

DAGON

#376, APA-Q Distribution #284

30 July 1988

I'LL SEE YOU IN THE FUNNY PAPERS

LV. How We Got This Way

In DAGON #366 I reviewed the first volume of Larry Gonick's The Cartoon Guide to U. S. History (1987, Barnes & Noble Books, \$7 per volume). Like all two-volume treatments of U. S. history, it ends with the suppression of the Slaveholders' Rebellion in 1865. The second volume, therefore, begins with the transformation of the United States from an agrarian to an industrial economy, and with the reconstruction of the devastated south. Gonick has no patience with the frequent characterization of Reconstruction as an indignity perpetrated on the poor suffering southern whites by alien forces. The defeat of Reconstruction was in reality a second Rebellion, often accompanied by violence, and done with the collaboration of northern politicians who wanted a colony of their very own, filled with a population so divided within itself along racial lines that it could give no attention to the way it was being exploited.

No sooner had this deal of 1876 been struck between northern industrialists and southern rebels than a new upheaval began - the rise of organized labor with its economic demands. Gonick tells a part of history that often does not get into the school books - how industrial workers and poor farmers resented the economic servitude which they suffered under the new masters of the American economy. We see the struggle to organize labor up through World War II - and then we hear no more about it. Even though Gonick considers the war against Vietnam to have been a gross and costly mistake, and obviously supports the Pacifist demonstrators, he does not mention that the AFL-CIO was America's largest pro-war organization, or that union workers frequently attacked Pacifists. The subsequent decline in the numbers and influence of organized labor in America can be traced directly to its enthusiasm for war and a war economy - a fact left out of this book.

The economic aspects of American history, however, still get a better treatment in this book than they do in most popular histories. The conquest of the last independent Indian tribes, and the Spanish-American and First World Wars, cannot be understood apart from the expanding continent-wide and then world-wide economic interests of American capital. The tragic failure to remove President Andrew Johnson from office is dismissed by Gonick with the words: "The Senate acquitted him, on the grounds that being obnoxious was neither a high crime nor a misdemeanor." However, this did not end the problem of Presidents who thought that they were free to decide for themselves which laws they got to enforce and which ones they could ignore - a matter that was the core of the articles of impeachment against Johnson, and was dealt with by Nixon with the words: "If the President does it, it is not wrong." To judge from President Reagan's and Vice President Bush's attitude towards the War Powers Act, we are not yet done with this matter.

Feminism is given a thorough treatment in this book, from the guarantee of women's vote by Wyoming in 1870 to the still unfinished business of today. (Actually, the western territories and states which granted women the vote were not actuated by respect for equal rights, but hoped to attract more women to come out and marry the surplus of male sod-busters.) Gloria Steinem is named as a major figure in modern Feminism - but without the revelation, which appeared in the press in 1967, that she was an agent of the Central Intelligence Agency. Feminism as a movement that could poten-

tially draw away half the membership of any other protest movement must have been very appealing to certain specialists in "domestic counter-insurgency".

World War I, and the subsequent "Red Hunt", are strongly condemned. This seems to be a part of the long overdue realization that Woodrow Wilson was the greatest enemy of traditional American civil liberties who has ever sat in the White House. After World War II there was another such "Red Hunt" - and Gonick does not make the common mistake of blaming it all on Senator Joseph McCarthy. Liberal Democrats were just as eager to scrutinize the opinions of government employees and others in search of an imaginary Communistic conspiracy. Gonick represents a clean-cut liberal as saying to McCarthy: "We can show as much contempt for the Constitution as anyone!"

Not only political, military, and economic developments are shown, but cultural ones as well. Gonick appears to accept the same "thirty-year-cycle" idea as have many others. He observes that both the 1920s and the 1950s were, on the surface, periods of political conservatism, social conformity, and official anti-Communism - but that, in both decades, whites began to take up black music, and "government mind control was failing to take hold below the belt...black dance music was crossing over...and the message was sexy!" (If you want to know whether these words refer to the 1920s, the 1950s, or the 1980s, read the book.)

Elvis Presley is called "the white kid who could 'sing black'", and gets a page for himself. This line is said to originate from a music impresario who noted the popularity of rock and roll, and remarked: "If I had a white kid who could sing black, I could make a million with him." In our own time and the near future there may be a variation on this theme. Some political boss is sure to say: "If I had a white politician who could campaign black, I could make him - or her - President."

With the 1960s, Gonick inserts some observations based on his personal experience. Gonick mentions that LSD was introduced to this country by the CIA, who thought it had something that could discombobulate the actions of unfriendly foreign leaders. On the day that President Kennedy was shot, two of Gonick's high-school friends made their first experiment with peyote.

Gonick also tells us, at long last, what Richard Nixon's "secret plan to end the war" was. This secret plan gave him his narrow edge over another veteran red-baiter, Hubert Humphrey, in the 1968 election - and then was heard of no more. Most people, including myself, thought that the famous "plan" was at best a feeble echo of Eisenhower's 1952 pledge to go to Korea, and at worst a campaign promise never intended to be fulfilled. But the truth of the matter may be found in To Win a Nuclear War, by Kaku and Axelrod. (1987, Scuth End Press, Boston) The plan actually existed, and after he became President, Nixon tried to implement it as "Operation Duck Hook". (Where do bureaucrats think up these names?) In November 1969, U. S. armed forces were "secretly" placed on full nuclear alert. (The "secret" was told to the Soviet government by our own, and kept only from the American people.) A protest march whose numbers Gonick gives as 250,000, but which Vice President Agnew estimated at 4,000,000* descended on Washington in the spring of 1970; "the outcry was so long that Nixon backed off the nuclear option". Similarly, the statements early in the Reagan Administration, that the US could fight and win a nuclear war, were heard no more after the big nuclear freeze demonstrations of 1981 and 1982.

"What Was So Great About the Sixties?" Gonick asks, and answers, in his last chapters. Clearly, we cannot dismiss the issues and concerns of that decade as belonging only in the past; they are still strongly relevant to the present day, which is the fact behind the frequently heard statement: "The Sixties never ended!" This is particularly true as Gonick concludes with the high ambitions and resounding failure of the Reagan administration. And then he ends, naturally, in mid-sentence: "No tidy, pat conclusions here!" It is almost as if Gonick realizes that an era is coming to an end in America's history, that another is going to begin in the next few years, and that it is too early to draw firm conclusions about the situation in which we now find ourselves.

* - His exact words were "2% of the American population", which were intended to denigrate the demonstration as negligible!

WHO REWROTE ROGER RABBIT?

In 1981 Gary K. Wolf wrote an outrageous comedy-fantasy-detective novel entitled Who Censored Roger Rabbit? It combined the "California tough guy" school of detective fiction with a world in which the traditional animated cartoon characters, as "toons", were real. The ones in comic strips were, it seems, in show business; at one point Wolf says Dik Browne is the "photographer" of a 'toon actor who plays the role of Hagar the Horrible. The whole tone of the book is so much like those of Ron Goulart, that for years I thought that "Wolf" was a Goulart pseudonym.

Wolf's basic assumption about 'toons, their nature, and their relationships with humans, will not bear close examination - but then neither will Jonathan Swift's Lilliputians, Brobdingnagians, or talking horses, or Lawrence Sanders' never-sleeping adventurer Evan Tanner. 'Toons show some uncomfortable similarities to stereotypes made of non-whites. Wolf's detective Eddie Valiant (complete with shabby office and a whisky bottle in the bottom drawer of his desk) doesn't like 'toons much, and his Monday night poker club walks out on him when they find out that not only is he working to clear a 'toon of a murder charge, but the accused 'toon is currently living with him. We also learn that the first Thanksgiving feast was held by the Pilgrims and the 'toons they found living here, and that humans demonstrated when 'toons started moving into "human" neighborhoods.

