love to hear from y'all in the form of a card or a letter: 408 G St. SE, Washington, DC 20003.

All of the good, healing thoughts and prayers continue to help and make the old boy stronger, so don't stop now!

As Shelly said, "He's coming back!"

Praise God! A reminder: Rusty is a onetime Knoxville fan who played an essential role in setting up Robert E. Howard Days in Cross Plains TX. He was badly injured in a fall in December, but the spirit of Crom is with him! Keep it up, Rustoid!

Lloyd & Yvonne Penney

From:penneys@bell.net

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Be aware, the whole world is watching Trump's antics and furies, and many see him as the most dangerous man in politics today, perhaps the most dangerous man in the world. Dismiss him at your peril. Americans seem so polarized, he could easily win. If he likes his first day as a dictator, who knows where he'd go from there? He probably has already written a sheaf of executive orders to turn the world upside down. His remarks about not defending other NATO members if he feels they haven't spent enough on defence is a sneak preview of his second-term management style. I think we all know what will happen...Biden will sneak in for re-election, and Trump will scream FIX!!! Again. Please, SCOTUS, judge with law, and not politics.

Too many friends and peers leaving us. *Ansible's* RIP list seems to get larger every issue. It depresses me, and I know it depresses Dave Langford.

For the first time in a few years, I nominated for the FAAn Awards. For once in some years, I felt like I could accurately nominate for the various categories. I have reduced the number of zines I respond to, but that is more for the amount of free time I have for it. *Amazing Stories* takes up just as much time, if not more.[On *Spar* #71] While I recognized Fred

Chappell's name, I never did talk to him or correspond; I don't believe our paths ever crossed. By the looks of it, that is my loss ...

Bob Jennings

From:fabficbks@aol.com

I just read your new *Spartacus* with the remembrance of Fred Chappell. I will take your word, and the word of the assorted literary critics, that his mundane poetry and novels were wonderful stuff; groundbreaking examinations of human spirit under stress and in development, but I've never read any of them.

I have read a lot of his fantasy and science fiction. Despite the letter you quoted in which he dumps on science fiction as being formulaistic drivel serving merely to provide sensational short term entertainment, in his own life he returned to the genre repeatedly. A quick check of *The Speculative Fiction Database* shows that he wrote quite a lot of fantastic fiction, particularly in the 1990s and into this new century, so I certainly see some sort of dichotomy in his statements vs his actual creative efforts.

I remember most of his stf stories as being very good. I never read the novel *Dagon*, but now that you've mentioned it I suppose I'll have to put that on my ever renewable list of Book To Read.

I think it is also interesting that a talented author can lead dual lives, appealing to entirely separate audiences with his output. I think SF fans will remember his work fondly, but I rather doubt that the residents in the world of fine literature will even acknowledge his considerable talents as a writer of fantasy and science fiction.

*Fred tried to merge his love of fantasy with his literary interests, a union he seemed to parody in "Science Fiction Water Letter to Guy Lillian." In **Dagon** he uses the Lovecraft mythos to expound on the value of human suffering. His World Fantasy Award stories do much the same. I heard rumors from Orson Scott Card – who also lived in Greensboro – that they were collaborating on a project, but what became of it? Dunno.*

Rich Lynch

From:rw_lynch@yahoo.com;

Concerning the current election year, you write that: "If the Republicans had sense – a substantial 'if' – they'd forget the orange idiot and seriously consider Nikki Haley." Nah. Trump is rarely right about anything but when he claimed that she's not of Presidential timber, he was actually correct. She had not been willing to call Trump out for any of the shit he's been involved in – only Chris Christie did that. But now that she's the only alternative to Trump left standing (and that may not last much longer, especially if she loses the primary election in her home state of South Carolina) she's reluctantly growing a spine. This is not someone who should be in the Oval Office.

Not unless they install rubber walls.

Ray Palm

From: raypalmx@gmail.com

So was your sleep study conducted at home or did you speed a night in a sleep lab? [A very *nicd* /There was a sleep lab here in town but it folded. So it's either a home study or a trip across the lake to Burlington, VT. I've been using CPAP for sleep apnea. It takes a while to get used to the mask and sometimes it's annoying when the mask has to be adjusted to stop a leak. But it's worth it when you get some good sleep.

I had to figure out on my own that I had sleep apnea. When I was visiting friends it was mentioned I snored loudly. I remembered an article about snoring and apnea so when I saw my doctor I mentioned I wanted to have a sleep study done. If it wasn't for me diagnosing myself I would still be a zombie.

Trump. When will it end? Each juror in the E. Jean Carroll lawsuit has to remain anonymous, not revealing their name or the names of other jurors. The Don is intimidating with his MAGA mob. I wonder if I was caught with boxes of illegally removed classified documents how long would I be free. I bet within a day I would be thrown into Gitmo.

Speaking of health issues, I've had an X-ray exam, a CT scan, a full body bone scan, and an ultrasound of my thyroid. Each step of the way one test has indicated I needed another test. They haven't found anything as far as I know. They're either covering their asses or just making sure the money keeps coming in. What started the process was severe back pain. But that cleared up and so I'm on this health system treadmill with the original problem long gone.

Mark Nelson

From: mnelson@uow.edu.au

Your comment regarding the Bill of Rights "not that it isn't ingrained in every American's fiber, whether he knows it or not" seems to me to be aspirational. I wish it were true, if a non-American citizen dare utter an opinion. I don't see why a non-American citizen shouldn't be allowed to have an opinion, but I am sure that plenty of MAGA supports would tell me to shut up if I uttered any opinion if I were in the USA.

