



Taking off once again, here it comes, flying in the lap of luxury somewhere in the skies over Texas. Here is the personalzine of John Purcell, who lives at 3744 Marielene Circle, College Station, TX 77845.

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The World is Not Enough: or is that, “I’ve had enough of the world”?

This is the existential question I keep asking myself whenever a politician of the Republican stripe says something completely stupid, misleading, uninformed, socially tone-deaf, and all because whatever they say is politically motivated. In countering such idiotic ravings from the right, there are a lot of old-school Democratic leaders whose response is often along the lines of “That’s incorrect” or “we’re gonna censure you” or the even less effective “we need to form a bipartisan committee to investigate _____.” Whenever I hear any of these feeble counterattacks, that is when I say, out of exasperation, “that’s enough of this bullshit from Congress!” It really is enough to make an honest American citizen puke.

(Example #1)

Case in point. The current poster child for birth control is Georgia “Representative” Marjorie Taylor Greene. Two weeks ago, congressperson-in-name-only Greene made a truly horrendous analogy by comparing Covid mask-wearing to do her job akin to German-Jews wearing gold Stars of David during the Holocaust. The ensuing foofaraw from Representatives and Senators from both major parties condemning her ludicrous statement, plus the expected cries of anger from Jewish leaders across the country and the Anti-Defamation League, etc., did not exactly result in Rep. Greene’s immediate contrition. On the contrary, two days after her initial verbal blunder she *doubled down on her statement!* Greene would eventually “apologize” on Monday, June 14th for her comparison of Covid mask wearing in the House of Representatives to the treatment of Holocaust victims only after she visited the Washington, DC Holocaust Museum that morning. Here is what she said: "There are words that I have said, remarks that I've made that I know are offensive, and for that I'd like to apologize," adding that a lesson she learned from her

father was to admit to your mistakes: “So I should own it...I made a mistake.” Now, that is all fine and dandy, but if you watch the video of her making this statement, it is spoken with no emotion: it is a flat, matter-of-fact delivery, as if she wanted to just get this over with and get back to her regularly scheduled nonsense in the House of Representatives.

Suffice to say, Rep. Greene should be expelled from Congress, in my humble opinion. All she has done since taking the Oath of Office – which I believe she and a host of other congresspersons have yet to actually read carefully and understand exactly what it is they are swearing under oath to do – is to foment dissent, spread misinformation, and use her bully-pulpit as a US congressperson to fund raise by spouting nothing but outrageous bullshit during her (so far) first five months on the job. Need I point out that she is also a die-hard supporter of Humpty Trumpty? That should be obvious, so I apologize for the rhetorical question.

Oh. On second thought, no, I’m not.

(Example #2)

As a follow-up to the above, on Tuesday, June 15, 2021, the United States Congress voted by an overwhelming margin of 415-14 House (less abstentions) and “unanimously” in the Senate (Sen. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin voiced his objections yet still voted for it, probably because if he did not he would lose votes back home) to make June 19th a national holiday. This is, for those who are not aware of the fact, to mark the date that slaves in Galveston, Texas, first learned of their freedom on June 19, 1865. This has been an official Texas state holiday since 1880, but now it is to be celebrated across the nation. Except South Dakota, but my understanding is that they’re working on it.

Again, this is a very good thing, but the appalling thing to me is that across much of America, including Texas, most citizens did not learn of the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921 in school. While many people are now aware of it, most of those surveyed last week have admitted that the first time they learned about Juneteenth and the Tulsa Massacre was from two television programs: *The Watchmen* and *Lovecraft Country*. To me that is profoundly worrisome and wrong. Granted, I am glad that these two topics are now in public discourse, but the lesson that must be learned here is that one cannot learn from history by ignoring it. History is full of great advances, very true, but more often than not, past mistakes are whitewashed, covered up without regard to the egregious harm and insults these cause human beings. As Santayana observed, “those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it.” I for one do not wish to see the United States of America, a democratic republic, become another authoritative fascist state. If this goes on, as the old song goes, such an outcome could happen here.

It is bad enough I already doubt that a “united” American nation will survive past the end of this decade. Recent events in this country and around the world make me even more cynical about the eventual future of the human race. Climate change is merely one contributing symptom of the greater disease that infects the world. The real disease is willful ignorance.

Personally, I think we’re screwed. Somebody, please convince me otherwise.

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“We have to move the wainscoting to get at the leak in the reactor.”

Music, Music, Music!



Lately I have been focused more on polishing my music making abilities, and by that I mean technically as a musician and songwriter, plus acquiring more home-recording capabilities to start creating basic demos of songs as they are written. In the most recent issue of *Askance* (#51, posted to efanazines.com at the end of last month) I wrote a tease paragraph about this. In this space I will elaborate on that. On Saturday, May 22nd, I spent four and a half hours in a newly re-opened recording studio just down the road in Navasota called Little Red Barn Recording Studio.