Now that the advance of technology makes possible liberal mixture of live and animated photography, this book was a natural for Hollywood. And so it was filmed - as Who Framed Roger Rabbit? Aside from the three leading characters (Eddie Valiant, Roger Rabbit, and Roger's sexy humanoid 'toon wife Jessica), and one minor 'toon character, not one character from the book is in the movie. The relationship between the chuckleheaded Roger and the sinuous Jessica (who obviously owes her looks to Will Eisner's female characters) is totally different in the movie from what it is in the book. Eddie's dislike for 'toons is, in the movie, not prejudice but resentment that his brother and partner was killed by a 'toon. (We have here, I think, a feeble echo of Sam Spade's resentment of his partner Archer's death in The Maltese Falcon.)

Gone from the movie is 'toons' ability to speak in real, lettered balloons. Also gone is the entire plot about the teakettle that everyone wants to get hold of, and the ability of a 'toon to create a short-lived Doppelgänger. Since these are basic to the book's plot, it is not surprising that the movie's plot is so totally different.

Once these cavils are out of the way, I can heartily recommend the movie. The blending of live and animated action is superbly done, and Warner Brothers and the Fleischers liberally loaned their characters to join with the Disney characters - Disney was co-producer of the film. We therefore get to see Donald Duck and Daffy Duck playing a sort of piano duet in a nightclub which only humans may patronize, but where 'toons are waiters and entertainers. (Sounds like the old Cotton Club in the Harlem of 50 years ago, doesn't it?) At one point, Daffy splutters a complaint about having to work with a guy with a speech defect. Betty Boop is the nightclub's cigarette girl; she has had trouble getting acting jobs since color came in, since she is drawn in black and white. With the expendable Doppelgängers gone, the film instead had to give 'toons fantastic recuperative abilities - just like Wile E. Coyote, Tom Cat, and Yosemite Sam have in the cartoons. And the plot revolves around the attempt of an unscrupulous corporation to get hold of 'Toontown - which, of course, is a 'toon ghetto where humans don't care to go - tear it down, and build a "freeway" once they have bought up and shut down the trolley lines. (The film is set in 1947, when such a plot - without 'toons - really was set in motion; it destroyed Los Angeles's excellent system of urban and suburban trolley transportation.)

The book could not very well have a sequel involving Roger Rabbit, but the movie is certainly going to have one. Rather than putting Roman numerals after the title, I would recommend a series of Who (verb)ed Roger Rabbit? - until plausible verbs run out.

THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANITY

"Dukakis, Frankly but casually, said he would use nuclear weapons first in Europe because he believes NATO conventional forces are too weak to stop a Soviet invasion."

- Richard Reeves, New York Daily News, 18 April 1988

"I propose that the President of the United States advise the commander of the North Korean troops to withdraw his forces beyond the 38th parallel within one week, or use that week to evacuate civilians from a specified list of North Korean cities that will be subjected to atomic attack by the U. S. Air Force." - Lloyd Bentsen, c. 1950, quoted in the New York Post, 15 July 1988

Now - how many of you are going to vote Democratic?

*

Lee Burwasser's NEVER Bluff a Librarian #54 was aimed at the 283rd Distribution on 9 July. However, it is in this Distribution, because she mailed it on 28 June and it didn't get here until 19 July. That's three weeks from Washington to Brooklyn.

*

There have been persistent rumors of a "Lost Episode" of the original Star Trek show, and Newsday of 17 July seems to confirm them. Paramount Home Video has already released the episodes from the show, but "what the company hasn't announced yet is that there is more to come from the series."

A color print of the 1964 pilot "The Cage", with Jeffrey Hunter, has turned up and will be released. (This is the episode that appears as black-and-white bits and pieces in "The Menagerie".) Furthermore, the first four Star Trek movies will allegedly soon appear "in letterboxed format on laser disk", and that the Star Trek cartoons from the early 1970s will also be released, on cassette and disk.

*

I think I have figured out why the Central Park Shakespeare Theater chose August of this year for its production of King John, one of Shakespeare's deservedly lesser known plays. It may have something to do with the fact that this is the 400th anniversary of England's defeat of the Spanish Armada. A speech at the end of King John is usually supposed to refer to this event.

If King John has a hero, it is the king's bastard nephew Philip, an invention of Shakespeare. (The late King Richard I, "the Lion-Hearted", is supposed to have been Philip's father. King Richard was in actuality a homosexual; he did get married, but it was part of a deal to get financial support for the crusades from his bride's father.) It is Philip who fights valiantly against a French attempt to intervene in the troubles among the King of England, his barons, and the Pope. Because of these divisions, there was a sizable French army in southeastern England at the time of King John's death; they had come in to support a claim of the French Dauphin, backed by the Pope, against the English throne.

With King John dead, Philip rallies support behind his 9-year-old son King Henry III, and the French are expelled. There is an obvious parallel with the recent Spanish attempt to put the King of Spain on the English throne. In rallying the nobles behind the young king, in the face of foreign invasion, Philip the Bastard says:

"This England never did, nor never shall,
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,
But when it first did help to wound itself.
Now these her princes are come home again
Come the three corners of the world in arms,
And we shall shock them. Nought shall make us rue,
If England to itself do rest but true."

*

"One might note that we have had for eight years a president who has been the antithesis of boring. He has stunned us with his ignorance of policy issues, he has amazed us with his ability to distort history, he has brought us right off our chairs with a thumping musical fanfare of scandals and sleaze played by his closest cronies.

With excitement like that, it may be that a number of voters this fall will choose boring." - Sydney H. Schanberg, Newsday, 21 July 1988

*

In 1948, Clare Booth Luce referred to Governor Thomas E. Dewey as "looking like the little man on the wedding cake". Apparently a number of other people did also, because this line was remembered and frequently quoted after Dewey was upset by President Truman in the election.

Another such remark has surfaced, that might be equally destructive to George Bush's candidacy. Ann Richards, who gave the Democratic keynote speech, "told a gathering of feminists that the gender gap besetting Bush is best explained 'if you've ever gone to a high school dance and looked at the stag line and there was this guy raising his eyebrows at you and you said to yourself, "Oh, Lord, I hope he doesn't ask me."'" - Susan Page, Newsday, 22 July 1988

*

There's been more in Robert L. Park's weekly newsletter What's New about the FBI's "Library Awareness Program" and other attempts by Reagan's Administration to impede the free flow of scientific information. The issue of 15 July says that James Geer, the FBI's point man in the censorship racket, "sought to portray criticism from librarians as an over-reaction to the legitimate counter-Intelligence efforts of the Bureau." However, Park observes that "in 37 states, when an FBI agent without a court order approaches a library's employee seeking information about library users, the agent is suborning a crime."

The Administration also seems to have invented a "myth that America's competitiveness gap results from a one-sided flow of technical secrets." It seems that RMS Associates runs an electronic database for NASA, called NASA RECON. According to What's New of 8 July 1988, "librarians have discovered that their contract with RMS Associates ... stipulates that foreign nationals cannot use the system." Some university libraries have disaffiliated with NASA RECON for this reason, but other "librarians point out that they have no way to establish the nationality of users, and if they did it would almost certainly violate anti-discrimination policies." This is particularly true of university libraries, since many universities operate under anti-discrimination regulations so strong that Young Americans for Freedom cannot operate at those institutions because they limit membership to American citizens. NASA even has what they officially call a "No-No List" of companies which are not allowed to subscribe to NASA RECON because they have foreign customers.

