

# DAGON

#108, APA-Q DISTRIBUTION #315

12 May 1990

## THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY

Over the decades, the New York Times has shown a persistent inability to write intelligently about science-fiction and fantasy. This inability has been chiefly due to the utter incompetence of long-time drama critic Vincent Canby to even comprehend these fields, but other writers have also been responsible. Sometimes this has even spilled over from science-fiction to science, as the memorable time about 12 or 14 years ago, when Walker Sullivan committed to print the words "other end of a hyperbolic orbit", though things have improved greatly since he was succeeded by William J. Broad.

Eventually it must have occurred to the Times that articles by writers or editors in these fields might improve its image. And so David G. Hartwell, an editor for William Morrow & Company and for Tor Books, has nothing less than a front-page article on fantasy in the New York Times Book Review of 29 April 1990. Hartwell, to begin with, knows that science-fiction and fantasy are two different fields of literature. Though many authors write both, and many readers are fans of both, they are different from each other. Different standards apply in their criticism, and they have different though overlapping readerships.

Hartwell describes some interesting developments in fantasy in his article, which is entitled "Dollars and Dragons: The Truth about Fantasy". He describes the development of fantasy as a variety of genre fiction, comparable with "the woman's Gothic romance... (and) the contemporary romance genre," and, though he doesn't go that far back, the detective novel. In less than two decades, he observes, mass-market publishers have elevated fantasy to a field that accounts for nearly 10% of all fiction sales in the U. S.

Why did this happen with fantasy, and not with s-f? Hartwell notes that the majority of readers of mass-market fiction are women, and women never took to s-f in numbers large enough to become a marketing phenomenon. "Besides, the writers kept coming up with new ideas, and new ideas are hard to market... New ideas throw you off and require individual effort for each. Fantasy... has been made predictable, has eliminated new ideas and can now be sold as product."

I fear that he's largely right. Of course, it didn't start this way; the modern fantasy boom began in the 1960s when Lord of the Rings became popular, and publishers revived the works of older fantasy writers such as E. R. Eddison, Mervyn Peake, Clark Ashton Smith, and H. P. Lovecraft. (For some reason, James Branch Cabell was largely ignored, but then his works stimulated thought almost as much as good science-fiction does.) Then, according to Hartwell, a sinister plot was set in motion at Ballantine Books, mainly by Lester del Rey.

Del Rey, as this tale has it, took a "slavish imitation of Tolkien by an unknown writer and create(d) a best seller using mass-marketing techniques, and so satisfy the hunger in the marketplace for more Tolkien." As you have probably guessed, this was Terry Brooks's Sword of Shannara, so obviously a copy of Lord of the Rings that it is painful to read. Then came Del Rey Fantasy, "original novels set in invented worlds in which magic works. Each would have a male central character who triumphed over the forces of evil (usually associated with technical knowledge of some variety) by innate virtue and with the help of a tutor or tutelary spirit."

Well, this isn't quite the whole story, and it's certainly not why that big female readership came in. Significantly, Hartwell's article does not mention the name

of Marion Zimmer Bradley, or of Katherine Kurtz. This leaves out a whole, very popular variety of fantasy, which accounts for a huge number of sales: the variety which I have frequently called in these pages "Keltic-twilight-plus-telepathy".

This in itself does not negate Hartwell's thesis. Keltic-twilight-plus-telepathy can also be written to formula, and has been, frequently, as frequently as the formula described by Hartwell. But its protagonists are usually female, and deal with fantasy versions of problems which many women see in their own lives. These, not The Sword of Shannara and its spin-offs and imitators, have made fantasy a genre mass-market.

Still, Keltic-twilight-plus-telepathy is described by a generalization which Hartwell cites about fantasy literature:

"One critic seeking an explanation for why an American audience would adopt and support such a body of fiction has remarked that it was essentially a revival of the form of the utopian novel of the old South, the plantation novel in which life is rich and good, the lower classes are happy in their place and sing a lot, and evil resides in the technological North. The plot is the Civil War run backward: the South wins. That pattern seems to fit a majority of recent fantasy works as well."

And there you have it: the Shire, before and after its brief occupation by the forces of Saruman and technology; Darkover in the days of its glory, before the arrival of the Earthmen; Pern, in the great days of the past...examples could be multiplied as long as you have the patience to read the same multi-volume fantasy series again and again with different authors and different personal and place names.

This points up Bruce Berges's ideas about the recurrence, on an approximately thirty-year cycle, of major themes in science-fiction and fantasy. Times when political reaction is in vogue in Washington are also times when escapist fantasy is in vogue in literature. Moreover, the literature is more durable. It has now become obvious that the Reagan-Bush Administrations have largely failed, and will continue to fail, to repeal the Civil Rights Revolution and other accomplishments of the liberal 1960s, just as the Eisenhower Administrations failed to repeal the New Deal of the 1930s. But Stephen R. Donaldson will probably still be able to sell one or two more of his ponderous "Thomas Covenant" novels before the air goes out of it, or before people become familiar with Joanna Russ's outrageous parody of them, "Dragons and Dimwits".

Hartwell does not see fantasy fiction as a total wash-out, written only to formula, though he does say that "it is enough to make one distrust...any book with a unicorn depicted on the cover." He concludes this essay by citing the works of a number of promising new authors of fantasy, and concludes that "the fantastic in literature is healthy and growing in America".

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In a brief letter, Redd Boggs cites an omission I made in a recent comparison of Edgar Rice Burroughs with William S. Burroughs. Apparently Phil Farmer, as a part of his obsession with the Tarzan books, wrote a pastiche in 1968 entitled "The Jungle Rot Kid on the Nod", "which is what would have happened if William Burroughs instead of Edgar Rice Burroughs had written the Tarzan novels."

Redd also points out that while the state flower of California is the poppy (E. californica), it is not the opium poppy (P. Somniferum). This leaves me wondering where the poppyseeds come from, that are used to decorate poppyseed rolls and other bakery products. People eating these things have been known to test positive on urine tests for drugs.

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Teacher's guides, and students' guides such as the famous Cliff Notes series, are familiar to us for the classics of literature, and for non-fiction works of major importance. However, it is a bit disconcerting to find that a book from the field of science-fiction, or of fantasy, has achieved a literary status that would make it the

subject of such an analysis. Yet this distinction has come in Robert Foster's Teacher's Guide to The Hobbit (Ballantine Books, 1981), a copy of which was once left behind here after a First Saturday. The guide contains nothing that is strange to a veteran reader of fantasy, but it is interesting to see the different perspective from which it is approached. In a way, it reminds me of Herodotus's book about Egypt, in which the cat is described as a strange and exotic animal unfamiliar to the author or to his readers.

The guide begins with a brief biography of Tolkien, including the fact that the whole universe of Middle Earth grew out of his invention of the Elven languages. First came Quenya and Sindarin, and then a people to speak them, and then legends in those languages for the speakers to tell. "These legends soon became important in their own right, a mythic cycle...to provide England with a national mythology that would express the English spirit as the Eddas and the Kalevala to for Scandinavia and Finland."

(This, by the way, was L. Frank Baum's goal in writing The Wizard of Oz and its sequels - to give America a national mythology. Munchkins and Winkies were to be our equivalent of leprechauns, elves, kobolds, lutins, or kallikandjaroi.)

As many Tolkien fans do not know, The Silmarillion came first; it has been described as an "Old Testament" contrasted with Lord of the Rings as a "New Testament". It was not until 1930, long after he had conceived the whole cycle as a youngster in prep school, that he started on a diversion, a story for his children that began "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit." Unlike "orc" which is an old English word for "demon", used by Milton in Paradise Lost, "hobbit" is a creation of Tolkien, compounded from "rabbit" and the "hob-" element in "hobgoblin". ("Hob" in its turn was a rustic diminutive of "Robert" or "Robin", thus connecting "hobgoblins" with Robin Goodfellow, the familiar name of some antiquated Pagan deity in Christian England.)

The Hobbit was originally published as a children's book in 1936; it was critically acclaimed, though I have never met a genuine certified child who liked it much. Tolkien then began work on The Lord of the Rings, and after it was completed in the middle 1950s, he returned to The Silmarillion, "leaving the original stories relatively untouched but embellishing their context with philological essays, genealogical tables, historical speculations, and...philosophical and theological explications, all designed to clarify the meaning of his creation and enhance its internal consistency." Tolkien, in short, added to the role of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle the role of the Baker Street Irregulars.

The genealogical tables derive from their obvious importance in Old Norse literature. In sagas, as with hobbits, "it is important to remember who is related to whom, and in what degree." (Tolkien, prologue to The Fellowship of the Ring) My own copy of the William Morris translation of the Volsunga Saga has, on the inside back cover, a genealogical tree that I drew of the principal personages just to keep the story straight as I went along.

Foster shows how The Hobbit is a typical "Quest" story, and shows how general elements of such a story are illustrated here. Unfortunately, he seems overly impressed by Bruno Bettelheim, who sees "Quest" stories as guides to maturation - and who therefore objected to Disney's giving specific names and personalities to the Seven Dwarfs, because they were "supposed" to be undifferentiated personages from a pre-adult stage of "latency".