It is exactly as advertised. Ron Winters, who owns the studio and also is the recording engineer, is an area musician who plays guitar and keyboards, and what he did was put up a small barn on his property on the south side of Navasota (an easy 20-minute drive south of College Station) and turned it into a recording studio. It is filled with a variety of guitars, basses and electrics, a Yamaha keyboard, an electronic drum kit, lots of amplifiers, microphones, and other instruments as needed. Ron installed two rooms at the back end of this barn, one of which is a small soundproofed vocal recording booth, and the larger room is where his 32-track mixing board, computer screens, and other recording paraphernalia are located. He has a lot of stuff jammed inside this barn, creating a home-studio feel that is both relaxing and fun with room to maneuver as needed.

The last time I was in any kind of a recording studio was a church office studio in Bloomington, Minnesota in the early 1990s, so Ron's set up has everything a musician needs. It was nowhere near as professional or expensive as Sound 80 Studios in Minneapolis, where I spent an afternoon with Bill Fischer and Michael Johnson recording a demo of a few songs for our folk trio in the fall of 1976, but Little Red Barn is right up the alley for what I play. There are two larger and pricier recording studios in College Station, but Ron Winters had exactly the kind of setup needed to meet my goal.

I went in with a plan of attack to record four original songs: "A Job that Pays" (1997), "Crescent Moon" (1999), "We Have to Take it Slow" (2020), and "Never Let Go" (1989). My established methodology was to record in the following order: rhythm guitar, lead vocal, lead guitar, bass guitar, and then add in drums. (I learned that next time I should do the drums after the lead vocal track.) I figured if I had enough time I would redo any flubs (which happened) and add harmony vocals. Well, I was able to lay down tracks for the first three songs, so "Never Let Go" will have to wait for the next session (July 2021, I hope), and I was not able to do any backing/harmony vocals. When I heard the master mix I was struck by how reedy my voice sounded, plus other problem areas where the drum and guitars were out of synch for a brief moment (a measure and a half before getting back into synch), so I have written notes on each of these songs to polish those up, and also do a remix of levels; the bass and lead guitar lines need to be more prominent, try to adjust the tonal quality of the vocals, and other things of that nature. Once I am more satisfied with the end product, then I will share them with the greater world. Until then, you will all have to wait. In the meantime, I need to practice some other songs and a few new tunes under construction.

Recently Read

Like many of you, the pandemic isolation has resulted in an increase of reading time, so here is a brief recap of novels I have read over the last two months, but not counting my science fiction and mystery magazine subscriptions. Hmm. Doing a review of those magazines could be a good topic for the next *Askew*. We shall see. In the meantime, here you go:

Jameson, Malcolm. *Tarnished Utopia*. Galaxy Books, 1956, 126 pp. (cover by Ed Emshwiller)

First published in *Startling Stories* in 1942, this is the 27th novel that the Galaxy Publishing Company produced through the mid-1950s. Malcolm Jameson (born in Waco, Texas in 1891, died in New York City in 1945) was a fairly prolific pulp writer, and his stories are well-paced and filled with action. The basic premise of this story is one of those “I slept for over a thousand years” type of things, and it is predictable. The story starts in 1942 when American pilot Allan Winchester’s plan is shot down during a bombing raid on Munich, taken prisoner then escapes, and eventually links up with an underground sympathizer, Cynthia Schnachelbauer. Together they run from Germans, and hide in a bomb shelter that looks like an underground laboratory, but seems well stocked with food and supplies. A bomb falls, destroying the building above and their pursuers, and something they eat knocks Allan and Cynthia out cold. They wake up in the 31st century when mankind has left for the planets and has turned their home world into a garden paradise, but all is not as it seems. As a story *Tarnished Utopia* is a fun read despite its predictable plot.

Kuttner, Henry. *The Well of the Worlds*. Ace Books, 1965 ed., 142 pp. (cover by Alex Schomburg)

The stories of Henry Kuttner have always appealed to me, even his poorer attempts, such as this one. First published in 1952 in *Startling Stories*, the premise is more fantasy than “science” fiction, although modern worm hole theory sort of matches the concept that Kuttner uses: Earth is joined to the world Khom’ad by a Well that is located inside an Arctic uranium mine and powered by Firebirds, which is some kind of radiant energy locked in crystal form. So much of this story is expository writing to explain what this is, how it functions and why, ad infinitum, with really only six distinct action scenes. The Well of the Worlds is definitely not a very good novel; it was only his second long-form science fictional attempt. Kuttner’s writing, in my opinion, is best in the short story format; his novels leave a bit to be desired.

Leiber, Fritz. *Swords and Deviltry*. Ace Books, 1970 ed., 254 pp. (cover by Jeff Jones)

The first book of the Fafhrd and Gray Mouser series, in which the backgrounds of both major characters start the book in separate tales – “The Snow Women” in which Fafhrd is introduced, followed by “The Unholy Grail” that does the same for the Gray Mouser – then concludes with the award-winning story “Ill Met in Lankhmar.” Leiber is in full form with his brisk pacing, brilliant character development, descriptive writing, and action sequences. These are fun stories, and setting these stories in sequential order is great. Each story stands very well on their own, but read in order, the overall story arc is pure fun. If you like a well-told fantasy adventure, I totally recommend the Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser stories. You will not be disappointed.