There are loopholes in this attempt to build a wall around NASA RECON. Dr. Park reports that one university library does not subscribe to NASA RECON because of insufficient demand, but when they do get a request, they simply get it fulfilled - through RMS Associates! "RMS never asks who the user is."

All these problems seem to have originated from NSDD 145, a directive that the senile actor issued in 1984 after being persuaded that sinister foreigners were making off with unspecified American technical secrets and using them to shove our products out of international markets. The directive "established a national policy on the protection of 'sensitive but unclassified' information in electronic databanks. The source of this electronic paranoia is the 'mosaic' concept, which argues that the KGB obtains classified information less by seducing Marine embassy guards than by assembling bits of unclassified information from public sources." However, a later executive order, NSDD 189, seems to put an end to this policy, which makes me wonder why Frank Carlucci has still agreed to "review" NSDD 145.

NASA is still trying to sneak around any possible weakening of NSDD 145, according to Park, by putting a "Foreign Use Control" statement on its unclassified reports. Permission to release such a report to something undefined called 'foreign interests' must first be obtained from the Office of Aeronautics and Space Technology. Several librarians

This is
O At
P Great
E Intervals
R This
A Appears
T To
I Inflamm
O Optic
N Nerves

GETTING CAUGHT UP

DAGON is published every third Saturday by John Boardman, 234 East 19th Street, Brooklyn, New York 11226-5302. It circulates through APA-Q, an amateur press association which is gollated at this same address and frequency. When I can be home at that hour, gollation begins at 2 PM Saturday afternoon, but if you'd like to come over and help, phone me first to make sure that it hasn't been rescheduled. (My phone number is 718-693-1579.)

DAGON also circulates to people outside APA-Q who have subscribed to it (12 issues for \$10) or whom the publisher thinks might be interested. With this issue you will get ANAKREON #39, my quarterly filk-singing fanzine, which circulates through APA-Filk. The 39th Mailing of APA-Filk will take place on 1 August 1988, next Monday, and the 40th Mailing is scheduled for 1 November 1988. That 40th Mailing will include ANAKREON #40, my annual collection of newly composed or discovered verses for the Neo-Pagan filksong "That Real Old-Time Religion". (Oh, you know - Astarte, Freyja, Aphrodite, Mama Legba, etc.)

The gopy gount is 35 for APA-Q and 60 for APA-Filk. If you need printing facilities, I can print your contribution to either apa if you send it to me on any kind of a mimeograph stencil that can fit on a Gestetner, I will print it for 2¢ per copy per sheet. For a few dollars I can mail you your copies of either or both apas for the cost of postage plus 25¢ per envelope. The status of present postage-and-printing accounts appears on p. 9 under the heading "The Ministry of Finance".

The gover for this Distribution of APA-Q was qortributed by Mark Blackman, in honor of the defeat of the Spanish Armada, 400 years ago this week. For the benefit of people who get DAGON but don't belong to APA-Q, it shows a period Spanish warrior, standing in the bows of a ship, waving a lion-and-castle flag, and saying "Nobody ecthpecth the Thpanith Armada!" (Note the Cathtilian acthent.) At the right, Queen Elizabeth I and Sir Francis Drake are saying: "Wanna bet?" And, in the lower right corner, Mark has added the words: "Por que un pato?" with the translation "Why a drake?"*

John Malay sent along a computer-generated gover for the 283rd Mailing, but seems to have got the date wrong. The deadline for that Distribution was 9 July, but he mailed it on the 12th and it arrived on the 14th. It is included here as a second gover.

APA-Qover #283 (Blackman): Thanks again for the "Qasey at the Bat" gommemoration. As you point out, a number of other sports anniversaries fall due about now - the 50th anniversary of the stunning first-round victory of Joe Louis over Max Schmeling being chief among them.

Blancmange #203 (Blackman): Heinlein's The Puppet Masters was a typical piece of 1950s science-fiction. There was a sinister menace with which no compromise was possible. There were Americans who came under the control of this menace without even realizing it. Anyone who urged calm or compromise, or who denied the reality of the menace, was actually under its control. In fact, if you can distill an ethic from the literature of fantasy and science-f'ction, it is that every enemy must be met at once with war to the uttermost, that compromise is the greatest evil of which the human mind can conceive, and that the advocates of peace, compromise, and reconciliation are at best fools and at worst agents of the Enemy. We find this theme repeated to stupefaction in The Puppet Masters, Lord of the Rings, Star Wars, The Dark Crystal, The Machine in God's Eye, the Dominic Flandry and Retief series, and so on, and so on. There is one bright spot in the fact that this theme no longer dominates s-f and fantasy so completely as it did in the 1950s, but it is still very much with us.

Michael Kurland's continuation of Randall Garrett's Lord Darcy books may not be up to the originals, but I still think Kurland is a good person to continue the series.

* - For the benefit of the tiny minority of DAGON readers who are not Marx Brothers fans, this refers to the "Why a duck?" routine from Cocoonuts. Actually, the contemporary Spanish referred to Drake as "El Draque" - "the Dragon".

During the early stages of Kurland's career, Garrett gave him a great deal of help, and Kurland refers to Garrett in one way or another in almost every book he writes. He has tuckerized Randy in many of them. His respect for Garrett's memory and writings make him qualified to continue the Lord Darcy series. I am curious to see what he comes up with.

Mike Resnick is certainly qualified to write on "the nature of evil"; he was one of the most vicious opponents in Science-Fiction Review of John Brunner, when Brunner made his unwelcome assertion that peace is preferable to war.

My assertion that Glen Taylor was a Fundamentalist comes from Bob Lipton, who mentioned it to me when he told me of Taylor's death.

I still maintain that Oliver North is a Lieutenant Criminal. The full criminals are the people whose orders he was carrying out: President Reagan, Vice President Bush, Sir* William Casey, Admiral Poindexter, Robert McFarlane, etc. Oliver North seems to have been a human switchboard, relaying messages between the full criminals and the smugglers and assassins who did the actual dirty work. And now, it seems, he will go to trial precisely seven weeks before the presidential election!

I had been hoping that the new Star Trek would dump Wesley and keep his mother, whose character has more exposition to go; apparently they will do the opposite.

How to...in 12 Easy Lessons (Dei Grande): Yes, I do advocate using force when it is a question of saving life. Preventing people from making, planning, or advocating war is saving life. I would prevent a pro-war speaker from advocating war with exactly the same motivation that a life guard would use in knocking out a panicky swimmer so he could rescue him. My right to advocate peace is not equivalent to someone else's right to advocate war. The question of "rights" does not enter into it. Opposition to war is not a right but a duty. Support of war is not a right but a crime.

Whether or not war happens to be approved by a majority is utterly immaterial. This is why I am unimpressed by President Reagan's two huge electoral majorities, or the present polls which claim that a majority of the American people think it is Iran's fault that the US Navy shot down an Iranian air-liner, and believe that the US should not pay compensation to the victims' families. All this shows is that the judgment of the American people has been so badly perverted by over 40 years of pro-war propaganda that it is incapable of making an informed judgment on the matter.