Anyone who is thoroughly steeped in Tolkien's writings, or indeed in the tradition of heroic fantasy, will find many of Foster's comments trivial or even childish. ("...geopolitical consequences of the death of Smaug" -- Give me a break!) Still, for someone just getting started in fantasy literature, Teacher's Guide to the Hobbit could provide a few things to think about.

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Speaking of heroic fantasy, a long spate of Ring-bashing seems to have set in. In ANAKREON #46 I described a high-camp parody of Der Ring der Nibelungen now playing off Broadway under the title The Ring Gott Farblonjet. But even the Metropolitan

Opera's current productions of the four operas of this cycle is being afflicted. On the evening of Saturday 28 April 1990 the Met was presenting the fourth of these operas, Götterdämmerung, which is not a German swear word, but means "Twilight of the Gods". Much of this opera takes place in the Hall of the Gibichungs, or Giukings as they were in the saga from which Wagner took his story. In this opera, Brünnhilde, who is jilted by Siegfried and marries Gunnar, is supposed to die on Siegfried's funeral pyre. Instead, the Hall of the Gibichungs collapsed on Hildegard Behrens, a soprano who was singing Brünnhilde (originally Brynhilde). Fortunately, the beam which struck her was made of foam rubber and canvas, so Behrens was treated for minor scrapes and bruises at St. Luke's, and then released. But, said her son, "had she not been struck, she might have taken a fatal fall into an open shaft created by a premature lowering of the stage floor behind her." Just to be safe, she was replaced in a production of Die Walküre three days later.

But these haven't been Wagner's only problems. Some people have been speculating on what would happen if opera recordings were subjected to the same rules as have been proposed for rock and roll, with warning labels affixed to morally dubious items. The "Ring" cycle could take a beating from these people. The principal love-interest in Die Walküre is Siegmund's courtship of Sieglinde (Sigmund and Signy in the Volsunga Saga). Not only is Sieglinde married to someone else, but she is Siegmund's sister - twin sister in the saga. In the third opera, Siegfried (originally Sigurd), Fafner's hoard is his just wages for building Valhalla, although he had, to be sure, murdered his brother so as not to have to share it. Siegfried's actions become murder and aggravated armed robbery. In Götterdämmerung, Siegfried takes a magic potion - or "dope" as we would now call it - which causes him to break faith with Brünnhilde and marry a sneaky little fortune hunter named Gudrun, Gunnar's sister. When this plot falls apart with Siegfried's murder, Brünnhilde in full armor rides her horse onto his funeral pyre - clearly cruelty to animals.

Some of these points were made by Peter Bloch in a letter to the Times on 11 April 1990 - a letter which the Times entitled "Sex 'n' Drugs 'n' Wagner". Philip Winters replied in a letter on 30 April that Wagner was not advocating violence or cruelty to animals, though he did admit that Wagner's anti-Semitism led Hitler to be "in his misguided way...a Wagner enthusiast". Still, it is about as just to blame Wagner for Hitler as it is to blame a heavy metal group for crimes committed by anyone who happens to have bought a few of their albums.

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Over the centuries, food and drink have not been solely means of nourishment, but have sometimes been factional labels. Three hundred years ago in England, Whigs drank port because they had negotiated the treaty with Portugal which made that fortified red wine the characteristic drink of the English gentry, while Tories drank claret because it came from France, which was backing the claims of their beloved and worthless Stuart Dynasty to be restored to the British thrones. And of course the history of the American Revolution includes the refusal of the revolutionaries to drink tea because of Parliament's tax on it, while Tories loyally stayed with tea. (Our American preference for coffee over tea, however, is more likely to have been established by the large immigration of coffee-drinking Germans and Scandinavians in the 19th century.) The absurd Jewish and Moslem prejudice against pork, and the Hindus' refusal of all meat, help fortify those groups' senses of separate identity. During World War I, German foods were either rejected or renamed; frankfurters became "hot dogs" or "tube steaks", while sauerkraut became "liberty cabbage", and even beer became suspect as a Teutonic beverage, a matter which contributed to the agitation that briefly clamped alcohol prohibition on this country.

Now, certain foods and drinks have become identified with cowardice, disloyalty, or "liberalism" in what has to be called the "minds" of conservative ideologues. Of those, the most famous is quiche, a French dish composed of cheese, eggs, spices, and whatever bits of sausage or vegetables were lying around the kitchen. Once, the well-known conservative Republican Representative Jack Kemp, now Secretary of Housing and

(continued on p. 9)

## DUNGEONS AND CHRISTIANS - XXXI

From time to time, a major crime is attributed by a police officer to a "Satanic cult", which inspires its devotees to play Dungeons & Dragons, worship the imaginary being whom Christians call "Satan", mutilate cattle, or play rock music. However, upon further examination it appears that what we have here is not an outbreak of "Satanic cults", but an outbreak of Fundamentalist Protestants trying to drum up a nation-wide panic about "Satanic cults".

Much of this "further examination" has been done by Kenneth V. Lanning of the FBI, and by Robert Hicks, a criminal justice analyst with the Law Enforcement Section of the Department of Criminal Justice Services, 805 E. Broad St., Richmond, VA 23219. Lanning and Hicks are the sort of law enforcement officer that we need badly in this country, who prize above all the liberties guaranteed us by the Constitution, and who believe that criminality applies to specific acts, not to ideas, books, films, TV shows, organizations, religions, or thoughts.

Hicks has prepared a "Resource List on Satanism and the Occult: A Mildly Annotated Bibliography", which lists the books that make preposterous allegations of Satanic and other cults, and also the sober analyses of their claims. This bibliography is available upon request from Hicks, as are the following works, originally speeches given by him before various groups concerned with law enforcement or with individual freedom:

"Satanic Cults: A Skeptical View of the Law Enforcement Approach"

"None Dare Call it Reason: Kids, Cults, and Common Sense"

"Dungeons, Dragons, Witches, Censors, and Librarians: A Satanic Brew"

These lectures show how little factual underpinning there is to the widespread Christian claims that sinister Satanic conspiracies, directed from some central agency, is conducting ritual killings of humans and animals. "Characteristically, law enforcement cult seminars all parley the same model of satanic cults, circulating the same second-hand information, most of it without documentation or sources for quotations." To these scare stories, Hicks quite reasonably replies:

"Ken Lanning has pointed out many times that human history cannot produce a single example of any large scale organized murder (on the order of 50,000 human sacrifices a year, as some cult officers claim) without someone breaking ranks sooner or later. No such enterprise has ever existed, one that can commandeer so many people to carry out for so long thousands and thousands of violent crimes. People in any group change their minds, get jealous, build empires, develop rivalries, disagree, ally themselves in factions. Why should satanists be any different?"

Since this article is going into EMPIRE #306 on 5 May, and DAGON #408 on 12 May, I will limit my comments to RPGs (role-playing games such as Dungeons & Dragons) and to science-fiction and fantasy. But there are plenty of these, particularly about D&D. The people who make livings holding seminars for police officers on "Satanism" have worked out a hierarchical arrangement for this supposed "vertical" Satanist conspiracy, whereby D&D and other RPGs are in the lowest level, for "children, teenagers, or young adults who might play with satanic bits and pieces." But as for alleged murders and suicides, Hicks observes that, "outside of reporters' suggestions, no documented killing or suicide exists directly attributable to playing the game."

There have been a few teenagers who played D&D, and who also may have committed suicide or murder, but no causal connection relates them. There does, however, seem to be a common connection among the suicides described by Hicks, which are allegedly caused by D&D. The boys are brighter than average, with lively imaginations, and come from families with a strong, overbearing, and usually deeply religious mother,

and an absent or ineffective father. This was the case with Irving Pulling, whose mother Pat Pulling went off the deep edge and is now regarded as an authority on satanic cult killings and D&D. In fact, however, suicides are far more common among teen-agers who do not play RPGs, than among those who do.

In her book The Devil's Web, Pat Pulling has expanded from D&D to the whole, four-level satanic conspiracy. "She claims," says Hicks, "that the students most susceptible to falling within the spiraling path to hell are bright boys with varied interests who may lack social skills. In other words, nerds."

A real scholarly work by T. M. Luhrman backs this up. She has observed "that these folks also read science fiction in abundance," and also get involved with computers. "Perhaps the most important" explanation, she writes, "is that both magic and computer science," and for that matter other sciences, "involve creating a world defined by chosen rules, and playing within their limits."

Pulling, and the Christian police officers who are running these scary seminars, do not advise us to look for satanist conspirators among the outcasts, underclass, or low level day laborers of our society. Instead, "cult officers say that the ranks of secret satanists boast the intelligentsia of our society. Patricia Pulling maintains that satanic ranks burgeon with 'doctors, lawyers, clergymen, even police.'"

And now this becomes something that we have seen before, in our own and in other societies. Faced with a rapidly changing world, people of limited education, imagination, and ability to accept changes are striking out against a world that has become unintelligible to them. Thus did Adolf Hitler fulminate against the "intelligentsia". If your minister tells you that henceforth non-whites will be welcome in your church, he's one of them. The Atheist or Jewish parents who object to their children being exposed to Christian religious propaganda in the public school, and the lawyer who gets the courts to agree, are a part of this alien, threatening force. The young man who refuses to go to some distant jungle and get shot to bits, simply because someone with peculiarly shaped pieces of metal on his shoulders tells him to, is also breaking with the good old ways. The pre-teener who looks forward to flying a spaceship to Mars, rather than flying a stealth bomber over Moscow, must be part of it.