Pohl, Frederik & Jack Williamson. *Rogue Star*. Ballantine Books, 1969. 213 pp. (cover by Jacques Wyrns)

This is the last book in the Starchild Trilogy by Pohl and Williamson, the precursors being *Reefs of Space* (1964) and *Starchild* (1965). First off, these are two of my favorite science fiction authors, so the

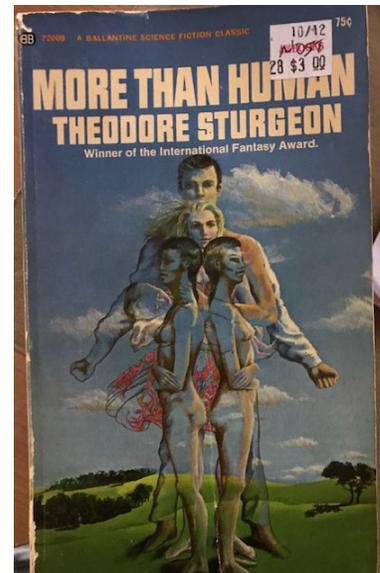
combination of their talents is a winner in my book. The entire series is set in a – guess what? – dystopian future in a computer-ruled totalitarian state, but in *Rogue Star* this has been replaced by a utopian state that is threatened by some unknown force. Tying all three novels together is the concept of sentient stars, which is pretty darned near classic space opera trope, and the world-building is actually more interesting than the plot. The protagonist, Andreas Quamodian, still has the hots for Molly Zoldivar, and when he receives a distress call from her, naturally Andreas comes running to help her, but gets diverted by this “unknown force,” which turns out to be a rogue star. The plot is predictable, and the ending of *Rogue Star* is disappointing. I think that is because Pohl and Williamson wanted to avoid a traditional “happy ending” space opera storyline, so the book fails despite their talents as writers. My thinking is that they wanted to get it over with and move on to other individual projects.

Silver, Steven H (no period). *After Hastings*. Ring of Fire Press, 2020, 339 pp. (cover by Laura Givens)

This novel is set squarely in an alternate history timeline with the “what if” principle applied to the consequences of the Battle of Hastings in 1066, namely if English King Harold had defeated the Norman army of King William the Bastard. Steven Silver does a very good job of considering the potential results in terms of the assorted English land barons and their alliances, the Pope’s political aspirations, the conflicts of faith between the Catholic and Protestant churches... the whole lot. *After Hastings* is a sprawling, brawling novel with well-realized battle scenes and their horrors. The pacing throughout is excellent: even the transitioning developments between battles, while lengthy in terms of time, the dialogue and narrative keep the reader interested. One needs to pay attention to details in these sections because they explain a lot of the motives behind every character’s actions.

Sturgeon, Theodore. *More Than Human*. Ballantine Books, 1968 ed., 188 pp. (cover art uncredited)

Arguably one of the greatest science fiction novels ever written, *More Than Human* is probably one of the most remembered novels of the 1950s by sf aficionados. This novel is an expansion of the story “Baby is Three” (published in the October 1952 issue of *Galaxy Magazine*) and details in exquisite details of what has been described as the development of “homo gestalt” as the next step up in human evolution, the interdependency/psychic linkages between multiple personas possessing different psychic abilities. The entire novel is brilliantly written in three parts: “The Fabulous Idiot,” “Baby is Three,” and “Morality.” If I try to say anything more about the plot my fear is that I would spoil it for anyone who has not yet read *More Than Human*. This is the second time I have read this novel, and once again my mind is blown by Sturgeon’s prose. My lord, but he could *write*! No wonder this won the 1954 International Fantasy Award. Total brilliance.



Wells, H. G. *The Croquet Player*. Viking Press, 1937, 98 pp. (cover art uncredited; signature “Saltez”?)

Here is an intriguing short novel – novella, if you will – written toward the end of H. G. Wells’ life when he was writing more social-commentary type fiction than prophetic novels of the future. Just like *More Than Human*, I have read *The Croquet Player* before, but the two-plus decades between reading make a difference in what I get out of the text. The protagonist is a young man, Georgie, who is on vacation and

fancies himself as a rather disinterested gentleman of means. He strikes up a conversation with Dr. Finchatton, who tells Georgie his life story, which encompasses the rest of the book. The story that Finchatton tells is a ghost story of sorts, but which runs much deeper than the spirits inhabiting the land. Since I will be writing a longer critical review of this book for Justin Busch's fanzine *Far Journey*, I will hold off on those thoughts for that article. For now, I see *The Croquet Player* as an allegory regarding the inherent evil or dark deeds that inhabit the human psyche. This is an interesting book, though, and I am glad I took the time to reread it.