Besides, even if a majority of the American people turns against a war, that majority is not allowed to take effect. Early in 1968 the American people turned against the war with Vietnam. I have this on the authority of the pro-war Harvard political theoretician Samuel P. Huntington, who believed that this change of opinion was wrong and that it shows an undesirable "excess of democracy". You will find details in Crozier, Huntington, and Watanuki, The Crisis of Democracy: Report on the Governability of Democracies to the Trilateral Commission (New York University Press, 1975) Yet, while a majority of Americans turned against the war in 1968, it was not until 1973 that U. S. troops got out of Vietnam.

If you can't see your role in the maiming of Brian Willson, then I doubt that I will be able to persuade you. You will just have to give the usual excuse at the war crimes trial.

That episode about the Moslem soap opera stars took place in "the Islamic Republic of Pakistan". Moslem law provides that such a couple can remarry, but the wife must marry and get divorced from someone else first.

As you observe, "the only reason Carter re-introduced registration (and the only reason Reagan has kept it) was 'in case of an invasion of Europe', there may be a draft called 'to have troops ready just in case.'" If Michael Dukakis is elected President, this won't be needed. He has instead said that in the event a war breaks out in Europe, he would initiate the use of nuclear weapons. (New York Daily News, 12 April 1988) Every one who tries to hustle my vote for the Nuclear Duke this year is going to get this quotation thrown at them.

* - Casey held a papal knighthood and was therefore entitled to the "Sir", just as are Sir Alexander Haig and Sir Peter Grace. Poor Ollie can't get one; he was born a Catholic, but defected to some charismatic Fundamentalist sect.

The wanton US attack on the Iranian airliner is already getting swept under the rug; President Reagan has said, "We regard this matter as closed," and Vice President Bush in on record against compensation. And people ask me why I consider politicians to be people of bad moral character!

Some of your facts about the incident have turned out to be otherwise; the Iranian plane informed its control tower that it was raising altitude, from 7000 to 14,000 feet.

More generally, have you ever noticed that when soldiers kill civilians it is always regarded as a regrettable incident and quickly forgotten. However, when civilians kill soldiers, it is regarded as a most monstrous crime, and no efforts are spared to bring the civilians responsible, and as many others as can be reached, to what is laughably called "justice".

Thanks for sending the listing of Nuremberg Principles through APA-Q. Have you read them yet?

DAGON #375 (me): In that soccer game on the 13th, Poland beat the U. S. 2-0.

Vaudeville Lines #199 (Lipton): So your 200th issue will be in this Distribution. Congratulations!

I have had some experience with students who could not get in lab results that are anywhere near to what they ought to be getting. Where the reasons can be traced, they involve an inability to plot a graph, or to read a clock, or to determine how many hundreds are in a thousand, or in one case to read. I get students who do not know how many centimeters are in a meter, who cannot compute one number as a percentage of another, or who cannot comprehend the difference among a centimeter, a square centimeter, and a cubic centimeter. Usually some such thing as this is at the heart of an inability to get the results they should get. And yet these people think themselves competent to understand the issues involved in nuclear power or genetic engineering!

As I should have recalled when cutting stencils for DAGON #375, it was you who informed me about the Official State Cat of Maine and its alleged antecedents.

Sharyn McCrumb knows Bill Linden? She's got the material for 3 or 4 satirical novels right there!

Fremont's Intelligence Newsletter #8 (Hauser): It was in 1934, not 1933, that a Morgan Guaranty Trust broker named McGuire handed \$18,000 to General Butler and told him there was more where that came from if he'd lead a Mussolini-style coup against President Roosevelt. After the congressional hearings in early 1935, McGuire died "of indigestion".

Congratulations - 37 years after it was first in the news, you have discovered the "Golden Triangle". This dope-growing region in the Indochinese interior was the refuge of some Kuomintang remnants after the Communists took over China, and apparently they and their successors have been selling dope for gun money ever since. Wherever in the world you find dope dealers who are politically motivated rather than merely after a fast buck, the political motivation is invariably strongly anti-Communist. What this Khun Sa wants the U. S. government to do, on the assertion of Gritz and Griffin themselves, is to suppress their business rivals so Khun Sa's gang will have more of the drug trade for themselves. This is what I might have expected of the John Birch Society, which publishes the magazine from which your 12 pages of tedious conspiracy-mongering comes. I expect to see, in future Bircher frank-throughs from you, similar justification for the way in which U. S. officials are running guns to Central American anti-Communists and bringing those planes back loaded with drugs for sale here to support the anti-Communist war effort.

Are you capable of putting anything original into APA-Q?

THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY (continued from p. 5)

have told Dr. Park that they would refuse to carry such reports because of the vagueness of the NASA policy. "The net effect of the restriction is therefore to deny the information to everyone."

There is clearly only one way to deal with this bureaucratic paranoia. That is, to continue the intellectual freedom which has made the scientific age possible. This

DUNGEONS AND CHRISTIANS - XX

In past installments this column has related Christian attempts to censor Dungeons & Dragons and other games, as well as rock records, movies, television shows, and magazines. However, this is scarcely the big leagues. Throughout history, the principal targets of censors have been books. And, in the May 1988 issue of its irregularly published newsletter, the National Council on Television Violence finally gets to the meat of the censorship racket.*

NCTV, which in practice means mainly its founder Thomas Radecki, has just completed a study on bestsellers from 1905 to 1988, "both because many violent books later become violent films or TV specials, and because of the harmful impact of the books themselves." Radecki claims "that there has been a dramatic 61% decrease in the number of positive or pro-social themes since 1966" while "during the same period, sensationalistic, violent themes in best-selling novels have increased by over 300%."

NCTV must tread very delicately in this new field. Radecki is quoted as saying, "Governmental censorship is not the appropriate way of dealing with this issue." In this capitalistic nation, private enterprise is instead recommended. "We need to get the message out...that entertaining yourself with violence is unhealthy." Another of NCTV's dubiously credentialed experts says, "There is a real need for teachers to talk about the violence in books as well as the plot and the book in literature."

The study tended to use book reviews rather than actually reading the books. Book covers were also studied, on the presumption that "the brief sketches on the book cover were presumed to be related to the contents of the books." This will give you an idea of how seriously we have to take NCTV's "study".

"Recent bestsellers singled out as being especially violent and unhealthy included Red Storm Rising...The Matarese Circle...The Wounded Land...The Aquitaine Progression, The Parsifal Mosaic, and The Holcroft Covenant." The way was prepared for these back in the 1950s and 1960s, it seems, with Lolita ("the theme of sexual perversion first appeared in the best seller listings"), The Chapman Report, and Rosemary's Baby.

At this point it might be observed that, if you draw the net wide enough to include politico-military extrapolations into the near future, practically all of these books qualify as science-fiction or fantasy. Of these, Stephen Donaldson's The Wounded Land, part of a series of books featuring the hero Thomas Covenant, has the best claim to being s-f. Apparently NCTV did not go deeply enough into specifically s-f titles, or we could have expected to find numerous others here. A novel by the late Louis L'Amour, in which he deserted the 19th-century Old West for 11th-century Europe, is also listed. Generally, "satanic and horror themes have become commonplace after being nonexistent before the late 1960s." This coincides with the period in which formerly "specialized" genres such as murder mysteries, s-f, and horror began moving into the "mainstream". NCTV sees this as meaning "that modern readers of popular fiction are entertaining themselves with more hate-filled, sadistic and gruesome material than any previous generation in world history."