The last-mentioned of the three Hicks talks was given on 17 November 1989 to a meeting of the Virginia Library Association, so in that talk he is particularly concerned with pressures brought on libraries to remove books on the so-called "occult". And the Christians who bring this pressure are casting a very wide net. Not only do they demand the removal of Anton LaVey's sarcastic The Satanic Bible, but also "any title with the word 'witch' in it, or books on the occult generally." Since witches are sympathetically represented in many fantasy novels, fantasy is likely to be the next topic of these Christian censors.

Rumors of satanic cults are particularly harmful when the activities are alleged to take place at day-care centers or schools. A few years ago a prosecuting attorney in a rural Minnesota county claimed to have elaborate and circumstantial testimony from numerous children allegedly victimized by a ring of child molesters. She put her case together on the idea that "children wouldn't lie" about such things. Then it turned out that they would - either from their own imaginations or from suggestibility while being questioned by investigators. The case fell apart, and the prosecutor resigned and left the county, leaving behind a legacy of rumor, distrust, and slander.

More recently, the same thing has happened at the McMMartin Day Care Center in California. Hicks points out two obvious things about such cases: that policemen and therapists have quite different goals and methods in questioning abused children, and should not confuse them; and that when "a single incident of alleged abuse by a single child mushroomed into mass accusations," it becomes difficult if not impossible to get justice in cases of real child abuse. The McMMartin case fell apart in court, and the New York Times of 1 May reported that parents and other investigators have been allowed to tear apart the center, looking for the alleged underground rooms and tunnels in which the child abuse is supposed to have taken place - according to the highly dubious testimony of the children. They are finding no such rooms, or evidence of their obliteration, and the local authorities have decided it will be just as well if people "get this out of their system".

## 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 collated at this same address and frequency, though the latter could change - see below for details. The copy count of APA-Q is 35, so if you want to participate, send 35 copies of your 'zine and, if you live out of town, a few dollars for postage and envelopes. (If you have already done this, see "The Ministry of Finance", elsewhere in this issue, for your account's present balance.) The next APA-Q collating date is Saturday 2 June 1990.

DAGON also goes to subscribers (12 issues for \$10) or to people whom I think might be interested.

Recent Distributions of APA-Q have been so meager that I wonder whether members might want to increase the time period between collations from 3 to 4 weeks. Three contributors per Distribution has become more the rule than the exception, and most readers never contribute, so that some weeks I feel that I am dropping APA-Q into a black hole. I should like to have comments from readers on this proposal to extend the separation of deadline dates from three to four weeks.

APA-Qover #314: Did you notice that there wasn't one this issue, either?

Blancmange #234 (Blackman): I also liked Tomorrow Knight - and I fear that if such a thing should ever become technologically feasible, the sort of people who are presently addicted to television drama would take to it in a big way.

What Cardinal Admiral O'Connor may not realize is that these accusations about rock & roll (and, for that matter, Dungeons & Dragons) originate from the same sort of Protestants that deny to O'Connor's church the name "Christian". A Canadian war-gaming fan named Pierre Savoie found that a local group called Daughters of St. Paul was circulating a tract against role-playing games which drew on strongly anti-Catholic sources. One of these, Albert J. Dagger, is quoted in the tract as saying that: "It is not without knowledge that Dungeons & Dragons was devised. But it is the knowledge of an evil that mingled the Babylonian mystery religions with a lukewarm 'Christianity.'" "Babylonian mystery religion" is a Protestant code-word for the Roman Catholic Church, originally based on Revelation 17:4-7. Savoie found that this tract had induced a Catholic school in Toronto to ban the play of D&D. He informed the Daughters of St. Paul about the origin of these accusations, and they withdrew the tract from circulation. Savoie concludes: "A chain of transmission of anti-D&D thought now suggests itself: starting from anti-Catholic and Fundamentalist Christians, it spread to Pentecostals, Charismatics, Charismatic Catholics, and finally conservative and mainstream Catholics." This could be said of other ideas than opposition to D&D.

Avram Grumer's filksong "Drexel's Profiteers" was printed in ANAKREON #46, which went to press with the rest of the 46th Mail-ing of APA-Filk on 1 May. Everyone who gets DAGON also receives my filksong quarterly ANAKREON, and many will get ANAKREON #46 with this issue of DAGON.

Japan may airbrush the nudes in Playboy, but until a mere 25 years ago, so did Playboy. Manga, Japanese comic art, is much more free from censorship than is all American comic art except the "underground".

I agree that alliteration still suits the particular character of the English language. For centuries fashionable poets regarded it as crude. Chaucer once sneered, "I too can rhyme 'ram, ro, ruff' like a northerner." Northerners were singled out for derision because it is also characteristic of old Norse poetry, and that is the most heavily Nordicized part of England. To this day store is Yorkshire dialect for 'big', from Old Norse stor, and 'Eric' is a common given name there.

Drug dealers have already become a movie/TV menace comparable to the old "international Communistic conspiracy." We recently bought the tape for Crocodile Dundee

This is

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

# 607

II, and a drug dealer and his henchmen have become the same vicious, vindictive sort that the Evil Commies were in the action films of previous decades. But this development also has its problems. Soon it will become obvious that Congress will not give up the money, and the public will not give up the civil liberties, that a "full-scale, all-out, no-holds-barred war on drugs" would require. What John Quincy Adams said about American independence will eventually be said about drug legalization: "It was extorted by grinding necessity from an unwilling people."

With both Communists and drug dealers passé as villains, we'll be back to good ol' corporate greed, which has already proven its worth in everything from Robocop to Innerspace to Who Framed Roger Rabbit. Between the new birth of capitalism in eastern Europe, and the merry pranks of Michael Milken on Wall Street, there should be plenty of opportunity for this.

Dispatch from the Farm #11 (T. Byro): Now let me see if I can explain this to you, slowly and carefully. There was this thing called "World War II". It was an attempt by Germany to conquer at least Europe, and to put it under a German aristocracy, ruled in its turn by the Nazi Party. Germany was solely responsible for starting the war. The German aims were defeated by a widespread and disparate alliance which agreed only in wishing to see this scheme of conquest defeated. And this alliance then took steps to see that nothing of the sort would be tried again.

This, you see as "one third of Germany remains occupied and colonized by aliens, mostly Poles and Russians." You seem to regard this as a temporary and easily reversible accident of history. It is not. It is history. The Polish city of Wrocław will never again become "Breslau". The Czech city of Ceske Budejovice will never again become "Budweis". The Romanian city of Cluj will never again become "Klausenberg". The Lithuanian city of Klaipeda will never again become "Memel". The Ukrainian city of Lviv will never again become "Lemberg". The Russian city of Pskov will never again become "Pleskau".

Never. The German dominion over eastern Europe is as dead as the British dominion over India. A few remnants of the old German colonial regime may still inhabit eastern Europe, as a few elderly British "sahibs" still live in India, but they are citizens of the nations in which they live, with no more connection to Germany than you as an American citizen have.

Your grumblings over the present state of affairs in eastern Europe have one great gap. You do not suggest any way to reverse this situation. This can only be because there is no such way. Even diplomatic efforts by a united German government to reclaim these old conquests would be opposed by all the rest of Europe, backed by the United States. A military effort to retake these territories would be followed by another peace dictated to Germany, this time one that would leave its eastern boundary not at the Odra but at the Elbe. To judge from the large number of Slavic place names between the Elbe and the Odra, this would be yet another reclamation by the Slavs of regions taken from them by the Germans during the Middle Ages.

Germans should quit while they are still ahead. It is more to Germany's advantage to continue making and selling high-quality consumer goods overseas, and getting rich that way, than to fret about restoring boundary lines which will never exist again. Aside from a handful of superannuated revanchists and their kids, "West Germany" is in reality "North Switzerland", and most East Germans want nothing more than to join the West Germans in their profitable business enterprises.

DAGON #407 (me): J. C. Squires's If, or, History Rewritten went through several editions, but I think it first appeared in this country in 1931. Sometime around 1907 an English writer named Chamberlain wrote a book of similar speculations, but it was not nearly as well done.

The front page of the New York Times's Sunday business section of 29 April had a lead article about the manufacturing and distribution of "Simpsons" merchandise. It looks as if we're in for a long siege.

When he wrote The Ring, Wagner merged in Siegfried the two half-brothers Sinfjötli and Sigurd of the Volsunga Saga. Sinfjötli is the son of brother-sister incest, and Sigurd slays Fafnir, woos Brynhilde, and marries Gudrun.



## THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE

The postage account balances listed below are correct as of yesterday. Several people whose accounts were nearing zero informed me that they would renew them. However, while the promises came in, the renewals did not. Accounts which still have a positive balance are:

Lee Burwasser	\$11.98	Daniel B. Holzman	20¢	Jeff Poretsky*	\$16.90
Philip M. Cohen	\$5.88	Robert B. Lipton*#	\$20.67	Robert Sacks	\$2.40
Don Del Grande	\$17.00	John Malay#	\$7.08	Jane T. Sibley*	\$17.28
Robert Hauser	\$10.58	Richard McCluney	\$4.05		

\* - Also gets APA-Filk on this account. Including costs of this present mailing, your balance at present has become: \_\_\_\_\_  
# - Gets APA-Q by 1st-class mail.