Skewed Results: letters from readers

{A good amount of responses were received about the last issue, and that is a very good thing. As usual, my comments to correspondents are in this italicized brown font.}

Ray Palm

Address correspondence as follows:

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2 April 2021

Thanks for sending me the latest digital version of *Askew #33*. That image of Rod Serling introducing a Twilight Zone episode with Trump in the background sitting in the Oval Office: How appropriate. It's TZ time when Trump and the other repuglicans try to sell deceptive fantasy as reality like the election was stolen. Recently Trump stated that the insurrection on January 6th was peaceful, cops and demonstrators were hugging and kissing each other. An odd statement from a homophobe but then again dementia...

Republicans blame the violence on January 6 (huh, where's the hugging and kissing?) on antifa. What's next? They'll blame the riot on evil shape shifting Skrulls or body snatching pods from outer space?

You said you still vote but don't trust any politician. So your voting is a matter of LOP: least objectionable politician? *{Not really, although I understand how that conclusion is reached. I believe Biden is better merely because (1) he's a professional politician, which I admittedly don't like; (2) throughout his career Biden has learned how things work in DC to get something accomplished; and (3) he is basically a decent human being, even though his decision-making process is still politically motivated. Least Objectionable? Yeah, maybe. Considering the other major choice, Joe Biden looks like a saint.}*

I noticed a couple of letter writers didn't completely buy into the concept of Perfect Xmas; they had qualms about perfunctory family gatherings and phony gift exchanges. I have the same dislikes and others.

I have to kick myself in the backside to get going on another issue of my zine. Don't be surprised if I use a few lines from this LOC for an article.

- **Ray**

{Don't kick yourself too hard, Ray; you might leave a mark. If you do use some of your LOC in your own fanzine article, go right ahead. It's your zine, so say what you wish. () As for the Big Lie that the republican party continues to propagate, what astonishes me is how willingly those who support GOP lawmakers*

accept their massive loads of fecal matter. This is what galls me the most: the deliberate, self-inflicted ignorance by so-called intelligent people.

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30 March 2021

Finally, a bit of time to sit in front of this much-used computer (at least right now), and do some writing. I have here the recent *Askew 33*, and it is time...

No worries about the schedule of the zine, although the publisher might come down on you for it... Fortunately for you, you're both, so you're safe.

I wish Trump could be a bad memory, easily forgotten, but he has no intention of going away. He's kept the legal system busy with contesting the election results at every turn. Of course, everything that happened is someone else's fault, not his, and he will rise up when sympathetic media will let him, and vent about all those who did him wrong. His latest targets are Dr. Anthony Fauci, and Dr. Deborah Birx. Fauci has risen to become Biden's lead health advisor and looks like Birx may lose her career and reputation over how she "advised" Trump. (Did I see a story the other day that a bill in Arizona will allow the state government to overturn the presidential electoral results on a whim? Did I also read a story about David Koch's multi-million-dollar attempt to subvert democracy, and stop the Biden recovery bills? When did we all switch to the dystopian timeline?) *{You probably did read about Koch's plans, Lloyd. As for living in a dystopian timeline, I think we've been stuck in it for at least twenty years already.}*

Trusting Biden should be much easier than trusting Trump...Biden's good works and orders have been a shining example of how this president stuff is done, especially compared to the advantage the whole Trump family took of government money. Still, while Biden and Harris appear to be doing their jobs wonderfully well, they still need close scrutiny from those who voted for them. They need more than scrutiny; they need protection from Republican factions that would do them and their good deeds harm. Every successful politician is at least well off, and they will never see, or even suspect, the average voter's struggles. Same here in Canada...they need the regular reminder that they are public servants.

When I see Republican state officials demand revenge for the past elections and suggest death or dismemberment for Democrat supporters (this happened yesterday in Michigan), these people need to be arrested and charged with threatening, at least. (For the record, I do like Justin Trudeau as Prime Minister, and I believe he is doing a great job, but he is under scrutiny from much of the Canadian electorate, including me, and the opposition Conservatives can only raise petty complaints against him. I suspect that a snap election may be coming soon, and I expect Trudeau will easily win re-election.) *{Trudeau seems like a decent sort, but all politicians need to be held accountable for their words and deeds. That is how it should be in a real democracy.}*

Yvonne loves Edwin Abbott's *Flatland*, and has it in several editions. I like the story because of the games it plays with mathematics and dimensions. And math was one of my best subjects in high school.

The local...the structure of our government here means that while there is a federal minister of health, much of the responsibility of administering response to the pandemic falls to the provincial governments. A major report that came out this morning cited provincial pandemic response mismanagement, and especially cited the governments of the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario. The premiers and governments of these provinces all happen to be connected with our right-wing federal party, the Conservative Party of Canada. Most of us here are wondering...coincidence? We think not. At least federally, the buffoons are in opposition, and it looks like their chances of forming another federal government are slim to none, and we're definitely pleased with that.

