



SPARTACUS no. 58

A zine of opinion and bluster from GUY LILLIAN III + 1390 Holly Avenue Merritt
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When I look back on the **Star Trek Lives!** convention held in New York in 1974, I find that my memories are many. Some aren't so pleasant.

Take Asimov's appearance. He spent his introduction rubbing the ass of the blonde doing the introducing. He openly bragged about his reputation and the praise visited on "The Last Question" and "Nightfall". During his Q&A I asked if he still believed in robotic superiority over humanity, and he claimed that he did. It was the only time we ever spoke. A dopey young fan challenged him to explain relativity, and when he demurred – why spend the time? – the little jerk boasted he'd "stumped" Isaac Asimov. He walked away giggling. In that moment I was thoroughly sick of fandom.

Pro-dom, too. That was a time when a certain professional was at his worst, sneering at fans condescendingly. Many seemed to think his obnoxiousness lovable, but I found him loathsome. During his speech at the '74 convention, a spazzy kid, clumsy and ill-coordinated, tripped and sprawled out painfully just in front of the dais. The pro looked through the boy with contemptuous indifference. It took me decades -- until a revelatory conversation with good Drew Sanders and the writer's heroic rescue of a Worldcon – to think of the man as anything more than a dog turd in tights.

But mostly I remember one happy moment. Janet Davis – 17, brilliant, beautiful and trekkie to her core – flew in from Atlanta for the con. (I was 25, knew Janet from southern fandom, and also knew her mother was keeping an eagle eye on "things" from afar.) I squired Janet hither and yon through Manhattan and the con and particularly recall an elevator ride we took in the hotel. We were at the front of the crowded 'vator and as we ascended, I glanced into the rear of the car. I stilled Janet's chatter and advised her to turn around. Needless to say, when Janet saw

George Takei and **Nichelle Nichols** standing there, she *flipped*. (She's now a physician. I suppose she recovered.)



The actors exited the elevator a few floors up and disappeared down the hallway. A black guy – not with their party – ran after them, shouting "Nichelle!" I don't know if she stopped for him. Later, before the whole con, someone asked Ensign Uhura to sing, and she did so, *a capella* and beautifully.

She didn't tell us any part of the pressures she'd endured because of *Star Trek* or the request from Martin Luther King Jr. to stay with the show when she'd threatened to quit. Those were days when America was wrestling with itself in blood earnest, and even popular, commercial entertainment was making points for justice and hope. And here was Uhura, a responsible, able, totally non-caricatured professional, an equal member of a professional crew, a great role model for young black girls, King told her, and too valuable to lose.

Nichols understood her importance after talking with King, and stayed on, and played her part both as Uhura and role model with supreme class, working for NASA to attract young women of quality and ability into space science and astronautics. And young black women of promise, like Tananarive Due, could wear a *Trek* uniform as TM at Sasquan in Nichelle's honor, had someone close to themselves whom they could admire and emulate. If you will, a Spartacus.

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Among the many heroes celebrated in this *Spartacus*, **Merrick Garland** stands tall. The American Attorney General makes me proud that I spent much of my life as a lawyer and sad

that I never came within *beaming* distance of his heights of integrity and ability. Of course, few have.

“With neither fear nor favor.” It’s the mantra of responsible law. It’s also the aphorism cited by Garland to explain his Justice Department’s search of Donald Trump’s Mar-a-Lago estate for purloined government documents in August. Of course, the search was executed properly, on a warrant issued by a magistrate after a proper showing of probable cause, but the fact that it was Trump’s fiefdom that was investigated caused froth among his people. Calls have gone forth from Trump chumps to disband the FBI. MAGA maniacs in Donald’s thrall have threatened, even attacked federal cops. Trump spokesmen have thrown around ideas calling for an end to the “Deep State” – in other words, the independent government bureaucracy. Big talk about a new civil war or revolution is rife.



Against which, we have the law, as enforced and exemplified by the Attorney General. The Republicans should have allowed Merrick Garland to gain that SCOTUS seat. He’d’ve done less damage to their fascist agenda there. This little guy may end up saving the whole shebang through his fealty to the idea that a society should adhere to principle, and not despotic rule.

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Liz Cheney lost her congressional seat from Wyoming to a Trump bootlicker, exposing the soiled GOP as a proto-fascist strongman cult -- but continues and will continue to fight the orange-utan down the line. She co-chairs the remarkable House committee investigating January 6th and promises a doomed fight for the 2024 Republican nomination. She is angry, she is ambitious, she is fearless, and she – and her committee – are invaluable.

The presidential psychosis and sleaze they’ve exposed have melted away any pretense to legality, humanity or plain common sense in the guy Dave Schlosser calls “45X.” Trump’s actions regarding both the January 6th horror and the desperate criminals behind it are an infection. By exposing the country at its worst, the January 6th Committee has exemplified the country at its best. Citizens like us need to recognize both.