Accounts which fall into arrears will be suspended. Accounts presently suspended for this or other reasons, and their balances, are:

Robert J. Baker	-\$1.10	Liz Ensley	-37¢	Alan Rachlin	-30¢
Vinnie Bartilucci	-76¢	Harold Feld*	-19¢	Lana Raymond*#	12¢
Andre Bridget	-72¢	John Hartzell	-79¢	Frank Schildiner	-15¢
Shelby Bush	-\$5.98	Mark Keller	-86¢	Joyce Scrivner	-75¢
Tom & Barbara Byro	-85¢	Barbara Koksall	-20¢	Gary Tesser	-90¢
John Colton	-88¢	Ted Pauls	-39¢	Peter G. Trei	-73¢
John Desmond	-39¢				

Anyone wishing to establish a postage account with APA-Q should just send a few dollars, and keep up with this column's accounting as they continue to get their Distributions. APA-Filk, the filksingers' amateur press association, is available from me on its quarterly mailing dates on the same terms.

## THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY (continued from p. 4)

Urban Development, encountered quiche at a fund-raising event for something or other. Informed that he was eating quiche, Kemp recoiled in horror. "I've never tasted anything so elitist in my life!" he exclaimed.

It must be stressed here that Jack Kemp is not some Fundamentalist clown from the Flyover, or a Bensonhurst cugeen, or an AFL-CIO goon who regrets the good old days when all these soft-skinned Pacifists were out in the streets to be beaten. Kemp is a college-educated man and retired football hero, who has been the pin-up boy of the National Review crowd for over a decade, and was a serious candidate for the 1988 Republican presidential nomination until Pat Robertson beat him in a show-down for the political and intellectual leadership of American conservatism. He is a member of President Bush's cabinet, and almost the only conservative who still seems to think that his party has to come up with new ideas if it is to retain the confidence of the diminishing minority of Americans who still bother with voting.

And yet this man, the intellectual flower of the American right today, believes that what is essentially an omelet with delusions of grandeur is an "elitist" food unfit for consumption by good Americans. This yet again illustrates what I have long maintained about politicians - their way of thinking is so utterly alien to that of ordinary people that there is no point in trying to understand what they say, or in trying to speak with them, or indeed in bothering with what they do. The American politician of 1990 increasingly resembles those science-fictional aliens who, in a tradition going back to the Barrel People of Stanley Weinbaum's A Martian Odyssey, have thought processes so alien to ours that neither conversation nor comprehension is possible.

(continued on p. 11)

## I'LL SEE YOU IN THE FUNNY PAPERS

## LXIII. The English Sense of Humor, If Any

The English are not a people devoid of the ability to write humorously - quite the contrary. Over the centuries, brilliant works of satire have come from English pens. But when it comes to comic strips, there seems to be something lacking about English productions. The English can do as good an adventure comic strip as any nation given to this art form, but to an American reader their humorous strips seem to fall flat.

This may be because, though the two nations have as strong a cultural connection as any two on earth, their sense of what is funny differs. English humor is the humor of understatement. The Irish sense of humor, which is ancestral to the American sense of humor, is the humor of overstatement. English humor is Ol' Bill, pointing to a shell-hole in his bivouac, and explaining: "Mice." Irish humor is Finn MacCool's wife, baking stovelids in the pancakes.

The comic strip as an art form originated with Wilhelm Busch, a German. German-Americans were among the earliest artists here, particularly including Rudolf Dirks, founder almost 100 years ago of The Katzenjammer Kids. After America, the most important country in the development of comic art was France, from Louis Forton's Mickelfoot Gang through Goscinny's and Uderzo's Asterix and Hergé's Tintin to, despite their triviality, the Smurfs. Several people have noted that, despite all the overlay of Roman and Germanic conquests through the centuries, the French are essentially a Keltic people like the aforementioned Irish. (Poul Anderson, in one of his "Time Patrol" stories, calls into evidence, as an essentially Keltic element in the French character, Paris's famous traffic jams.)

These reflections were stimulated by a souvenir of Eric Lurio's foreign travels, the comic section of the London Times of 22 April 1990. "The Funday Times" leads off with Steve Bright's Rex and Tex, who are nothing less than a comic version of the lion and unicorn from the British arms - and the Times's. The unicorn, of course, is drawn as a white horse with a horn, despite the fact that drawings from the times when unicorns were taken seriously show them as anything but horse-like. Other English creations in "The Funday Times" are Bananaman, a soggy send-up of costumed super-heroes; Walter of Sherwood, a medieval mess; Bogart, by a Jonny Hart imitator; Beryl the Peril, a "brat" strip modeled after the British Dennis the Menace; and Mr. Clean, an "ecologically correct" strip.

Essentially, English comic strips have not changed much since I first encountered them 50 years ago, at the home of a family friend who received them in thanks for food and other wartime luxuries shipped to a relative there. There are not only character asides to the readers, but sometimes the reader is given lines to say to the characters!

With this chronic problem, it is not surprising that American and French strips have begun to appear in British comic sections. This one includes Bugs Bunny, B. C., and an old Asterix episode that originally appeared in 1966 in Le Combat des Chefs.

\*

In the last installment of this column I mis-stated the name of that series of "literary" comic books that appeared in the 1950s. They were Classics Illustrated.

\*

Several readers have pointed out that the title character in Jeff MacNelly's comic strip Shoe is not a crow, but a purple martin. His full name, rarely given, is "P. Martin Shoemaker".

If so, then MacNelly has drawn a most uncharacteristic purple martin. I remember this bird well from my midwestern childhood. It is a larger relative of the swallow, with a graceful flight, and a truly awesome appetite for flying insects. But the loud, chain-smoking, opinionated, domineering editor of this comic strip has more in common with crows than with martins

\*

Tracey Ullman, whose TV show had the poor judgment to give air time to Matt

Groening's The Simpsons, has not vanished from the airwaves as I had suspected. She has merely been banished to 9:30 PM on Saturdays by Fox. Meanwhile, the mis-adventures of the everlastingly annoying Simpsons is now in Fox's Sunday night line-up where Ullman used to be.

\*

The New York Daily News has recently been reprinting "Golden Age" comic strips in its Sunday magazine section. First they did some 1942 episodes of Batman, at about the time the most recent film of that name was released. Now they have shifted to Dick Tracy, and currently Tracy is in hot pursuit of a criminal named "Measles", whose mother, a crooked prison matron, has recently been killed after being exposed by the "bag lady" Gravel Gertie.

In the episodes reprinted on this sequence, one daily strip takes place in a train compartment occupied by the actor Vitamin Flintheart and his wife. The fugitive Measles tries to break into this compartment and threatens Mrs. Flintheart, whereupon her husband hits him over the head and knocks him out. He then calls for a porter to clean up the mess. The next day's strip, the Daily News tells us, is deleted because it contains an ethnic stereotype which would be found repulsive. In the strip after that, the unconscious Measles, covered with blood, is still on the floor and the porter is nowhere to be seen. We may presume that the intervening strip showed a period caricature of a scared African-American, who runs as soon as he catches sight of the bloody form on the floor.

\*

Cathy Guisewite seems uncertain as to how much she can show of her character Cathy's private life. There are off-camera mentions of vacations with her main squeeze, Irving, and also vague hints about other boyfriends who fill in the intervals during her frequent quarrels with Irving. But Guisewite got about as frank as she ever gets in the strip of 11 May 1990, when Cathy is giving instructions to her puppy Electra at their mutual bedtime. Cathy has taken up "power walking", whatever that is, and points out to Electra that the alarm is set for 5 AM so they can "power walk" before work. "When the alarm goes off at 5:00," she tells Electra, "get me up! Please help me get up at 5:00!"

As you might expect, the alarm buzzes at 5 AM, and Electra eagerly starts barking. Cathy cries, "Are you out of your mind? It's only 5:00! Quit your yapping and go back to sleep!!" As Cathy proceeds to do just this, the puppy looks at her in exasperation and thinks: "Get a boyfriend."

In context, this means a bedmate. Not since Cathy's mother observed, with horror, that her single daughter has a double bed, did matters get this explicit.

#### THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY (continued from p. 9)

Nor is quiche a unique example. During the 1988 presidential campaign, George Bush shucked off his membership in an aristocratic eastern family, here since 1631, by representing himself as a Texas good ol' boy who likes to snack on chicharrones. (That's "fried hawg rinds" for those of you who buy them in bars rather than in bodegas.) And then how about all those politicians who solemnly wasted valuable legislative time by debating what ought to be the Official State Muffin, or Pie, or maybe even Chip? This is more appropriate to the Gershwin's 1931 musical Of Thee I Sing, in which the U. S. Supreme Court solemnly decrees that corn muffins are more important than justice, than it is to the legislatures of our own time. And yet when the New York State Legislature solemnly enshrined the apple muffin as the Official State Muffin, over rivals made with corn or cranberries, Governor Cuomo signed this lunacy into law before an audience of school children, and even praised it as a shining example of how the governmental process ought to operate. This, mind you, is the same Mario Cuomo who is now leading in consideration for the 1992 Democratic presidential nomination, and whom the New York Times has already called, possibly as an act of invocation, "Franklin Delano Cuomo".