My loc... I find Zoom is an ersatz way of gathering, and to be honest, there are times I have felt a part of a captive audience. We keep a Post-It note over our camera, even when it isn't plugged in. We do Zoom gatherings with a number of historical societies in our area, and there are more Fanac.org Zoom events coming up, too. *{Good idea to cover up the camera. I have had my camera lens covered since the end of spring semester, unless I'm in a fan Zoom meeting or attending a convention via Zoom. It has been a good way to stay in contact with friends.}*

Orange Monster pardoned a lot of despicable characters, but in the long run, didn't cause too much chaos in his last days, except to say that he really did win, and the election was stolen, all evidence to the contrary. As you have probably read elsewhere, Yvonne and I tested positive for COVID-19 the end of January, and we self-isolated for two weeks and a bit. We felt like we had a bad flu, and our appetite was shot, and took a long time to return. After all of that, we each lost ten pounds, and Yvonne's sense of smell and taste was not lost, but enhanced, and it is still like that. Sounds strange, but we actually got some benefit out of this coronavirus. Wonder if there's one that will give you superpowers? I have had my Astra-Zeneca COVID vaccine, and my next one should be in late June. We have gotten Yvonne into several waitlists, and we hope she can catch an A-Z shot soon. *{Well, it's almost late June now, so I trust you and Yvonne are all set to get those shots.}*

AmazingCon II did not happen as advertised, but right now, publisher Steve Davidson is in the midst of home renovation, and an eventual move to Florida, I think. What did you think of the FAAn Awards ceremony? Hey, at least I showed up well in the final count. I left the Zoom event not long after the discussions turned to the upcoming Corflus, especially the one in Vancouver. You'll meet a lot of Vancouver fans who do some writing, but not necessarily for all the fanzines you and I get.

Some people online were wondering about the efforts to block the massive US \$1T+ relief bill now out there, and someone made the observation that America's favorite game, Monopoly, has a relief benefit built into it. Every time you pass GO, you get \$200...not the best relief benefit, but it was pretty good when it was invented. *{Good analogy, Lloyd.}*

Justin Busch mistakes my desire to see justice done to Trump and his syndicate as charming. Your casual dismissal of action against Trump is equally charming, or rather casually dismissive, or even forgiving. *{Hardly. I want Trump to rot in jail.}* The Orange Monster has an ocean of blood and [over 600,000] deaths on his hands, and a prison cell is his just reward. I still think he openly toyed with the idea of dictatorship, saying he wanted multiple terms.

John Hertz's letter...I grew up with insulated houses. Southern and Central Ontario can have bad winters, but not as bad as they were, and that's global warming in action. Years ago, my father built an insulated house on Vancouver Island, and built it beyond provincial standards at the time. It sold quickly.

The DisCon III controversy saddens me and strengthens our resolve to not go a Worldcon ever again. Too much politics, and there are happier places to be. It looks like DisCon III will be virtual like CoNZeland was, so there is the chance for more facts to be discovered, and perhaps Toni can guest at an actual Worldcon.

Look what I did...I filled two pages! This issue must have been jammed with comment hooks. Many thanks for it, and see you the next time you're inclined to create another zine.

- **Lloyd**

{ I guess the 33rd issue was filled with comment-laden material. Works for me, and as always, it is good to get letters from you and other readers. () Worldcons have become very problematic this century. We would love to attend Chicon 8 (2022) and two of the upcoming likely bid winners, Memphis, Tennessee (2023), and Glasgow, Scotland (2024). After that, we may have to call it quits on attending Worldcons. }*

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16 April 2021

Thanks for *Askew #33*. It was most illuminating.

I've always considered *The Lord of Death and the Queen of Life* one of SF's most vivid and memorable titles. I have never read the book, though: I figured I would be disillusioned. And Homer Eon Flint is a terrific name for an SF writer, calling back over literal "eons" to the origins of Man and the first epics. The bard who chanted of the monstrous beings to be encountered beyond the edge of the known world has a pretty strong claim to be the world's first SF writer. *{The Odyssey qualifies, and I consider Gilgamesh as another likely candidate for an early example of science fiction. Fantasy, definitely.}*

On the subject of using Zoom to replace in-person classes and meetings, *New Scientist* had something just a few days ago about why most people find working through a screen more tiring. *{Personal experience agrees with this assessment.}*

"Biden is an old-school Democrat; a centrist who believes that concession and negotiation is still possible in Washington DC these days." That — entirely plausible — take did not survive long into the Biden Presidency. *{That is how Biden currently feels, but it needs to change in a damn hurry.}*

As additional details gradually trickle out, it's interesting to see how the January 6 Capitol Hill riot looks like now. It's also a great example of how the media manipulate the news. "Eventually leaving five people dead": Well, two of those were middle-aged Trump supporters who, perhaps imitating Trump's terrible diet but without his iron constitution, died of heart attacks, running around in all the excitement. OK, that leaves *three* people. For several months it was alleged that a female Trump supporter had been trampled in the crowd. Just a few days ago the story was amended to say that she died of a drug overdose.