Is Trump blathering when he makes his comments about being "a dictator for a single day" or paying back his enemies? It would be nice to think that these are promises that won't be fulfilled, just as he made promises that weren't fulfilled before he was elected President. But, as you point out, it would be foolish to believe that he would not move on them.

In today's newspaper there was an article about GOP plans to advance two articles against the Head of Homeland Security "despite lacking evidence of wrongdoing". The article quotes constitutional scholars as saying that the move is "illegitimate". Though, of course, legal opinions often seem to be two a penny.

If Trump wins the next election and decides to go ahead with being "a dictator or a single day" or paying back his enemies, what do you think the Congressional Republicans will do?

Obey.

Paul Keating, one of the greatest Australian politicians and a master of the put-down, once said of an enemy that "He is simply a shiver looking for a spine to run up". Is that a fair comment about Congressional Republicans?

In retrospect do you think it's a bit untoward to say of a female politician that she has "decent looks"? But I suppose in making such a comment, you are expressing a view about the proclivities of the average American voter rather than yourself.

*Voters are only human – they respond better to a person who makes a strong or pleasant impression on the eyes. It isn't the way I vote or the best standard for choosing leaders a populace should always listen for the truth about a candidate, look foand insist on the truth, but it **is** human nature.*

With regard to your sleep study photograph. Is it my imagination, but if you removed your remaining hair you'd have a passing resemblance to Darth Vader.

*No, Luke, *I* am your Uncle Smedley.*

Heath Row

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It boggles my mind that Donald Trump remains eligible to be a candidate for the presidency. While I understand the decision by the Supreme Court not to remove Trump from the ballot in Colorado—state rights not applying to federal elections—I look forward to his criminal activities catching up with him. The ruling in the second *E. Jean Carroll v. Donald J. Trump* case is heartening (full disclosure: I once interviewed Carroll, and my mother went to college with her), but it doesn't yet seem enough to sway a majority of voters. I'm concerned

that if Trump is elected for another term, our country's democratic processes will be dismantled. That way lies authoritarianism.

More recently, the Alabama Supreme Court ruled that embryos developed via vitro fertilization are in fact children. That's unrelated to Trump, perhaps, but suggests a more general failing of our judicial system. Taking that to a logical extreme, is each individual spermatozoa, spermatozoon, or ovum a child? Is a zygote a child? How much will be done to further restrict the bodily autonomy of women while not increasing the responsibilities of the fathers? Will social services be increased and improved to care for these "children"? Or is this part of a conspiracy to keep most citizens undereducated, underemployed, unhealthy, impoverished, frightened, and otherwise unable to vote critically?

Isn't *Slow Horses* grand? My wife and I also recently watched Season 3, as well, and it's brilliant. She's also read most, if not all of the novels by Mick Herron, but I haven't read any of them yet. And Mick Jagger's song "Strange Game"! So much to like about the program. More recently, I've now dipped into *Sapphire & Steel*, a 1979-1982 series starring David McCallum. It's one of the more awkward and bizarre programs I've ever watched, and even though I began watching the fourth series and sixth serial, I'm smitten—and need to watch what preceded the episodes I've seen. The sixth serial is a doozy of an ending for the program. That this isn't more of a notable show in fandom confuses me.

I also read and enjoyed your commentary on DeepSouthCon. Like Rich Lynch, I've decided I have too many books—and comic books, and magazines. I've decided to stop buying any more printed matter if I can avoid it, as well as to divest myself of books and other items once read rather than putting them back on the shelf or in the box. So far, the Little Libraries in our neighborhood—four within easy walking distance—have benefited from that ongoing divestiture, though the recent rains in Los Angeles seems to have dampened one such Library a surprising amount. My wife and I have also been donating boxes of books to the local library for its Friends of the Library sales room. Putting books out on con freebie tables is an excellent idea!

Lloyd Penney mentioned the intent to return *Amazing Stories* to print. I'd even welcome an e-book or PDF edition rather than the free stories available online. I recently read an advanced reading copy of the forthcoming relaunch issue of *Worlds of If* magazine, and it's stellar. Word is the editors also plan to relaunch *Galaxy*. This might be the year for *Amazing Stories* to resume publication as more than a Web site.

It saddened me that you're considering a sabbatical for *The Zine Dump*. I've avoided reviewing most fanzines in my own publications largely because of *The Zine Dump*. You've been doing such a fine job. Occasional fanzine reviews have begun to show up in my multiple periodicals and the resulting *The Stf Amateur—Idea* and *Rune* in recent issues, as well as various United Fanzine Organization publications (and a mention of *Memphen* in *De Profundis* #591). Perhaps I need to reconsider my avoidance of fanzine reviews! (Or perhaps we should discuss collaborating.)

*TZD #59 is in the works simultaneously with this **Spartacus**. As I admit in its pages, I can't let my best connection with contemporary fandom drift away.*

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Some late yap dealing with **politics** – specifically Joe Biden's State of the Union speech. When it comes to the science of politics, breathes there a sharper, more savvy wit than Joe Biden's? When we watched the SotU speech, we saw decades of experience, courage and combative drive resurface in the progressive Democratic Party.

Boy, we needed this – a rousing, combative, joyous declaration of political war against Doanld Trump's brand of insane authoritarianism and *for* good sense, compassion and skilled professionalism in government. And Biden needed this – public proof that he is far more than the doddering old fool the Republicans, with the complicity of the media, have sought to depict him. Yes, he has many years behind

Bring it on.

Hmm ... when I was a kid I wanted to witness two natural horrors I thought would be cool: a tornado and an active volcano. In 2009 I got chased off the road (well, to the curb, anyway) by a genuine F2 in Shreveport. I hope I won't feel quite as foolish after seeing the volcanoes of Iceland. You will hear more about it later. Wish us luck. Say