The latest foray into political food fights is, of course, broccoli. In a gesture which appeals to childhood memories of most of us, he announced that he had hated

broccoli when he was a boy, that he still hated it, and that he wasn't going to have it served at the White House any more. This, incidentally, may be due to Bush's WASP upbringing. WASPs have a fairly good touch with meat, potatoes, and the heavier desserts, but the WASP cuisine has no real understanding of most vegetables, and they come to the table with most unimaginative preparation. For example, WASPs slice eggplant, roll it in breadcrumbs, and fry it. As a result, I never cared for eggplant until I came to New York City and found out the many interesting ways in which Italians and Greeks prepare it. The limp and over-boiled broccoli that probably appeared on Master Georgie Bush's plate bears no resemblance to the raw broccoli on a plate of appetizers, or the interesting ways in which several ethnic cuisines use broccoli as a garnish.

But, in her Newsday column of 3 April 1990, Ellen Goodman had another explanation for the president's distaste for broccoli. "Food has become a lifestyle accessory," she observes, "important to the image as well the innards...Utter the words 'Perrier' and 'quiche' and 'sushi' and entire professions spring to mind." After adducing several examples, she concludes, "...it is not surprising that any backlash against the constraints of health foods and their purveyors, wives, signals not only the banning of broccoli but a return to macho menus."

In an apparent attempt to counter this image, President Bush showed up recently on the White House grounds with "Conan the Republican" (Arnold Schwarzenegger) and other fitness enthusiasts, possibly to offset the effects of a remark by one of his aides, James Pinkerton, who said that "People are definitely looking for relief from the masochism of the fitness craze. And if the President will let them off the hook and let them become kinder, gentler, and flabbier, we'll all be grateful." (Maureen Dowd, New York Times, 23 March 1990; Deborah Orin, New York Post, 2 May 1990) In an effort to show that he is not a "couch potato", the president "fired...a way off-base golf putt that nearly slammed into the head of the hapless man overseeing the putting range."

And there the political food fights stand at the moment, though we may still wonder why President Bush wants the youth of America to be physically fit. (Thirty years ago we wondered why President Kennedy wanted the youth of America to be physically fit. A few years later we found out.) But we seem definitely to have entered the underground tunnels of Weinbaum's Martian Barrel People, whenever we try to comprehend the thought process of that strange and alien species, the politician.

\*

Wine, also, is still a point of political controversy. "In Empire, Calif., some 400 copies of Little Red Ridinghood are locked away in a storage room of the public school district because the classic Grimm's fairy tale recounts that the little girl took a bottle of wine to her grandmother." (Roger Cohen, New York Times, 23 April 1990) The local curriculum director claims that the book "condones the use of alcohol". The Times illustrated this story with an old picture showing Little Red Ridinghood meeting the wolf. The long neck of a wine bottle clearly protrudes from the basket of goodies.

Clearly, many Christians still regard as reversible the defeat they suffered in 1933 when Prohibition was repealed, just as Tom Byro regards as reversible the expulsion of German colonists from eastern Europe. "What did you think was in that basket anyway?" the Times asked 16 days later in an editorial. "Diet soda?"

Wine is a perfectly good food when used in moderation, though I prefer beer. It appeared on all European dinner tables whose owners could afford it, for centuries, without any imputation of habitual drunkenness. Its use is not only condoned, but also authorized, in the Christian scriptures. And recall, in the story it is being sent from one adult to another; there is no hint that Red ducked behind a tree on her way to Grandmaw's and tapped the bottle herself.

Fortunately, the sellers and readers of books are striking back at these Christian attempts at censorship. Waldenbooks has taken up the challenge of the United Methodist Church's Rev. Donald Wildmon, whose American Family Association is picketing their stores for selling Playboy and Penthouse. Along with the American Booksellers Association and the American Library Association, Waldenbooks and other plain

tiffs are suing Wildmon's little gang of censors under the RICO statute ("Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act"), claiming that this law has been violated by "harrassing stores and trying to prevent them from conducting business". This is going to come as a dismaying surprise to the prosecutors who have tried to use RICO to attack the sellers of "pornography":

And Wildmon's fanatics are drawing their nets very wide. Judy Blume has been for over twenty years one of the most popular authors for the pre-teen and teen-age girl reader, and her publisher is being accused of obscenity. Shel Silverstein's children's books Where the Sidewalk Ends and A Light in the Attic are being attacked as "satanic".

As you might expect, Rev. Wildmon is very upset that, after all the lobbying, lawsuits, and boycotts he has set afoot, someone is suing him. "I suppose," he says, "the American Family Association and the Mafia are two peas in a pod."

To this the only possibly reply is, "Yes!"

\*

However, another religious figure, at a more humble level than Rev. Wildmon, is also using food to make a point. Many Christians are perfectly aware of the Pagan origins of such things as Santa Claus and his elves, the Christmas tree, the Easter bunny, and Hallowe'en "trick-or-treating". But on Easter Day the New Life Evangelical Center in St. Louis put its principles into practice. They served a dinner of 300 grilled rabbits to the homeless.

Here, at last, is a sort of Christianity we can all applaud. Who cares what they believe at the New Life Evangelical Center about the Easter bunny? Rabbit is an excellent meat, nutritious, high in protein, low in cholesterol, and easy to raise. Rabbits come to maturity in six months, the gestation period is one month, in another six weeks the doe can be bred again, and at the age of eight weeks the young are frier size, four pounds live and two pounds dressed. Furthermore, you get from them not only meat but also fur, which can be shipped to New York City's garment center, and there made into fur coats to be spat upon by yuppie idealists who never missed a meal in their lives.

Two days after Easter, Robert Reno commented on this rabbit feast in his column in Newsday. He compared this practical action in St. Louis with the annual Easter Monday egg roll on the White House lawn, and observed that the New Life Evangelical Center "is, after all, doing more to feed the homeless than rolling around perfectly good Easter eggs, 92 percent of which will end up uneaten in the garbage."

Meanwhile, anyone with questions about why these people in St. Louis can't buy their own rabbits and cook and eat them in their own homes probably should have been at the White House lawn on Easter Monday to ask some questions. The vast increase in homelessness, unemployment, and poverty over the past decade is directly a consequence of the economic policies of the Reagan-Bush Administrations.

\*

Meanwhile, what about "space tomatoes"? About a month ago, someone whom the New York Times did not consider worth quoting said that tomato seeds exposed for six years to radiation in space might produce plants whose produce would be harmful to eat. (15 April 1990) These seeds, nevertheless, are going out to schools all across the country for classroom experiments, with full assurances from NASA, the Department of Agriculture, and the South Carolina company that originally provided the seeds that there will be no harmful effects of these irradiated seeds. Dr. James Alston, the seed company's research director, "estimated that the seeds were exposed to lower radiation doses than those given routinely to many vegetable seeds to combat fungi and bacteria or to promote the breeding of improved species."

This, however, may not quiet the nuclear hypochondriacs, who have also been protesting the irradiation of seeds and food here on earth. And before this is over, I suppose that Jeremy Rifkin might join the controversy, with wild stories about as scientifically reliable as a videotape of Attack of the Killer Tomatoes.

\*

And what was the outcome of the 20th anniversary "Earth Day" on 22 April 1990?

In Newsday of 6 May, Robert Reno reported that the 750,000 people who turned out for the Central Park observances heard a lot of good popular music, and left behind 154 tons of mostly unrecyclable trash. EarthDay has certainly come a long way in 20 years; the original demonstration in Union Square in 1970 left behind only 18 tons of trash.

Reno, who started his professional life as a financial columnist, and who has managed to become that great rarity, a liberal financial columnist, observes that "we are developing a fanatical reverence for anything that claims to be part of the environmentalist movement...The trouble with the greens is they're just as likely as a clear-cutting timber baron to be jackasses."

If it comes down to be Central Park vs. Twin Peaks, I'll bet on Twin Peaks. Crazy as the Central Park Greens may be, the Twin Peaks population is even wackier, and this is on the record not a world in which sanity is successful.

\*

The next issue of DAGON will go to press six days before the beginning of the 1990 World Cup. (If you have to ask what sport that is, you just haven't been paying attention.) Argentina opens as defending champions, in Milan against Cameroon - this may sound like an Argentine walkaway, but the last time Argentina opened a World Cup as defending champion in 1982, Belgium upset them. The U. S. team opens in Florence against Czechoslovakia on Sunday 10 June, at 11 AM EDT.

The second U. S. game, against Italy in Rome on 14 June at 3 PM EDT, is approaching in the same ominous way that a funnel cloud does in the Midwest. But merely getting on the same field as the Italian team will be a victory for the U. S. soccer team. What happens after that is secondary.

The U. S. team is tuning up for the World Cup with games against various other national and club teams. On 5 May our lads beat Malta 1-0 - which is no great surprise, since Malta plays the same role in European soccer that Columbia University does in Ivy League football. But, four days later at Hershey, Pennsylvania, the U. S. team upset Poland 3-1, so maybe we stand a better chance than I thought in Italy. (A Polish-born colleague tells me that this is simply a measure of how badly Polish life has been disrupted by the current political upheavals. He's probably right; Poland didn't even qualify for the World Cup this year, and they are a traditionally strong team.)