Two people:

A woman USAF veteran was shot to death by a Capitol policeman. Who killed her? The Biden administration isn't saying. Why was she killed? Five foot two, weighing 110 pounds, and unarmed, she

hardly sounds like a threat. Was the policeman who killed her in a panic? Was he aiming at somebody else? Was he shooting wildly into the crowd? Was he intending to shoot over their heads and missed horribly? The Biden administration isn't saying. The media aren't interested in knowing. Or they already know but decided it's better that we don't.

OK, *one* person:

In hundreds of lurid stories, we were told that a Capitol policeman had been brutally beaten to death by Trump supporters wielding a fire extinguisher. The story was started by the once-credible *New York Times*; many other outlets picked it up, saying they had "independently confirmed" it.

Apparently that merely meant they had spoken to the same liar who had deceived the *Times*. As Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter Glenn Greenwald has pointed out, given that the hundreds of BLM/Antifa riots had killed dozens, the media were desperate that Trump supporters be guilty of at least *one* killing, and continued to push this hoax as long as they could.

According to his family, the officer, like most white male policemen an ardent Trump supporter, had died of natural causes. (Ironically, a Capitol policeman was for real murdered by a radical activist three months later, but the killer was a Black Muslim; so the media were as eager to sweep this real killing under the rug, as they had been to trumpet the fake killing.)

Never mind, they were "armed insurrectionists" anyway. Except, strangely, they had all left their firearms at home.

Never mind, they were carrying wrist ties to take Congressmen hostage. Except the indictments reveal they had merely picked up the ties inside the Capitol to prevent their use by the police.

Insurrection? I would call it a Children's Crusade or Ghost Dance, people without hope retreating into fantasy. Astute observers of the political scene understand that where Antifa and BLM demonstrators are permitted to get away with murder (or everything short of), the establishment believes patriotic demonstrators need to be crushed.

- Taras

{I have to agree with your observations about media coverage of the January 6th insurrection; there is definitely a bias to any news service. This is especially true "as additional details trickle out," seemingly every other day. I do, however, disagree with your concluding comment. The two major parties involved – the Democrats and Republicans – have different reactions. The Republican party largely believes these "patriotic demonstrators" need to be honored and protected, while the extreme left wingers in the Democratic party want to punish those involved in the January 6th protest rally that did indeed turn into an uncontrolled riot, no matter how the conservative media and politicians want to portray it. The way I feel about all this is that it does not matter which political affiliation is involved: if people are hurt and public/private property is deliberately destroyed and defaced, then those individuals who committed these acts must suffer the legal consequences. It is that simple. The Capitol Building in Washington, DC was attacked, and this cannot be denied. As a protected government building that is largely considered off limits to the general public – tours and such are strictly limited: check the government website for the Capitol Building – then it doesn't matter who broke the windows, doors, etc.: whoever committed the crimes must be dealt with legally.}

{Enough of that for now. Shifting gears, here is an interesting question I want to answer:}

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"Just another love song playing on the radio..."

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27 March 2021

I wonder if your dissatisfaction with Kipling's "With the Night Mail" might arise partly from reading the wrong version of the story. In John Brunner's collection, *Kipling's Science Fiction* (Tor, 1992), and in several other places only the text of the story is presented. But when it was originally published in *McClure's Magazine* (1905) as "With the Night Mail: A Story of A.D. 2000" the text was embellished with "extracts from the magazine in which it appeared". These were included when the story was collected in *Actions and Reactions* (1909) and in many subsequent Kipling collections.

These "extracts" include weather and aerial traffic notices, correspondence from aeronauts, advertisements, and the like. When I interviewed John Campbell in 1962, he told me that this seemingly extraneous material was a pioneering instance of the science fictional technique of providing depth to the imagined world of a story – a technique refined by Heinlein and his contemporaries, who slipped such material unobtrusively into the tale itself. (That interview is available on the [fanac.org](https://www.fanac.org) YouTube channel.)

I've recently been reading *His Dark Materials* and related works by Philip Pullman. In *Lyra's Oxford* (Yearling, 2017), the central novelette is supplemented (some might say padded out) with the image of a postcard from Lyra, shipping schedules, "lantern slides", and a foldout map. (I do not know how much, if any, of this material appeared in the 2003 Knopf first edition.) I can't help wondering if this wasn't inspired by "With the Night Mail".