There is not the slightest intimation, in this study, that a world living under the threat of nuclear annihilation is naturally going to reflect this fact in its fiction of choice. The world leaders who have permitted this situation to develop, and who are now eagerly promoting such fears, are not mentioned by NCTV at all.

Of NCTV's "20 Best, Most Pro-Social Writers of the 20th Century" only 5 were active since 1953. Curiously, many of this group were hotly controversial during their careers, often being called radical, Communistic, or even violent: Sinclair Lewis (at the top of NCTV's "pro-social" list), Erich Maria Remarque, John Steinbeck, Kurt Vonnegut, and even Ernest Hemingway! The "Most Violent or Anti-Social Writer of the 20th

* - As always, I am indebted to Loren K. Wiseman of Game Designers' Workshop for these issues of NCTV News. Since books, some of them in science-fiction, are involved, this installment of the series "Dungeons & Christians" will go into July 1988 issues of both my gaming 'zine EMPIRE and my s-f fanzine DAGON.

Century" is Robert Ludlum, in a tie with Frederick Forsyth, Mario Puzo, James Clavell, and Helen MacInnes. This list also includes Rafael Sabatini, ~~Lance Grey~~, the fantasy-writer Robert Chambers, Hervey Allen, and Mary Stewart!

NCTV has apparently at last realized that a lot of books (and films, TV shows, etc.) deal with violence mainly to condemn it and show its futility, and so they have created another category: "Prosocial with Violence Appearing to Serve an Educational Role." Eugene Burdick's Fail Safe, William Lederer's The Ugly American, Morris West's The Shoes of the Fisherman, and Dr. Seuss's The Butter Battle Book come under this heading. No such rating was given to General Sir John Hackett's The Third World War, which Hackett no doubt intended to be a cautionary book; it goes in the heading "High And Intense Violence" along with Donaldson's White Gold Wielder, two police novels by Joseph Wambaugh, several horror titles by Stephen King, and numerous cold-war masturbatory fantasies by John Le Carre, Robert Ludlum, and Frederick Forsyth.

Paperbacks got a separate study. In it, "Science Fiction was heavily violent with only a small percentage with educational or prosocial messages." Rated by percentage of shelf space, paperback s-f was 81% violent, while horror was 96% and sword-and-sorcery 98%.

The last half of this issue is given over to reviews of specific books of which NCTV disapproves. Science-fiction or fantasy titles include:

Stephen King, <u>Cujo</u>	Dean R. Koontz, <u>Lightning</u>
Stephen King, <u>Firestarter</u>	Stephen King, <u>Stand by Me</u>
Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman, <u>Forging the Darksword</u>	Dean R. Koontz, <u>Twilight Eyes</u>
Jack L. Chalker, <u>Masks of the Martyrs</u>	Stephen R. Donaldson, <u>The Wounded Land</u>

Among others included is William F. Buckley's latest spy novel, Magoose R. I. P. Between this book, his advocacy of the legalization of drugs, and his support of George Bush, Buckley must be regarded very oddly by now by his old conservative friends.

NCTV has some real problems with this attitude about violence. Its Board of Directors, and list of Endorsers, include: the public media director of the United Methodist Church, a Methodist bishop in Indiana, a Catholic bishop in Texas, a Catholic Women's League in Canada, and the fanatical Fundamentalist enemy of D&D, Pat Pulling, who indicate sufficiently well its Christian character. And the organized Christian churches in this country have historically been in favor of every war it has fought, and have condemned Pacifism from the pulpit. Evidence for this stretches from Ray H. Abrams' Preachers Present Arms (1933) through A. Grace Mojtabai's Blessed Assurance: At Home with the Bomb in Amarillo, Texas (1986). In the latter book, Mrs. Mojtabai tells how most of the devout Christians who assemble nuclear bombs at the Pantex plant in Amarillo believe that a forthcoming nuclear war is predicted in the last book of the Christian scriptures, and that therefore working against nuclear war is contrary to the will of god. God also seems to like "limited" non-nuclear wars too, to judge from Cardinal Spellman's endorsement of "the G. I.'s of Christ", and the book written by his successor Cardinal Admiral O'Connor supporting the U. S. war effort against Vietnam.

And yet Christians realize that increasing violence in films and on television - and, yes, even in books - may not be utterly unrelated to violence in civil society. They are faced with a real problem here. How do you make it less likely that the guy you beat out for a parking space will punch out your lights, and at the same time keep Americans snorting with rage and ready to go to war against some Satanic conspiracy centered in Moscow, Tehran, or the local Gay Liberation Front?

I leave to Christians the resolution of this dilemma. But we should note that, at present, NCTV rejects governmental censorship of books. Yet NCTV has in past newsletters demanded laws against Dungeons & Dragons and other games of which they disapprove. They also ask governmental action against allegedly violent TV shows. Demands for governmental suppression of books in which they see these same dangers will surely follow.

However, there is one reason for hope. For the first time, the usual appeal for funds has appeared on the front page of NCTV News. There is a strident and desperate tone to the appeal. If this indicates the actual state of NCTV's finances, the end of this band of amateur censors may be in sight.

THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE

The following people presently have postage accounts with APA-Q. (If your name is followed by a "*" you also have a postage account with APA-Filk, and you will be getting the 28th Distribution of the former and the 39th Mailing of the latter at the same time.) A "#" indicates a person who gets APA-Q by first-class mail even when it runs to more than four ounces. These accounts are up to the date of 26 July 1988; including this present Distribution, your balance appears in the blank _____ to the right.

Lee Burwasser	\$18.18	John Malay#	\$16.28
Philip M. Cohen	\$3.83	Jeff Poretsky	\$1.75
Don Del Grande	\$15.10	Alan Rachlin	\$13.20
Harold Feld*	\$8.36	Lana Raymond*#	\$6.12
Robert Hauser	\$5.23	Robert Sacks	\$14.20
Daniel B. Holzman	\$18.79	Jane T. Sibley*	\$11.13
Robert Bryan Lipton*#	\$17.41		

Accounts that fall into arrears will be suspended. Presently suspended accounts are:

Vinnie Bartilucci	-76¢	John Hartzell	-79¢
Andre Bridget	-72¢	Mark Keller	-86¢
Shelby Bush	-\$5.98	Ted Pauls	-39¢
John Colton	-88¢	Joyce Scrivner	-75¢
John Desmond	-61¢	Peter G. Trei	-73¢
Liz Ensley	-37¢		

And why has this accounting appeared on p. 11, rather than on p. 9 where it was announced? Because at the last minute I decided to run "Dungeons & Dragons XX" in this issue of DAGON as well as in EMPIRE #268 two weeks ago.

THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY (continued from p. 8)

means that any restrictions whatsoever on the free transmission of scientific and technological ideas and processes are wrong - morally wrong in that they place restrictions upon intellectual activity and the free exchange of ideas, and practically wrong in that they retard the advances of American technology which our government assures us they are designed to protect.

Park has since discovered, and tells us all in the 22 July issue of What's New, that there are no Executive Orders forbidding Societ citizens from using the National Technical Information Service (NTIS). This flatly contradicts a claim by James Geer of the FBI. NTIS, it should be recalled, deals only in unclassified information. In pursuit of this same policy, which is not only idiotic but also has no basis in law, the US Department of Commerce refused to allow "Soviet-block" scientists to attend the 1980 Bubble Memory Conference of the American Vacuum Society. "There is nothing in these memoranda, or the Commerce Department directive, or any place else, to suggest that unclassified information in libraries can be restricted." It seems that the words "bubble memory" might better describe the FBI.