So far the U. S. team is 5-6 in these tune-up games, with 4 to go. They are:

Saturday 12 May, 7:30 PM: Ajax Amsterdam in Washington

Sunday 20 May, 4:00 PM: Partizan Belgrad at New Haven

Wednesday 30 May, 12:30 PM: Liechtenstein at Eschen, Liechtenstein

Saturday 2 June, 9:30 AM: Switzerland at St. Gallen, Switzerland

\*

Italy and Brazil, the only countries to have won three World Cups, have taken diametrically opposite views on a vitally important issue that is now producing a little debate and a lot of laughter in international soccer. It began when Azgelio Vicini, the Italian coach, announced to his players that they should not engage in sex until the tournament ends - on 8 July if Italy makes it to the finals. "Chastity of players prior to and during a major competition has been a long-debated but unsolved problem," he is supposed to have said. (New York Daily News, 8 May 1990) This notion owes little to human psychology and physiology, and a great deal to mystical notions about "vital force" and how sex causes it to dribble all away.\* "Most soccer coaches used to keep players in seclusion before important matches," explains Daily News sports writer Anthony Rieber, "but a few teams, such as The Netherlands, allowed the players' wives into the training centers during the World Cup."

Two days later, "soccer players from Brazil's national team reacted with horror" to this news. (New York Daily News, 10 May 1990) One Brazilian predicted tensions and even fights on the Italian team if this is enforced. Another said that "a healthy sex life was important, and would not harm a player's performance during Cup play. 'What huts is if you go out and get drunk,'" a thing more likely to happen if the wives

\* - To check the truth of this belief, just ask yourself who in our circle of acquaintances has more "vital force" - Robert Sacks or Brian Burley?

aren't there, The Brazilian players were bashed up in their opinions by their team's physician, who called Vicini's views "old-fashioned."

DAGON #410, six weeks from today, will be printed after the first round of the World Cup is over, and the 16 qualifying teams begin a single-elimination march towards the championship match. However, the next day is Anthony's sixth birthday, so that issue of DAGON, and the 317th Distribution of APA-Q, may be a bit late getting into the mails.

For his fifth birthday I gave him Milne's When We Were Very Young. This year, of course, he is getting Now We Are Six. And why not - they're what I received at those ages.

Last weekend I briefly dropped in on a type of s-f con that most of us haven't seen since the 1960s. It was Corflu, held at the Hotel Roosevelt in Manhattan. This was the seventh such convention, specifically designed for fanzine fans.

Attendance was small - only a little over 100, I heard - and the actual programming was limited to Saturday, and mainly consisted of how to arrange, publish, and distribute a print fanzine. In an era when the written word is downgraded in favor of computer-nets, television, and people who cannot accept its reality, this is a very welcome development. Indeed, present-day critics even have a name for the inability to extract meaning from a passage of English prose. They call it "deconstructionism", and seem to believe that it is a good thing to happen.

Therefore, Corflu reminded me of the low-key, small regional cons of the 1960s, where personal interaction and serious discussion of literary style and content prevailed, and there was almost no tarot reading, media blitzes, ass trology, or "hall costumes". And Corflu pulled in people from great distances, too. There was a substantial representation of British fans, and some former New York fans who had moved out of the city years ago - including Jerry Kaufman, Hope Lebowitz, and Rich Brown.

Ed Meskys was in town for Corflu, since he has been first and foremost a fanzine fan for over a third of a century. He stayed at our house with his guide-dog Jerry, who has matured considerably since the days when his nose frequently led him off duty. He'll never be the dog that the well-remembered and lamented Ned was, but he has shaped up nicely.

This house was a sort of bachelor hall, since Perdita was in Maryland visiting the girls. Ed and I went to the Friday night parties, and to the concluding banquet on Sunday; but I stayed here on Saturday while he went to Corflu, as I had to prepare for that evening's First Saturday. First Saturday was very well attended despite the competing attraction of the Corflu parties, as even Dennis Casey made it here after an absence of too long, and Fred Phillips not only put in an appearance but was accompanied by his daughters, who are starting to take an interest in fandom.

Ed's weekend was further complicated by the fact that a family friend from Lithuania was flying in from Moscow on Saturday for a few weeks of sightseeing. I met her at the con hotel Saturday evening. Her English was poor and my Russian is even worse, so Ed and two other Lithuanian-Americans did a lot of language-hopping. On Monday they all went up to visit Ed's mother in New Hampshire.

Corflu did a one-shot, for which Ed worked up a contribution which I printed. It is Of Corflu and Walls for Subwayseries #4a, which is also included in this APA-Q Distribution. It tells the true story of the "Ed-Meskys-drinks-corflu" story which was a fanzine rumor during the 1960s.

Ed also includes in this Distribution some publicity items about upcoming and back issues of his Hugo-winning fanzine Nickas.

At Corflu I picked up a couple of fanzines which I thought had ceased publication long ago. One was the May 1990 issue of Proper Boskonian, once a quarterly 'zine published by the New England Science Fiction Association (NESFA). It had not appeared since 1973, and is now being refurbished as a semi-annually under the editorship of Laurie D. T. Mann. Proper Boskonian was one of the most interesting fanzines during the 1960s, and I regularly read it when I attended meetings of a CCON fan club then.

As I recall, it was then running a serial which was a parody on The Lord of the Rings and on fantasy quest epics generally. Its heroine was "Knyfio, Lady Kirkmaiden", a sort of parodic anticipation of Marion Zimmer Bradley heroines.

Proper Boskonian's address is NESFA, Box G, MIT Branch PO, Cambridge, MA 02139. I plan to offer trade for DAGON if they're interested.

The other "blast from the past" was Radio Free Thulcandra, the "Christian fanzine". It was founded a few years ago by Ernest Heramia, but is now being edited by Marty Helgesen, 11 Lawrence Ave., Malverne, NY 11565, and also libmh@ccny.bitnet@cunyvm.cuny.edu - an address which makes me fear that this devout Catholic and vehement supporter of the U. S. invasion of Vietnam may be my colleague on the faculty of the City University of New York.

Most of the more aggressive forms of Christianity now being displayed by its truculent adherents in this country come from Protestant Fundamentalists - or "Fundaments", as someone on the GENIE computernet is calling them with considerable accuracy. Back during the Heramia Administration, I saw a copy of Radio Free Thulcandra in which some Fuzzymentalist was trying to work out a common ground for Christian fans to operate on, and included among this common ground a belief that the Christian scriptures were the sole and only basis for Christian doctrine and practice. Helgesen replied, calling this view scriptura sola, and regarding it as a mistake at best and a heresy at worst. Since scriptura sola is bedrock for just about every Protestant sect in the world, Helgesen must be having a lot of fun trying to deal with these people. I have no doubt that, somewhere in the Flyover, there are Christian fans who regard Radio Free Thulcandra as a devious Romish plot to lead Christian s-f fans down the road to perdition. To clinch it for them, "Thulcandra" is the Martian name for Earth in C. S. Lewis's s-f trilogy - and while this trilogy is heavily Christian in tone, Fundamentalists have bitterly attacked Lewis in their tracts, and Jack Chick has even urged that his works be burned.

Three fourths of Radio Free Thulcandra #20 (February 1990) is devoted to long letters about previous issues and various odd bits of Christian practice - and, from time to time, even the literature of s-f and fantasy. Aside from a three-page editorial by Helgesen, in which he gives the 'zine circulation as about 100 (not counting a Scandinavian edition!), its only other content is an article by Thomas Cron, entitled "Christianity in Alternate History". This is little more than an annotated bibliography, but it is very comprehensive. About the only book I know of, which is even remotely related to this topic and which is omitted, is L. Sprague de Camp's Lest Darkness Fall. In this 1939 novel, a 20th-century American is precipitated into the Rome of 535 CE, and tries to introduce a technological revolution to save civilization from slipping any further into decline than it already has. He finds his task aggravated by the obscurantism of that era's Christianity, and its vicious factional conflicts, complicated by the fact that that era's Italy is ruled by Ostrogoths of the Arian branch of Christianity, but populated largely by "Orthodox" (Catholics, actually) who wish the success of the invasion set afoot by their co-religionists in what's left of the Roman Empire, now ruled from Constantinople. In ~~the~~ bar, the hero meets an Orthodox who claims that he is being persecuted.

"'Religious persecution...I thought the Goths let everybody worship as they pleased.'

"'That's just it! We Orthodox are forced to stand around and watch Arians and Monophysites and Nestorians and Jews going about their business unmolested, as if they owned the country. If that isn't persecution, I'd like to know what is!'

"'You mean that you're persecuted because there heretics and such are not?'

"'Certainly, isn't that obvious...!'

This eventually escalates into a riot, with shouts of "Damned nonsense about tual natures! We Monophysites -", "I'm a Jacobite and I can lick any man in the place!", "Let's throw all the heretics out!", and "I'm a Eunomian, and I can lick any ty men



in the place!"

De Camp's hero eventually preserves the independence of Ostrogothic Italy, with what would have to be profound consequences on the subsequent alternate history. If the Byzantine Emperor follows his advice and secures control of the Arabian peninsula, there might not even have been an Islam. A tolerant Gothic Empire in the western Mediterranean region might have done what the tolerant Umayyad Caliphate in Spain did in our history, and attract religious outcasts from other countries, with the natural subsequent rise in the level of culture and technology. Arian monotheism might have prevented the rise of Islamic monotheism.