- **Fred**

{Fred, the version I read had all the extracts you note. Interesting that your John W. Campbell interview supports the inclusion of all this material was an early example of world-building that became prevalent, if not necessary, in effective science fiction. I will definitely have to watch that interview. My dissatisfaction with "With the Night Mail" is the writing style, not all the extra supporting information. It simply read flat and uninteresting. Then again, I am not keen on Kipling's fiction, but I do understand his importance and influence. Your comments about his father's writings in the May 2021 issue of Lofgeornost was illuminating. Which reminds me to write a letter of comment to you about that very topic.}

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18 March 2021

Thanks for *Askew 33*, the kind of thing that you can read through while your rather wilful cat, young Tristan, is having a cuddle which he demanded so vociferously that I could ignore him no longer. I understand your emotions about Duckie, we were similarly devastated when Lily-Belle and Jo-Jo died within a month of each other after 17 years. After a couple of months, we could stand the peace and quiet no longer and bought a couple more Devon Rex cats who now torment us day and night - and we love it. Like our previous cats, if we are not settled down in front of the television by a reasonable time in the evening we have to have a damn good excuse, and even then there is much stamping of little paws, sour looks and yelling, so in the end we go and watch something just so that the human pillows are in their expected positions.

I'm not keen on Zoom and the programs like it, mainly for the reason you give - it's not the same as being there. I quite like it for a quick hour long talk on something from the other side of the world that I would otherwise not take in, but as for socializing, well, it's severely lacking in that department. (And what is the point of 'going' to a convention at which the only bar is your own, the prices are not exorbitant and you have to clean up afterwards.) I see here that the FAAn awards are going to be Zoomed (is that an appropriate word) on 28 March at a time which is not given in Australian Eastern Standard Time so I will have to do some complicated mental arithmetic or find some software to do it for me. I suspect that I will not be watching at the time since there is an aviation cultures conference on at the same time and I'm a participant so I have obligations and cannot enjoy the fun live. I hope, however, that it will be recorded and put somewhere like You Tube so I can relax into it later on at a time that works for me. You may not have noticed it as much as we have here on the other side of the globe, but people in different places in the fansphere are awake when I'm normally asleep so doing something like taking in some of the Corflu you ran last year in real-time does test our endurance by either getting us up early in the morning or keeping us up late at night. And these days I'm neither an early morning or a late night person, you catch me at my best between about 2.15 and 2.30 most afternoons on Australian eastern coast time.

It's a pity that right wing fanaticism and the reaction to it, including 'cancel culture' have intruded into science fiction and fandom, but I guess it was ever thus. Recent research on Fanac.org reminded me of the Walter Breen affair which was cooling down just when I first encountered fandom. Illegal dealings with minors is a serious matter but what I found interesting and disturbing was the way in which people seemed to take sides so easily and how it soured friendships so easily too. I fear that the same thing is happening these days and the latest storm over Discon III seems to be doing it. Not that I know anything more about it than what I've read in a couple of fanzines so I couldn't really say what's right one way or the other. I could say that because Nic Farey and John Purcell think Discon II did the wrong thing that must be the truth of it, but perhaps there is another side that I know nothing about. So, instead, I remain sitting on the fence. Not that that has any effect on what the rest of fandom thinks.

Tristan got tired of his cuddle and went off to his box for a snooze, allowing me to tap out this letter of comment. His box sits on my scanner because that was the only place that there was room for it in my room at our old place. While it is inconvenient at our new place, and I have room to put it somewhere else here, Tristan's box has to be properly located on the scanner before Tristan will take his afternoon nap in it. Is there such a thing as passive tormenting?

There, an entire letter of comment, albeit a short one, without mentioning Trump or Covid. Is there a prize?

- Leigh

*{It is so much fun getting long, interesting letters from readers, and I am impressed by your not mentioning Trump or Covid. Your prize is a lifetime free subscription to both **Askew** and **Askance**. (*) IMHO, the Discon III committee has made a series of blunders regarding this year's Worldcon, and it has come to the point where there is nothing much I can add to that discussion. I have met Toni Weiskopf, and do like and respect her, but face it: Worldcons cannot please everybody all the time, so we simply have to let things ride for now and wish the best for everyone who is going to Discon III.}*

“She didn't like it when I grabbed her that time.”

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26 March 2021

A letter of comments for *Askew 33*.

First, a comment on “Madness in the Capitol.” I think the Dems tried Trump for all the wrong reasons. I doubt the speech he made to the crowd in Washington, DC had anything to do with the riot. He knew in advance who wanted to invade the Capitol because the FBI told him. He invited them during his speech, which, by no coincidence, was the same day as the Senate was counting the electoral votes. His reasoning was simple: he was angry because he didn’t get to be President again.

Now from Trump reality to Trump fantasy. I see it in an illos and its subtitle, both on the lower right. @ Rod Serling making Trump the villain of one of his scripts. That was a brainstorm.

Back to reality – politics. “Why I Don’t Trust Politicians.” I worked for the Agriculture Department in the DC area for 35 years. Did I know what was really going on in Washington? Unlike a lot of people living in Washington, I will be honest and say No. However, I get the impression, for big money and/or big power, politicians join or organize coalitions. There they find supporters and/or money. Can you trust Congressmen if they do that? Maybe not. However, you can always join another coalition.