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Returning to fandom, **Samanda Jeude** made her strongest impression on me at two Worldcons, Confederation and MagiCon.

At MagiCon Jeude won a Big Heart Award, and gave a brave, candid speech about the condition that confined her to a motorized chair and inspired her to found Electrical Eggs, dedicated to improving access at conventions for those with disabilities. It brought many to tears, including Rosy’s stepmother Patty Green, who swatted me across the back of my head when Sam finished speaking. “You didn’t tell me I’d need Kleenex!”



And at Confederation, Samanda, tooling around, found a sloping ramp, pointed her chair down it and let go. “*Small Japanese tree!*” she shouted.

Banzai indeed. We lost Sam this August, a true fannish warrior.

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Heat 2 by Michael Mann and Meg Gardiner has been August's outstanding **read**, a literary Sequel/prequel to Mann's exceptional crime film of the late '90s. The novel reveals the background and carries forward the stories of the main characters in the flick, written in a visual style – with outstanding dialog – that reflects Mann's cinematic skill. The guy is amazing. He made *Manhunter*, the first Hannibal Lecter movie, and here produces a deep and involved story that rivals the best of Don Winslow. Terrific. I'm following it up with one of T. Jefferson Parker's better novels, the Edgar-winning *Silent Joe*.

I abandoned Gretchen Felker-Martin's *Manhunt* halfway through. Thus the apocalypse into which humanity has blundered: males have become slobbering four-legged beasts, chewing their way out of their maternal wombs, useful only for the testosterone they provide for transsexuals trying to morph into women. The women depicted are militants dedicated to eradicating trans people, who are by and large victims struggling to survive. Interesting if obvious concept. However, this violent, bitter, but deftly written novel lost interest for me when it descended into endless scenes of trans porn about midway through, which is too bad: the book is not an easy or even a pleasant read – I'll publish a full review by my father-in-law in the next *Challenger* – but its perspective, however narrow, is original and important.

I must tout the best **movies** I've seen so far in '22: *Elvis*, *The Northman* and *X* (would love to see the porn film they were making). Also *13 Lives*, Ron Howard's cave rescue picture, which is *not* for claustrophobes, and Brad Pitt's insane *Bullet Train*, which shows how hilarious Pitt can be when satirizing Tarantino and not taking himself too seriously, either. On the loser side, *The Gray Man* and *Nope* are lousy, wastes of good casts.

Thriller and docudrama miniseries make the best **TV** in this new age of streaming services: *Tropo*, *Under the Banner of Heaven*, *Gaslit* (which I bet pissed off John Dean), *Dark Winds*, *The Old Man*. All very good to excellent. *Pieces of Her*, featuring the magical Toni Collette, I reminiscent of the exceptional *A History of Violence*, at least in its set-up, but has gone off in its own direction. My opinion is in abeyance.

Best, if most excruciating, is *Five Days at Memorial*, set at a New Orleans hospital in the hellish aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. 17 years afterwards, it still hurts to see what that storm and George W. Bush's incompetence did to New Orleans, and to remember the beloved special neighbor I lost. May I suggest you check out *Challenger #23* on eFanzines, my own response to the storm? I consider it the best fanzine I've ever done.

All well and good, but we all know what I *really* need to talk about. Rosy complains, How are we supposed to handle *two* new fantasy series in one season? It's a surfeit of riches. And since we know we're going to debate which wins the quality wars, given a sadistic universe where we could view only one, which would that be? *Rings of Power* vs. *House of the Dragon*. *Lord of the Rings* vs. *Game of Thrones*. What's the difference, and does it *make* a difference?

Of *course* there's a difference, and it's a matter of tone. *LotR* is high fantasy, grand in scope, encompassing not only as story but a culture, a universe with history – and myth. The numberless plotlines introduced through the first two episodes reflects that emphasis. The *GoT* spinoff is much more character- and story-oriented; though it seeks to establish the background of its saga, its individuals take over and dominate. The history is not center stage: it is *not* the focus or importance of the tale.

That both shows are amazing only proves that there is room on the tube got both high fantasy, about a whole people, and singleton tales. Both shows are – to judge from what we've seen –

promising, at the least. Advantage to *House of the Dragon* for now, but I look forward to seeing where each goes.

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LOCHOMEWARD. ANGEL

Received this e-mail on August 21.