Cron refers to alternative history novels as "allohistory", which is certainly preferable to Gordon Eklund's coined word "uchronian". Eklund said that he was making an analogy with "utopian", but in calling his imaginary African paradise "Utopia", Sir Thomas More was punning on "outopos", "noplac", and "eutopos", "good place". The prefix "allo-" simply means "other", and is better for this description.

Very often, in the pages of DAGON and my war-gaming publications, I have commented on Christian attempts to ban the play of Dungeons & Dragons and other games, and to censor books, movies, and TV shows that do not agree with their doctrines. I am happy to observe that much of the letter column in Radio Free Thulcandra #20 is devoted to similar horror stories. Just as, historically, the majority of victims of Christian religious persecution have been other Christians, so the best source for information about Christian religious fanaticism is other Christians. I may even ask to trade DAGON for Radio Free Thulcandra, if Helgesen is not upset about the fact that his 'zine may then become my source for yet more comments on the other idiocies done and believed in by people who think that virgins can have children and dead men can come back to life.

In #20, for example, Juanita Coulson tells several horror stories about a rural Indiana school with a sizable number of Fundie kids in it. When one student demonstrated a little parlor magic at a school party, the Christians panicked, claimed it was real magic done by the power of the devil, and demanded that the "magician" be expelled and the teacher fired. One teacher tried to get foreign languages taught there, but was told by the head of the school board that "If English was good enough for Jesus, it's good enough for them kids."

But those, we are told, are not "real" Christians. Coulson has an answer for that, too. She continues:

"I have run into far more people calling themselves Christians who follow the precepts of that defiantly ignorant sect near Kokomo than I have run into educated, reasonable, comprehensible believers."

So have we all.

(And, as you might suspect, those Kokomo Fundies have markedly higher rates of suicide and of teen-age pregnancy than do their neighbors.)

They are not "fringe groups", as Helgesen tries to make out in his comments on this letter. They are Christians, and we know this to be so because they will tell you so if you ask them.\* It is people like Herania and Helgesen who are misrepresenting themselves, by trying to establish separation between themselves and their co-religionists. It is people like Herania and Helgesen for whom these televangelists speak, when they demand that something or other be prohibited, in the name of the empty-million Christians of this allegedly "Christian" country.

One of the most influential writers of Christian s-f in the 1950s was Walter Miller, author of A Canticle for Leibowitz. This book, compounded from a series of stories originally published in The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction, drew an over-worked analogy between the Dark Ages after the fall of the western Roman Empire, and what might happen after the Great Atomic War over which everyone was fretting at the time these stories were written. Miller had apparently bought an unreliable "pop history" version of the role of the Roman Catholic Church during the Dark Ages. Accord-

\* - I propose to accept no other definition of the word "Christian".

ing to this legend, as the barbarians overran Rome, learning and scholarship fled into Christian monasteries, where it was tenderly preserved and nurtured until, a thousand years later, it could once again be safely released into the world.

The reality was far removed from this. Dark Age Christians regarded the learning of classical antiquity to be pernicious where it could not (as with most of Aristotle) be made conformable with Christianity. A Dark Age monk would have willingly scraped clean a parchment of Vitruvius or Vegetius in order to put on it a hymn in bad Latin to the perpetual virginity of Mary. And, when Renaissance scholars tried to revive the secular learning of classical antiquity, they did so over the loud objections of those same monks who, if you believe Miller's story, lovingly treasured that learning. For details I refer you to the writings of two devout Renaissance Catholics, Desiderius Erasmus and François Rabelais, who had quite a lot to say about the influence of the dead hands of narrow-minded monks on scholarship.

A Canticle for Leibovitz had a brief vogue in the late 1950s, and was dramatized for radio only some 6 or 8 years ago over, I believe, the Pacifica stations. But in a letter to Radio Free Thulcandra #20, Lelia Foreman passes on a report that six years ago she was told that Miller "is in no condition to read and understand any letters." She had no further details about his condition.

Despite the fact that Helgesen is getting a copy of this 'zine - partly because I want him to see what I've written elsewhere about the chances that he may soon have another lawless U. S. invasion of a foreign nation to cheer about - I rather doubt that I will be welcome in the pages of his Christian fanzine. A letter from Edward O'Brien Jr. huffs about the appearance of Neo-Pagan Christopher Hatton\* in Radio Free Thulcandra. "I did not know that RFT allowed Neo-Pagans to participate in its letter column. I had thought it was for Christians only. I was a little jolted by this; I did not expect to have to respond to Neo-Pagans individually."

Another Radio Free Thulcandra letter-writer claims that Somewhere Out There is a "Christian Crusade to Stamp Out Science Fiction". He or she (the letter was signed with initials) is not sure whether their fliers are a hoax or not, though an Atlanta post office box is given as their home base. These fliers claim that "science-fiction is 'escapist trash' with possible demonic influences."

In other letters, Walter Coslet explains the medical problems which accounted for his long gaffiation - and then goes on to tell of vivid memories of his previous lives on earth, and Gideon Strauss gives an overly careful distinction between "magic" and "prayer" which will not convince anyone who ever took a course in cultural anthropology.

\*

Albert A. Nofi has passed on to me a flier from a new comic book shop in this part of Brooklyn - Larry's Paper Memorabilia, which also deals in baseball cards, buttons, toys, magazines, medals, tokens, and comparable items. (There are also "Non-sports Cards", presumably including such things as Iran-Contra and Bush League Trading Cards.) Larry is at 1050 Coney Island Avenue, just off Foster Avenue, and is open 4-9 on Mondays, 12-9 on Fridays, and 1-9 Saturdays and Sundays. His phone number is given as 212-859-6410, though Brooklyn numbers all begin with 718; the flier may have been printed before that change was made. He'd better place an order for more; there is a rumor that New York City will soon get a third telephone Area Code.

\*

Andy Warhol once remarked that in the future everybody will be famous - for 15 minutes. Apparently this also applies to dance crazes. It seemed just a few weeks ago that the lambada was being heralded as the latest dance craze - and also being condemned as the nearest you could get, on the dance floor, to statutory rape. Several lambada movies have been completed, chief among them Lambada, the Sound of Love and The Forbidden Dance.

\* - I met him at Corflu a week ago - and no, I don't know whether he's related to that Christopher Hatton.

And now, satire has set in already. Newsday of 15 April reports that an independent producer called MoviCorp. is bringing out Lambadamy: The Operation. And, on 30 April, Newsday reported that the Palladium, which was the American base for the Lambada, will say farewell to it "with a ritual burning outside the club of Lambada records, books, and videocassettes." The Palladium's publicity director said that the whole thing was becoming a joke. "David Letterman was doing skits about beating up Lambada dancers," and that for this and other reasons people were getting embarrassed to do it.

\*

Eight days ago there took place the 20th anniversary of the attack made by the Ohio National Guard on an anti-war demonstration at Kent State University. Four students were killed, a fifth was crippled for life, and eight others suffered lesser injuries. The demonstration was in protest against the lawless American invasion of Cambodia, an invasion which had as a direct consequence the shift of Cambodian popular support to the Khmer Rouge, making possible thanks to Richard Nixon the slaughter later perpetrated by them.

American college campuses, already disturbed by the actions of the Washington warmasters, erupted in fury at this latest act of mass murder by President Nixon. The U. S. government, supported by almost the entire political establishment of both major parties, responded, in Vice President Agnew's words, by urging "the police to imagine that the students are wearing brown shirts or white sheets and act accordingly."

(According to his usual custom, Agnew got the whole thing wrong. There were few more dedicated supporters of the U. S. invasion of Vietnam than the American Nazi Party and the Ku Klux Klan.)

Depending on what theory of military command structure you believe, the massacre at Kent State University was the responsibility of either President Nixon or Governor James Rhodes. But there was plenty to go around; Governor Jimmy Carter of Georgia also praised the massacre, and less than a year later proclaimed a day in honor of his fellow-Georgian William Calley, who commanded an even larger massacre in Vietnam.

The American political-judicial system closed ranks around the military murderers. Five years later, Rhodes and several other Ohio National Guard leaders were completely exonerated by the federal courts. No one was ever found guilty of murdering Sandy Scheuer, Jeffrey Miller, Alison Krause, and Bill Schroeder. Things calling themselves "Americans" frequently said that the victims "got what they deserved", and for years afterwards the parents of the victims were receiving in the mail letters full of shit, and other characteristic expressions of patriotic sentiment.

Kent State University itself compounded the problem by refusing for years to erect a monument to the victims. When they finally got around to doing it this spring, the monument was a pallid and grudging recognition of the martyrs' sacrifice. Neither their names, nor the cause for which the U. S. Army had killed them, appeared on it. As a consequence, several of their survivors refused to participate in this lame and hypocritical tribute, and Jeffrey Miller's mother wrote an article explaining why for the New York Times of 23 April 1990.

As an added insult to the martyrs' memory, Kent State University brought in as keynote speaker ex-Senator George McGovern, whose 1964 vote for the "Gulf of Tonkin" resolution was later praised by another liberal Democrat as "the functional equivalent of a declaration of war". A plaque with the martyrs' name was hastily added nearby as an afterthought. Even this may be too much for some warmongers. As recently as 1986, a bucket of human slime called the Ohio American Legion protested against the erection of any monument at all.