Finally, Park tells us, "The story going around the Justice Department is that, when agents reported to FBI Director Sessions that they had arrested six Libyans, he exclaimed, 'No, no, no. I said librarians!'"

*

In the latest What's New, Park returns to the deteriorating situation of the "Strategic Defense Initiative", the notorious "Star Wars" hoax. The General Accounting Office finally released a declassified version of their report on the X-ray Laser that is an essential part of this scheme. "The report confirms that" Edward Teller and Lowell Wood "made wildly exaggerated claims for the X-ray laser and discloses that, as a result, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory will issue a formal policy governing the

dissemination of official laboratory positions as opposed to personal views. The GAO makes clear, however, that LLNL issued official statements on the X-ray laser that were only slightly less outrageous than the claims of Teller and Wood." The Governor of California has just approved legislation governing the management of LLNL, which is still formally a part of the University of California, to prevent future misrepresentation of work done there.

*

"I should say at once that I disagree fundamentally with Prof. West, who teaches philosophy at the Union Theological Seminary. He is a believing Christian, who echoes Dostoyevsky in saying that without God, everything is permissible. To this one can only reply, and with more and better evidence, that with God, everything is permissible, too. If faith and religion were of any use in restraining humanity we would, given the vast surplus of those two commodities, be almost out of the woods by now." - Christopher Hitchens, review of Cornel West, Prophetic Fragments, Newsday, 13 July 1988

*

This summer's Central Park Shakespeare performance of Much Ado About Nothing has proven to be so popular that the run was extended through tomorrow rather than ending last Sunday. This means that the opening of King John will be postponed until Thursday 11 August, and will continue into September. I suggest that a Line Party for it be arranged at First Saturday next week.

*

The first of the two USA-Jamaica soccer matches ended last Sunday in a scoreless tie. No local TV stations broadcast it. The second game will be played in St. Louis on Saturday 13 August. Its winner will go on to the next step in determining the two (not one as I said in the last issue) CONCACAF slots in the 1990 World Cup. Since Mexico has been disqualified, the US national team stands a fairly good chance of getting one of those slots.

If the St. Louis game is a tie at any score other than 0-0, Jamaica will advance, as having scored more goals on their opponents' field. In the event of an 0-0 tie, the team that has had the fewer penalties called against it will advance.

*

The Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee, which controls the issuance of commemorative postage stamps, has commissioned Al Hirschfeld to do a series of three 25¢ stamps commemorating great entertainers: Laurel and Hardy, Mary Pickford, and Rosa Pnselle. Certainly no one will question that these people deserve the honor. But when the stamps come out, everyone will examine them carefully for "Ninas".

For many decades it has been Hirschfeld's custom to work the name of his daughter Nina into his caricatures of show-business personalities. Originally, there was only one "Nina" in each drawing. Then, Hirschfeld put in more, and next to his signature put the number of them. In thousands of households that get the New York Times, a favorite Sunday morning sport is to find the "Ninas" in today's Hirschfeld illustration. (The crossbar of the "A" most commonly gives it away.)

The Postmaster General has assured the public that Hirschfeld will not be allowed to conceal "Ninas" in these stamp designs. This is particularly a sore point with the U. S. Postal "Service" these days because of what was done with the \$1 stamp in the regular issue. This stamp shows Dr. Barnard Revel, founder of Yeshiva University and the first rabbi ever depicted on a U. S. postage stamp. A government engraver had etched a tiny Star of David onto the stamp.

Meanwhile, a stamp has just been announced in honor of Elvis Presley. Though he was never one of my favorite singers, he does have a major role in American culture, and a stamp in his honor would be appropriate. But it seems that there are problems. One group wants the slender Presley of the 1950s. Another wants the more "mature" Presley - presumably the drug-soaked tub of lard he became in his last years. A third group insists that he is still alive, and that therefore a federal law prevents his being depicted on a postage stamp.

I rather doubt that anyone will try to conceal a hypodermic needle in the design of the Presley stamp. But the record for concealing things in stamps was reached by an

anonymous Serbian in 1903. In that year, the long rivalry between the country's two royal families, the Karadjordjeviches and the Obrenoviches, was settled when the last Obrenovich king, Alexander, was murdered by a military conspiracy which then called to the throne Petar Karadjordjevic, then living in exile. With a new king, new stamps had to be issued, and out came a new series showing profiles of King Petar together with his ancestor, a singular character called "Black Djordj" who had led the fight for independence from the Turks. But - if you turned the stamp upside down and carefully examined those two profiles, you saw a three-quarters view of the late King Alexander Obrenovich!

*

In the Newsday television magazine of 24 July 1988, Ellen Lubell gives her impressions of the old and new Star Treks. She begins with the tale of how, on a romantic tropical cruise, she wasn't able to tell the tall dark stranger when Kirk had first been told, "He's dead, Jim", but stumped him on what the "T" in "James T. Kirk" stands for. (Believe it or not, "Tiberius". I wonder whether that writer had ever read about the Emperor Tiberius and his little "fishies".) Between the original series and the reruns, she has watched it almost daily for 20 years, and has "seen those 79 episodes so often that I can recite the dialogue along with the crew. And do."

For the first few weeks she disliked Star Trek: The Next Generation. "The crew, particularly the new first officer, was grim - not much tension-easing banter on this bridge and none of the soapish melodrama suggested by the premiere episode." But at last she came around to the new show; "its more even-keeled foundation actually heightens the drama, by contrast".

The New York Daily News of 10 July 1988 stated that Denise Crosby left the role of Security Officer Tasha Yar because "I didn't want to just say 'The frequency's open, sir' for five years." And it seems that Gates McFadden will not be back this fall as Dr. Crusher, although her son Wesley will. In my opinion, they got rid of the wrong Crusher.

*

"Most creationists seem driven not by a healthy moral sense but by a generalised distaste for the modern world. We find in creationism none of the love for mankind necessary to any ethical system. Creationism must be recognized for what it is - not a humane attempt to save mankind from itself, but a manifestation of...mingled bigotry, hatred, and fear..." - Joseph Triebwasser, letter, New York Times Magazine, 13 September 1987

*

In the novel, the president made decisions based on advice from his wife. In turn, his wife made her decisions based on the horoscopes cast by a female astrologer who lived in San Francisco.

Ronald and Nancy Reagan and Joan Quigley? Nope - they're characters in Robert A. Heinlein's Stranger in a Strange Land. The president is Earth's chief executive, Joseph A. Douglas. The story broke in the New York Times of 13 May 1988, five days after Heinlein died.

Not long after the White House Ass Trological follies became public, the newspapers printed the obituary of a well-known psychic or psychotic - you decide which. His name was originally Pieter van der Hurk, but he went as "Peter Hurkos". He claimed to have become psychic after falling off a ladder in 1941; he obviously became something when that happened. Believe it or not, he was called in by police to use his "abilities" to help solve the Charles Manson and Boston Strangler cases. This was not Hurkos's first experience with police procedure; in 1964 he was convicted in Milwaukee of impersonating an FBI agent.

The racket continues to go on. The New York Times of 12 July reported that one Jenny Nicholson was appointed County Astrologer of La Grande, Oregon. The head of the County Commission, who promoted her appointment, said, "What the heck. If the Reagan Administration is rumored as using astrology, I guess we can try it on the local level as well." "Ms. Nicholson said...that she intended to offer the commissioners advice on such things as when to apply for government grants."