“Since 1941, the National Fantasy Fan Federation has given awards for contributions to science fiction. You, the members have voted. The winners of the 2022 N3F Laureate Awards are:

Best Fan Writer: Andy Hooper / Best Fan Artist: Brad Foster / Best Fan Editor: Fred Lerner

➔ **Best Non-N3F Fan Publication: The Zine Dump**

Best N3F Fanzine: Tightbeam / Best Literary-Critical or Historical Work: 2021 First Fandom Annual

Best Novel: Child of Destiny by Chris Nuttall / Best Shorter Work or Collection Thereof: Fantastic Schools edited by Jagi Lamplighter and Chris Nuttall

Best Book Editor: Toni Weisskopf / Best Pro Artist: Brad Fraunfelter

Best Manga/Comic Book/Graphic Novel: Tie between Telepaths and Jinnie Hex

Best Live-Action Television Show: Stargirl / Best Animation: “Komi Can’t Communicate.”

*I point out **The Zine Dump** for a particular reason. I edit it. It contains synopses of recent fanzines from around the hobby. Several zines have come forth since the last issue, which means another issue is mandated sometime before Christmas. The publication is posted irregularly on eFanzines.com.*

Anyway –congrats to Andy, Fred, Brad and Toni and thanks, N3F!

Rich Lynch <rw_lynch@yahoo.com> You mention that: “Standing before the *Mona Lisa* – the actual 518-year-old painting, not just a reproduction – has been item #1 on my Bucket List for decades.” Congratulations on that. From your description it seems like it exceeded your expectations. It did mine, too, the first time I saw it in person but not so much the second time. I’m guessing it was the overall experience – just being in the same room was the real achievement. The second time wasn’t quite the same.

Anyway, your comment started me to thinking on what might be the #1 entry on my own personal bucket list. And I can’t come up with an answer! There are certainly places I’d like to go where I’ve never been before, theatre shows I’d like to experience in person that I haven’t yet managed to do, some classical music compositions I’d like to hear live performances of...that kind of thing. But something that stands head-and-shoulders above the rest? I don’t think I have one. Maybe I should chalk it up to having done a lot in my life, a lot more than I would ever have imagined back when I was a high-schooler. If bucket lists had existed back then, my chief aspiration no doubt would have been to be successful enough that I wouldn’t have to live hand-to-mouth. That’s been the case, and I am very grateful that things have worked out.

So... what’s the *new* #1 on your bucket list? Inquiring minds (mine, anyway) want to know! *Write something good, I suppose. I want to get Rosy back to Scotland in 2024 for the Worldcon and some decent touring, but that doesn’t rise to “bucket list” level.*

*Rich goes on to another **Spar**.*

Another fine *Spartacus* but I can’t bring myself to comment about the gun culture and mass shootings you make the centerpiece of the issue. If I did it would get my blood pressure up to elevated levels. And I’m trying to avoid that, given the cardiac issues I’ve had this year. Suffice it to say that I agree with you, very much so.

Instead, I’ll give you a throw-off comment about your observation, while describing some recent movie watching, that: “J.K. Rowling is a Scot and wrote much of the Harry Potter saga in Edinburgh.” During your trip there earlier this year I hope you had a chance to visit or at least see the exterior of the coffee house in Edinburgh where Ms. Rowling wrote some of the books: The Elephant House Café at 32 Marshall Street.

Rosy knew about the site and tried to find it, but with four mere days to explore Edinburgh and a sick husband to drag around ... I'll make sure we get there in '24.

Back in 2005, Nicki and I were in Edinburgh for only a bit more than a single day and took a hop-on-hop-off bus tour to see as much of the city as we could in what time we had. It drove right past The Elephant House, which was probably deliberate given that the Harry Potter popularity was at about its peak back then. We didn't go in, but I got a photo of the place that I have yet to use for any purpose except traveling down memory lane. Which I seem to be doing a lot of lately, but that's a different discussion.

Kay McCutcheon kaymccutcheon2@gmail.com That is one scary cover with Putin larger than Zelenskyy. Putin has always seemed rather reptilian to me with those dead eyes.

Resorting to reopening the Keystone Pipeline would be counter-productive to our ultimate goals of weaning ourselves off of fossil fuels. The better (and more painful) way would be to pay higher prices at the pump while going whole hog with solar/battery/wind work. If we did that, everyone else on planet Earth could drink their oil while we prosper.

As for the Olympics, unfortunately, I've all but stopped watching the gymnastics and figure skating competitions. All I see are these tiny children being pushed to do more and more impossible stunts. The mental toll is absolutely appalling, especially for the figure skaters. I call for a higher age for these sports, say, 16 years old. These young folks (male and female and ?) are causing permanent damage to themselves at such a young age, and I'm not even going there on the drugs they are given.

You have your wish. The IOC has increased the minimum age for figure skating competitors from 15 to 16 and will boost it to 17 within a couple of years.

Despite the physical size of Tom Cruise as "Reacher," he did a good job with the role. I haven't seen the television version, but would imagine someone of very large stature would do better. The guy is supposed to be 6'4" and weigh 250 pounds, an all-natural product without pumping up his prowess with huge gym workouts.