Jeffrey Miller's mother, Elaine Miller Holstein, instead attended a far more meaningful ceremony at Plainview High School on Long Island. There, where her son was graduated in 1967, she shared her memories with students of the present day, thus making it far less likely that any of them will go blithely off to slaughter Peruvians or Filipinos or whoever will be settled on as "the enemy" by the next President of the United States to see a war as his ticket into the history books.

Several Newsday stories about this event, published on 3 May 1990, took up various aspects of the Kent State murders, and of the murders 11 days later of two Jackson State College students by Mississippi police. And there was an interesting little

footnote to all this. The Kent State massacre caused student demonstrations, many of them justifiably violent, all over the country. When the report came to Joe Schock, an ex-Marine in Idaho, he took a can of gasoline and burned 29 National Guard trucks and jeeps, thereby probably saving the lives of numerous Vietnamese.

Schock is now teaching English in Paris, a French citizen, and totally immune from extradition.

\*

A week after the Kent State martyrs were grudgingly and inadequately memorialized, Tom Wicker reported in the New York Times (10 May 1990) that it all may be starting up again. Of course, it won't be so easy this time for the Pentagon maniacs to find a war to justify the continuation of their \$300,000,000,000-a-year budget. The long and mendacious attempt to represent the Soviet Union as a menace to the United States has finally collapsed, and there are almost no places in the world where a Marxist insurgency threatens a government even nominally allied with the United States.

Almost.

But the Bush Administration thinks it has found one. For over a decade, the power of the Spanish-descended aristocracy that rules Peru has been challenged by an interesting mixture of university-trained and university-recruited Marxist intellectuals, and Indian peasants who fail to understand why the descendants of the conquistadores should kick around the descendants of the Incas forever. Coalitions like this have, over the decades, been the basis of Marxist insurgencies in many parts of the world.

And so the Bush Administration wants \$35,000,000 "to train the Peruvian Army to fight the Shining Path guerrillas...The lyrics are so familiar it hurts."

And so Bush wants to send "advisers" to Peru. (Remember the "advisers" sent to Vietnam 30 years ago?) A U. S. military base will be built in the Upper Hualaga Valley, and maybe another in the Ene-Tombo Basin. (Those names sound alien, exotic, and unfamiliar now. So did Pleiku, Iadrang, and Hue, thirty years ago.) "No one is saying what will happen when this fat target in the heart of Shining Path operations is attacked." But that is precisely what happened at Pleiku, which led to a major increase in U. S. military "commitment" in Vietnam.

Wicker puts his finger right on the motivation for this idiotic plan:

"This new U. S. commitment to an American military effort abroad, moreover, comes just as the U. S.-supported war in Nicaragua is coming to an end, as the U. S.-supported war in Salvador looks as if it might be settled, and as prospects rise for bringing home many U. S. troops from Europe and Asia. Apparently this Administration cannot bear the thought of having no foreign threat against which to pit U. S. dollars and lives, or of the savings to be had in reduced overseas involvement."

If the U. S. government is looking for a long-range, expensive war, it couldn't have chosen a better place. Peru is no Grenada or Panama, where the local opposition will cave in in 48 hours, leaving the President of the United States to congratulate himself on an easy victory. Those are the Andes Mountains we're talking about, with near-desert on the Pacific side and dense jungle on the Brazilian side. An experienced guerrilla force like the Shining Path, with ten years of hard fighting already behind it and a sizable base among the Indians, could hold out here for decades, provisioning themselves as the Vietnamese did from U. S. arms stockpiles.

And I have no doubt that in the Pentagon they are saying, "This isn't the 1960s; the American public isn't going to object very much to it." It still has not sunk into the minds of some Americans that the "1960s" were not an aberration from American tradition which is now blessedly over. The 1960s were, instead, the beginning of a whole new way of looking at America's role in the world - which still exists. The generation now at middle levels of American business, government, media, and education is not the generation whose minds took the ply in World War II, but the people who have already lived through, and in large part supported, a campaign against another lawless, unwise, and deservedly failing American war effort. Vietnam veterans

have been heard to say that they would not let their sons get caught up in the same idiocy that ruined their lives. Computer hackers have already loaded the Selective Service System's files with ringers, and a draft call-up would be an even worse fiasco than the present census. The universities who have special courses on the Vietnam War and its effects, are not going to produce students raging for action against Latin Americans. The Hispanic-Americans who have made the United States of America the world's fifth largest Spanish-speaking nation are not going to march off to shoot their fellow-ethnics. American Indians, who have participated enthusiastically in America's other 20th-century wars, are not going to help put down what is essentially an Indian insurrection in the Andes. America's churches were almost unanimously in favor of the war with Vietnam; does anybody out there think they will be as enthusiastic about another one?

It took several years for the American movement against the war with Vietnam to build up to the point where it was a matter of serious concern to the government. If you look over political commentary of the early 1960s, you will instead find that most officials of the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations were worried that they would be in trouble with the Republicans for being insufficiently vigorous in fighting this so-called "International Communistic Conspiracy". This time, however, Newt Gingrich and Pat Buchanan will be minor matters of concern to President Bush, compared with what will be done by millions of people from the generation that was draft-age in the 1960s, and from the generation that is draft-age today.

A large-scale, long-term U. S. military involvement in Peru (or the Philippines, or Colombia, or, perish the thought, Lithuania) will simply make the United States of America ungovernable. Anti-war demonstrations in Washington will approach in reality the figure of four million fantasized during one of them by Vice President Agnew. The monument to the soldiers killed during the war with Vietnam would become the world's largest outdoor urinal. Politicians of both parties may break ranks, as they did not 25 years ago, and come out in favor of ending the war - not because they want to be elected, but because they want to go on living.

I fear that excesses may be committed. Nations do not learn moderation under such tutelage as President Bush gave us, by turning stealth fighters loose on the people of Panama City in December. During the American invasion of Vietnam, anti-war demonstrators spat on soldiers; next time 'round, some might kill them. There were practically no Vietnamese nationals living here when U. S. troops entered Vietnam, but we have resident communities of almost every nation that President Bush might conceivably invade, and some of their members may feel that they can best defend their countries of origin here. (The son of a past President of Panama has already been arrested in Texas for making threats against President Bush's life - in a store where he was trying to buy a gun.)

But these actions can all ultimately be laid to the account of those war-lovers in Washington who are trying to turn the nation that we love into a dangerous, brutal, international bully. It is for the sake of the United States of America that they must be resisted.

\*

I am currently half-way through the last book in Esther Friesner's "Demon" trilogy: Here Be Demons, Demon Blues, and Hooray for Hellywood. Much of them deal with a common Friesner theme - what happens when widely diverse beings from different worlds, species, or eras meet and interact? In Sphynxes Wild, Vergil Magus turned seven Roman emperors loose in contemporary Atlantic City, for example.

Here Be Demons takes place at an archeological dig in the Egyptian desert, apparently in the late 1980s, since references are made to Trivial Pursuit and the Fox TV network. At the end of the book, a son is born to decidedly mixed parentage - his father is a student on the dig, and his mother is a succubus (sex demon) named Melisan. But between the first and the second book they either traveled backwards in time, or Friesner lost track of the plot. Demon Blues begins with the son, a handsome blond hunk named Noel Cardiff, who is a freshman at Yale. After a hilarious subplot when a team of demons out of hell staff the telephones of one of those insufferably tiresome Public Broadcasting System telethons, we go to Yale, Noel's problems upon learning that

he has considerable potential as a wizard, and an encampment of the Society for Creative Anachronism. (On, they don't call it that; it's got a different name whose initials are ARGH, but it's still the SCA.) Into the middle of this he evokes Richard the Lion-Hearted and Saladin, who mostly resemble the characters given them in the film King Richard and the Crusaders, although - modernized enough to know that Richard "just couldn't keep his hands off'n the good-lookin' minstrels." (Neither could Saladin, though Friesner doesn't take that up.) So we have these two friendly rivals turned loose on the SCA amidst the medieval glories of Yale's architecture. We get a little culture shock when Richard meets up with a crippled Vietnam veteran and exchanges war stories with him. ("Friend Matthew, tell me again who holds Jerusalem...I can't believe that, either.") And of course the picture of Richard Oc-et-Non in a gay bar is worth the price of admission all by itself.

\*

In this APA-Q Distribution, John Malay announces his decision to refrain from giving predictions for the 1990 baseball season. His reasons for doing so are good, and are a revulsion from the selfishness shown in the recent players' strike which eliminated the spring training season. If he decided to give us predictions on the play-offs, come September, we'll use the cover that Mark Blackman prepared; otherwise it will have to go for naught.

The cover on this present Distribution is the second contributed by Kirsten Phillips, who brought it over on the May First Saturday. It was a bit of a shocker for me to see it, since when I was her age I also doodled a monster that somewhat resembled an alligator with wings. However, my monsters were always perched in trees with wicked grins on their faces; I never dared trying to show onw in flight.

By the next APA-Q deadline on 2 June I'll have a "generic" cover ready, one that can be hastily rubber-stamped with the Distribution number and date if nobody else has come up with one.

DAGON #408

John Boardman  
234 East 19th Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11226-5302

CORFLU - More than just  
a drink. (See page 15.)

WHITE HOUSE FOOD FIGHTS.  
(See page 4.)

FIRST CLASS MAIL

THE FANDOM THAT WILL  
NOT DIE. (See page 18.)

( ) - If this space is  
checked, you may be interested  
in the item(s) on p. \_\_\_\_\_.