Philadelphia also appears to have a group of these wackoes. The Philadelphia Daily News of 27 June 1988 reported on the activities of a group called Parastudy, which meets in a Charles Addams type of house and "presents a broad spectrum of classes, workshops and lectures on subjects as diverse as astrology, biorhythms, crystals, kirlian photography, reincarnation, tarot and yoga." All the nuts, it seems, are under one roof. Eventually, a fence can be put around them, admission can be charged at the gate, and experienced zoo guides who know how to deal with this sort of thing can show parties of tourists through at \$5 a head.

The Newsday television section of 5 June 1988 reviewed a new videotape that does not have the cheerful idiocy of such things as Parastudy and the La Grande County Astrologer. They review a \$60 "mock-documentary" which "ties together the dubious assertions of seers from the distant past through the present day, from medieval soup to fundamentalist nuts, all pointing to the end of civilization as we know it by the year 2000." Armageddon, which is what this Sony tape is called, has missed the boat on some of this business. As far as fundamentalists are concerned, the world has already come to an end. Does anyone seriously think that gays will quistly return to the closets, abortionists to the back alleys, housewives to the kitchen, Pacifists to jail, Blacks to the cotton fields, and evolutionists to Europe?

Armageddon is nothing if not inclusive. We get the prophecy attributed to St. Malachy, the claim that "passages in an Egyptian pyramid are an architectural chart of history", Nostradamus, Our Lady of Fatima, Edgar Cayce, and the Mark of the Beast on credit cards.

However, this whole mass of superstition is too serious to be dismissed with laughter. Not only is the President of the United States of America basing major decisions on ass trolgy, but here in New York City is a pack of health food fanatics who "believe that AIDS can be cured with the proper mixture of bean sprouts and granola". (New York Post, 17 May 1988) They have formed a group to spread this grisly gospel; it's called "HEAL" for "Health, Education, AIDS Liaison". The Post listed several people who support this, in tones that indicated that we all ought to know who they are: Tama Janowitz, Brett Easton Ellis, Fran Lebowitz, Touki Smith, John Waters, Bruce Weber, and Dean Ralston. The only ones I recognized are Lebowitz who can't be too deeply involved in macrobiotics because she smokes, and Janowitz, for whom the word "ditzy" was invented.

*

"Ordinarily a hundred men rule the United States. The statement is subject to numerous and complicated qualifications. The hundred rulers have their advisers, lieutenants, and influential followers; they act with varying degrees of awareness and responsibility in their roles; they are organized loosely and informally and often defeat their own ends by their contradictions and jealousies. But in the large, they rule; against a majority of them no major policy can be pursued; against their united opposition any program or design is without hope." - Rex Stout, The President Vanishes (1934)

*

Some APA-Q members have wondered whether the President's reliance on ass trolgy is totally compatible with his assertion of a deep and meaningful Christian belief. As far as President Reagan is concerned, two contradictory beliefs are not incompatible at all. It is obvious that he lacks the mental equipment for making any such determination. However, I have learned that some southwestern fundamentalists have indeed written to him en bloc, informing him that ass trolgy and Christianity are incompatible, and prayerfully asking him to repudiate the rival gift. As the presidential campaign wears on, they will probably ask George Bush to pick their superstition and reject the other. George Bush is therefore faced with the unenviable task of antagonizing either the believers in fundamentalist Christianity, or the believers in ass trolgy. I am in no doubt as to which bloc is the larger. Hardly anyone would notice if the daily newspaper never printed another word about religious doctrine, but let that same newspaper drop its ass trolgy column for one day, and the phone will ring off the hook.

*

In May 1988, as Martin Burden pointed out in the New York Post of 17 May 1988, Isaac Asimov reached two milestones: the publication of Prelude to Foundation, and the opening of the film Light Years, for which he wrote the script. Asimov told the reporter that he had so many other projects in hand that there would be little time to celebrate. "And what does he do with his spare time? 'There is no spare time.'"

Light Years is not actually an original Asimov work. He adapted a translation of the script of what was originally a French film. Since the film is animated, the problems were many. "His hardest job...was matching his dialog to the existing pictures. 'I couldn't have a person make a long speech when his mouth only moved for a few seconds.'" As Asimov observed, he is more aurally than visually oriented: "I don't describe things because I don't see what's going on. I only hear it."

Is anything more coming in the "Foundation" series? Asimov says: "Next year I'll have to ~~decide~~ whether to tackle a sequel to Foundation and Earth." I rather hope he doesn't. While the "Foundation" books of the 1900s have been best-sellers, they just don't have the sublime simplicity and optimism of the books written in the 1940s. I will be reviewing Prelude to Foundation for Niekas, but I fear that I won't be able to be particularly enthusiastic about it.

On 21 June 1988 Asimov celebrated his 50th anniversary as a professional writer; it was on that date in 1938 that he sent his first story to Astounding. (Newsday, 22 June 1988) His tally at that time was 391 books with another 21 in press, 351 short stories with another 9 in press, and at least 2,000 non-fiction articles.

*

In the 1950s, one of my favorite radio shows was Walter Cronkite's You Are There. In a weekly half-hour show, Cronkite, Roger Mudd, John Holliday, Roger Chancellor, John Daly, and others interviewed the major characters, and a few anonymous faces from the crowd, at major events in history. At Gettysburg on 3 July 1863, for example, we had an interview with John Burns, a farmer in his seventies who volunteered to serve after the rebels had plundered his farm, fought with great credit, was wounded three times, and survived to tell the tale the rest of his life. An awed announcer described the appearance of the Persian army that was moving into position to fight against Alexander the Great at Issos: "I've never seen anything like this in my life! They've got these huge animals with long snouts and big tusks!" Oliver Cromwell was interviewed on the morning of the execution of King Charles I, and an Oxford scholar explained that the Magna Carta was a charter of rights for the high nobility, not for the common people.

There was a brief attempt to bring You Are There to television, but television is a more limited medium than radio, and the imagination could not fill in what the sets and costumes lacked. However, the Public Broadcasting System (excoriated recently in these pages by Robert Hauser as a pack of pretentious tax-eaters) is going to bring this same idea to the screen as Timeline. (Patrick Pacheco, New York Times, 24 July 1988) However, the director of this series says that "Timeline will exploit all the subsequent technological advances" and be more like Nightline. For example, after the English of King Harald Godwinsson defeat the Norwegians of King Harald Sigurdsson at Stamford Bridge on 25 September 1066, the anchorman will say: "Tonight, Viking power, which has continued unchecked throughout Northern Europe for the last 300 years, has met its first major defeat." That will provide the opportunity "to look at the Viking years with 'file' footage, which we've shot, and live interviews." This will be rendered easier by an SCA type group in England which goes in for Viking activities. Director Leo Eaton says that the show is treading a "very delicate tight-rope ..beyond which are the goblins of Monty Python and wide-screen historical travesties such as Cid." For example, the interviewers who shove microphones into the faces of Saladin or Pope Innocent IV are dressed in period costume.

I am eagerly looking forward to this one.

*

Some 25 or 30 years ago, there was a swank named Emmanuel Josephson who claimed that the United States of America was run by a tight little clique of aristocratic families who froze the rest of us out of decision-making - one gathers he had some-

thing like the old Venetian Republic in mind. To demonstrate this alleged fact, he circulated genealogical tables showing that most of our Presidents were related to one another.