I would like to go on a tangent about my theory. The Democratic and Republican Party are coalitions. Also, there are other coalitions as well. Some have some very strange bed fellows. None stranger than for the Farm Bill. Farm State politicians vote for it because it provides subsidies for farmers; and big city Liberals vote for it because it provides money for school lunch, SNAP (the new name for Food Stamps), and other feeding programs. Mysteriously, often for poor people. The Farm Bill coalition is so powerful that, in 2008, it overrode a Presidential veto – and had votes to spare.

One last point about your political rant. I beg your pardon: I’m a millionaire. With inflation and living in Washington, DC, it doesn’t go as far as being one used to. To be a fat cat, I think it takes hundreds of millions of dollars these days. *{My apologies, but for politicians, money equals power and influence.}*

Next I will comment on “Nook Reads.” I’m someone who got the Kindle too, I’m afraid. However, I know Project Gutenberg has some great stuff. I remember one novel in which Earth is attacked by space traveling elephant men. Probably written in the ‘30s. Ned Brooks showed it to me. It attracted me at the time. However, right now, I can’t find it.

Finally, I get to the letters of comment. The first one is Paul Skelton’s. I have two comments for you and Paul. First, Paul was waiting for the Covid-19 vaccine; and you and Valerie were waiting for the second. I had both several weeks ago. By now, I bet you and Paul have too. The second comment concerns Big Brother watching on Zoom. I wonder if Paul’s wife was watching Zoom when someone or something caught her using that product. Using bathroom items like that doesn’t click in my mind with a Zoom conference. Usually, people are trying to convince others they are listening.

Another letter is Lloyd Penney’s. Despite all the evidence, Trump and his Trumpites still claim they have been robbed in the election. Or was evidence irrelevant? Did they have a different interpretation of ‘being robbed’? Right now, Republicans are busy trying to cut down on Black and Hispanic voting by any means possible.

Another letter still comes from Steve Jeffrey. He talks about Xmas. I don’t do much for Xmas either. I and Heidi give ourselves presents year round. Of course, I am contemplating giving my grand nieces and nephew homemade greeting cards as they get older. I don’t pretend mine are like the pros; but if I can give those toddlers something funny, I label it a success. I have already given my oldest grand niece two.

Another letter again comes from John Hertz. He says he likes Chicago’s architecture better than Los Angeles’. It’s better constructed and sturdier. I gather Los Angeles architecture isn’t built to withstand storms. That’s why people have various restaurants that reminded one of other objects: like the ‘hat’ that used to house some of the Brown Derby restaurants.

Now for your comments after the letters. About “Meanwhile in the Science Fiction Realm... .” I agree with you about Toni: they shouldn’t have taken away her “Guest of Honor” award. Practically everyone who has spent many years in Fandom was of the same opinion. It hasn’t mattered how Liberal they are; they are angry about it. I and Toni have had our falling outs. On the other hand, that hasn’t stopped her from giving me at least one Baen book free.

About Discon III, it had a hotel, so the Washington Science Fiction Society wanted a real con rather than a virtual one. I do too – and for all the reasons you do. Unfortunately, SF conventions have a curse to raise in DC. Hotels have treated science fiction conventions as lepers since the disaster at the 1997 Disclave. Still, maybe the gang that can’t shoot straight will come through.

That’s about it for me. Until, I hope, next *Askew*.

- **Rich**

{Thank you so much for the lengthy and interesting letter, Rich. () Your input via personal government work experience is definitely appreciated. I cannot imagine anybody knowing exactly what is really happening in DC, but there is no question that the two major parties have formed very odd coalitions, yet somehow real work does sometimes happen. (*) On my Nook, 75% of the material is downloaded from Project Gutenberg; the remaining 25% is comprised of research articles off the internet. (*) Yeah, it does seem as though DC and SF conventions are cursed. Let’s hope this year’s event will be successful.}*

ALSO HEARD FROMS:

Bill Fischer, Bruce Gillespie, Jerry Kaufman, Perry Middlemiss, Ray Palm (again), Paul Skelton.



Yes, indeed. Summertime officially kicked off here in the states with the Memorial Day weekend, and that means two things here: baseball and backyard barbecue. For me, this year there is an additional consideration: The Stanley Cup Playoffs.

At this time – Father’s Day weekend – the Cup playoffs are in their semifinals, pitting four teams against each other to see which two duke it out for the championship best of seven series. Yes, this means that we will not know the eventual winner until just before the Fourth of July weekend – which is ridiculous for a winter sport –

so I will enjoy it while I can. In the meantime, I do enjoy baseball and soccer almost as much as ice hockey, so that’s good. However, let us hope that as the Covid-19 pandemic eases up and things return to something sort of resembling normalcy (which is a dream, people; nothing will ever be the same again) so that we can see each other again at family gatherings and science fiction conventions.

For now, like I said it is Father’s Day, and Valerie and I have plans: go for a swim, nap, then I shall grill a boneless pork loin to perfection for dinner. Life is good. In the words of my good friend, Bill Fischer, “hug your babies.”

John Purcell