*I recommend the TV version highly, and Alan Ritchson, **Smallville's** Aquaman, is perfect.*

If you want a list of indigenous, black and/or other ethnicities of lost and disappeared women, look no further than the local police departments. The Tribal Police are overwhelmed with reports from worried families. Just because they haven't hit the papers with actual names and faces doesn't make them any less important than Gabby Petito.

*Gabby's disappearance left **video** evidence behind, so the public felt they **knew** her – naturally they would respond more to a face and voice they knew more than to a name. But we do need to exercise more care for other missing women. Calling attention to them – many the victims of slavers, many, like her, injured by immature, violent mates – may turn out to be Gabby's legacy.*

*Something special from TAFF winner **Curt Phillips**.*

Re: Idi Amin

From: Curt Phillips

Date: Sat, 03 Sep 2022 05:08:52 PDT

It seems clear to me that those of us who actually care about science fiction, Fandom, and what I'll call the traditional exploration of the hobby are probably - at some point - simply going to have to abandon the Worldcon and some of the baggage of the modern science fiction world and reinvent our community in some fundamental ways. If we can be bothered to do so, that is, or maybe we're just approaching the more-less "natural" end of it all. I don't know.

I do know that I'm not going to stick around if the whole thing keeps spiraling down into madness the way it seems to be doing. I used to think the SF community was one of the few places that would always be grounded in reason and sanity. I'm less certain about that now. We've accepted into that community people who think that a Worldcon in a repressive, Communist Government controlled nation that is currently practicing genocide and slavery, is the source of a global pandemic that has killed millions and is still evolving onto deadlier forms, and which hates the West and is actively threatening war against democratic nations; is somehow an acceptable idea. We've allowed our community that was based on an enjoyment of science fiction to become a political tool and a social lightning rod. We used to think that there are no ideas at all too crazy to be explored without considering that some people around us lack the rationality to discriminate between "crazy" ideas and truly toxic ones. Someone actually thinks "Uganda in 2028" is a good idea? Or is this just another exercise in fannish perversity like promoting "Barsoom in 2052"? And here we are, watching the Burning Man crowd burn down the SF community while we're still using it. I never thought the pendulum would swing quite as widely as it seems to be doing. I wonder if it'll start to swing back before I get thrown off of it?

*Curt suggests that responses to his letter – originally published on FictionMags, be collected as a symposium and published in **Challenger**. I'm willing if readers are. Rejoinders to GHLIII@yahoo.com.*

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I came away from the televised **Chicon Hugo ceremony** with a new perspective on the "queer" fervor filling fandom these days, a new appreciation of the seriousness and humanity behind it. The several acceptance speeches bore no trace of the recent reprehensible attacks on George RR Martin and Bob Silverberg or the incomprehensible opprobrium given Jeanette Ng's slur of John W. Campbell the year before. These were sincere, affirmative, passionate appeals to justice and acceptance. They worked.

About the winners I have little to say – I haven't read any. But I'm now anxious to discover the Bot 9 series and to proceed with Arkady Martine's dense "duology," which has now won two Hugos. And to see what *Small Gods* is all about.

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I'd like to suggest that we SFers with **Parkinson's** keep in touch with one another – perhaps found a regular fanzine to discuss our experiences and news about the disease. Opinions, anyone?

As part of my research into Parkinson's, I recently scanned a website listing its five stages. Growing incapacity. Inability to walk. Hallucinations and psychotic delirium. It made me want to drive down to Cocoa Beach and walk into the sea. Events and efforts of late August calmed me down.

For one thing, Rosy – who has been steadfast and wonderful in her optimism and support – and I met my new Parkinson's doctor, and he was A-OK. He's articulate, patient. He put me through the usual tests, watching me walk up and down the hallway, touch my own fingers, subtract 7 from 93, and agreed with my earlier medic's diagnosis. He ordered an MRI sometime soon. He answered my nervous questions about Parkinson's psychosis, from which 30-40% of patients suffer, and assuaged my concerns: hallucinations come late in the disease if they come at all.

He prescribed a new drug. **Carbidopa/Levodopa**. Thrice daily, with food, breakfast, lunch and “supper.” It joins the thyroid and hypertension junk I already take. It will, supposedly, restore some of the dopamine I’ve lost, muffle the tremors and quell the muscle stiffness that, coupled with the arthritis that’s surfaced in my shoulders, makes almost every motion a lesson in masochism.

I continue with physical therapy, for my balance, my feet, and soon, I hope, for the aforementioned shoulders, and take heart from the words of my therapist: “You’re fighting the good fight, man!”

You bet I am. *I too* am Spartacus.