What truth there may be in this view probably resides in the fact that most of our Presidents have been from quite well-to-do families. The ones that were not born to money married it, with Abraham Lincoln and Lyndon Johnson being the two most outstanding examples. The genuinely poor boys who worked their ways up were relatively few; furthermore, Andrew Jackson, James Garfield, and Richard Nixon are scarcely to be numbered among our best Presidents.

Josephson's thesis will probably get a new birth from George Bush's candidacy for the presidency. Harold Brooks-Baker, publishing director of Burke's Peerage Ltd., has traced Bush's family tree back to the 15th century, and has found that "Mr. Bush has more connections to British and European royalty than any President of the United States." (The previous record-holder had been George Washington, who had many cousins in the British nobility as well. In 1760 his distant cousin Lawrence Washington Shirley, Earl Ferrers, became the last British nobleman to suffer capital punishment.)

Furthermore, Brooks-Baker reports, "the frequency with which royal blood has found its way into the White House is much higher than the share of the American population with links to British or European monarchs, which is estimated at 5 percent... American Presidents have been at least six times more likely to have royal blood than the people who elected them." He goes on to say that there is some special merit in royal blood which makes its holders so markedly superior that even in a republic the electorate recognizes this superiority.

Bush's closest British royal connection is the relatively recent House of Tudor, which reigned from 1483 to 1603; most other Americans who claim royal British ancestry run it back to cadet branches of the Plantagenets. He is descended from Princess Mary, the youngest sister of King Henry VIII, and her second husband Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk. This marriage, incidentally, was highly disapproved by Henry VIII, who felt that since his sister was the widow of King Louis XII of France he could marry her off to some other continental monarch and get political advantage thereby. Brandon escaped the Tower only by coughing up an enormous bribe.

*

In 1963, for no reason I could see, William Golding's 1954 novel Lord of the Flies was made into a film. Now, apparently, this is going to be tried again. (Newsday, 9 June 1988) I found it a rather dreary book, which had a bunch of upper-class English schoolboys revert to savagery after being stranded on a tropical island. We obviously have here the tired old myth of "original sin", or as Golding himself once put it, human beings secrete evil as naturally as bees secrete honey. Golding is supposed to have taken this view as a result of his experiences during World War II. To this my reaction is that Anne Frank had far grimmer experiences than he did, and yet her diary is a message of optimism to a world she did not live to see.

The 1988 version of Lord of the Flies will go into production in August. This time the boys stranded on the remote island will be American rather than British, and "the kids' language and everything will be updated."

When Golding got the Nobel Prize in literature a couple of years ago, there was an unprecedented dissent from a prominent member of the academy which awards them. While no one expects Nobel laureates to be necessarily morally uplifting in their works, honoring the author of Lord of the Flies is a bit too much.

*

I realize that I owe letters to a number of people on the DAGON mailing list. I regret that they are just getting more issues of DAGON and ANAKREON, and in some cases also GRAUSTARK and/or EMPIRE, rather than letters. I'll try to get these letters written before the fall term begins and life becomes even more hectic than it is now.

*

Lee Burwasser, who to the best of my knowledge is the only professional librarian in APA-Q, has just sent along some more material about the FBI's campaign to get

librarians to spy for them. An article by David G. Savage, reprinted from the Los Angeles Times of 3 June 1988, describes how People for the American Way and the American Library Association have been trying - so far without success - to get out of the FBI information about its "Library Awareness Program".

The FBI agents have asked librarians to "be on the lookout for 'suspicious-looking persons' with an avid interest in highly technical topics such as robotics or superconductivity". Since superconductivity is currently the hottest topic in the physical sciences, and thousands of scientists are eagerly following every latest report in the scientific journals, the FBI apparently has a hopeless task before it.

Fortunately, librarians are virtually unanimous in their opposition to, and refusal to cooperate with, this FBI scheme. The National Security Archive, which keeps a closer tab on FBI and CIA operations than these agencies would like, knows "of no instance...in which a librarian or clerk had cooperated with the federal investigators." Patrice McDermott, assistant director of the ALA's office for intellectual freedom, has said:

"Our position is that anyone who enters the library as a patron is entitled to have access to the information - all of which is unclassified - and that it is our duty to keep that confidential."

The same position is taken by the Librarian of the Library of Congress. In a memorandum dated 7 July 1988, librarians are reminded that "users of the Library are entitled to privacy with respect to information sought or received and materials consulted, borrowed, or acquired." Library of Congress regulations to this effect are then quoted.

*

I have recently read Esther Friesner's New York by Knight, to which Elf Defense is a sequel. It is good, but Elf Defense is better. Its villain is a dragon in the grand tradition, back when dragons were dragons and undeniably evil. But would a dragon, seated in state in St. Patrick's Cathedral and ruling New York City until he is slain, really be forgotten as quickly as he seems to have been by the time Elf Defense takes place some 7 or 8 years later? I would say, yes. This city has a remarkable recuperative ability from any disaster, and a public that can re-elect Ed Koch twice obviously has no memory at all for disasters.

*

I have just finished reading Stephen W. Hawking's A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes, can heartily recommend it, and will review it in a future issue of DAGON. Hawking, the most brilliant man to deal with Einstein's theories since Einstein himself, makes no compromises with mysticism and theism in interpreting the beginning of the universe, or human understanding of it.

*

The Minneapolis area seems to be developing a sizable population of science-fiction writers, critics, and fans. This is something of a "snowballing" effect, if the analogy may be used in this torrid weather, since the more s-f people are in a place, the more attractive it becomes to others.

Newsday of 10 July 1988 gave a more general look at this phenomenon. For more than a century, New York City has been the cultural capital of America. (This may have been due to the fact that it is also the financial capital, and thus the place where the patrons of the arts live. However, art patronage is not now considered to be part of the role in life of the very wealthy, certainly not as much as it was 100 or even 50 years ago. Furthermore, the creative people whom the wealthy like to patronize mostly seem to have values that the rich regard as a threat to their status.)

It now seems that New York City, even the outboroughs, is becoming too expensive for the sort of stereotype "starving young artist" who is starting out on a career of writing, painting, or sculpture. "They are going to rural areas in upstate New York and New England where space is cheap, or to cities such as Minneapolis, Boston, and San Francisco where, they say, life is easier and there is more public support for the

arts." (Note that Minneapolis is the first city to be mentioned here. Apparently it is not only aspiring science-fiction writers who have noticed this.)

This estimate deals mainly with painters and sculptors rather than with writers, and summarizes a number of interviews that the director of artist certification for the city's Department of Cultural Affairs has had with artists seeking permission to live in manufacturing zones in lower Manhattan. "Hardest hit are the artists whose work requires the most space: dancers, choreographers, painters, and sculptors. Writers and composers manage to work and live in small spaces; actors can live in a small space as long as they have a theater." (Theaters, however, are also having to fight for their existence.)

Three prospects are opened by these developments. One is, that New York City becomes a city of the very rich and the very poor, while some other city becomes to 21st century America what Florence was to 15th century Italy. Another is, that some public or private effort will be made to restore the conditions that once existed by reversing the Koch administration's notorious favoritism towards real estate speculators.

There is, however, a third possibility which the article did not mention. If, in the near future, we are hit with a staggering economic depression, the grossly inflated New York City real estate market will collapse. Store fronts now going begging at \$1500 a month will be desperately offered to struggling galleries at one fifth of that figure. Living space will similarly decline. And New York City will again become what it was during the Hoover Depression - the literary and artistic capital of the United States of America and of the world.

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