

DAGON

#3409, APA-Q DISTRIBUTION #316

2 June 1990

TWIN GAPS - I

(On Sunday 8 April, we went out to Col. Wright's place in Monmouth County for the birthday of his and our grandson Dean Earl Wright IV. After Deanie's second birthday had been duly celebrated in Col. Wright's new summerhouse, some of us watched a highly touted two-hour TV show called Twin Peaks. I was so intrigued by it that I followed the combination murder mystery and soap opera to the end of its ABC season, getting increasingly peeved as it lurched in all directions and settled into the conventionality of an ordinary prime-time soap. While Twin Peaks estimates, this series should fill in nicely.

(Readers are warned that no characters from Streak Gordon will appear in Twin Gaps unless the fall season of Twin Peaks does something really gross.)

(We see REVEREND AGENT D. B. COOPER, of the United Network for Christian Law Enforcement (UNCLE) driving a black Buick Regal along a dirt road which is closely hemmed in on both sides by fields of tall corn. He is speaking into a tape recorder.)

COOPER: Fawn, this is the most amazing country I've ever seen. There are miles and miles of this unbelievably tall corn, dark green and burgeoning with heavy ears. Did you know that the United States has more acreage planted to corn than the entire area of England? I expect to get to Twin Gaps in about half an hour. Thanks for booking me into this Cornbelt Motel, but I have my doubts about these small town places. Did I ever tell you about that place I stayed in when I was investigating that science-fiction bookshop in that shopping mall in Texas? There were ninety thousand chickens in the county, and the motel coffee shop used powdered eggs.. (Pause.) Fawn, these cornstalks just go on and on. Call my broker and try to get me a long position in agribusiness growth stocks.

(The scene fades. When it returns, we see AGENT REV. COOPER parking his car in front of a general store. Its various signs read "Six-Ten All-Night Store", "Twin Gaps Sheriff's Office", "U. S. Post Office", "We Fix Flats", and "Justice of the Peace", with the word "peace" imperfectly crossed out. As COOPER gets out of the car and walks up to the building's entrance, a tall, raw-boned man comes out of it.)

COOPER: Excuse me, sir - could you tell me where I might find Sheriff Nixon?

NIXON: That's me, stranger. Richard M. Nixon.

COOPER (somewhat taken aback): Sheriff, I'm Reverend Agent D. B. Cooper of UNCLE.

(They shake hands.) I'm here to investigate the death of Marcie Anderson.

NIXON: Er - well, Reverend Agent Cooper - this is something of a surprise - when they told me - er -

COOPER: There are some wider ramifications to this matter, Sheriff Nixon. UNCLE decided that I'd better work with you on this case.

NIXON: Frankly, Agent Cooper, we'd be glad to have your help. There are some aspects to this case -

COOPER: We should get one thing clear, Sheriff Nixon - er - we'll be working together on this case for some time. Just call me "D. B.". And, if I might ask -

NIXON: Everyone does, D. B. I'm no relation. In fact, the "M." stands for "Muggleton".

COOPER: A good Christian name, with a long tradition behind it. Did you know that

Lodowick Muggleton was the first man to realize that Our Lord was the only person in the entire history of the world who was exactly six feet tall, neither more nor less.

NIXON: Oh, yes, D. B. I'm active in the Muggletonian congregation here in Twin Gaps. Ten years ago, we ran out of town a high-school teacher who tried to teach the atheistical French revolutionary metric system to his class. Just call me "Dick".

(The two men enter the general store. In addition to an astonishing jumble of merchandise, the one-room store contains two men in deputies' uniforms, seated on opposite sides of the cracker barrel, and a very blonde young woman behind the cash register.)

NIXON: Toronto, hang the "Closed" sign on the door. As of now, we're a sheriff's office. Gracie, corn muffins and coffee for everyone.

(TORONTO, who wears a feather in his straight black hair but otherwise shows no signs of Indian heritage, puts up the sign. GRACIE busies herself behind the counter.)

NIXON: Folks, this is Reverend Agent D. B. Cooper of the United Network of Christian Law Enforcement. D. B., these are my deputies, Toronto and Chester, and Chester's wife Gracie, who helps out. (Gracie comes out with a large pot of coffee and a tray heaped with corn muffins. She passes them around as the sheriff continues to speak.) He's here to look into the Marcie Anderson murder.

COOPER (as he takes a cup of black coffee and a corn muffin): This Anderson case may have an importance beyond Twin Gaps. When we heard of it at UNCLE we recognized certain similarities with other murder cases around the country. I would not want to state anything positively at the present time, but (pauses) we may have a case of Satanism here.

(GRACIE gasps, and drops the coffeepot. CHESTER'S jaw and corn muffin drop. TORONTO emits the throaty sound inadequately represented in print as "Ugh!", and NIXON raises one eyebrow by an eighth of an inch. COOPER pauses to savor the effect.)

NIXON: Well, that makes a certain amount of sense. When we were questioning her family and friends, everyone was saying that Marcie was a typical, active, high-school senior. But there were some questions people were unwilling to answer. Her friend Debbie dropped a hint about 'meetings' but then wouldn't say any more. And Oddrey, whose father owns the motel where you'll be staying, D. B., Oddrey got real mysterious when I asked about Marcie's after-school activities. But there's bad blood in Oddrey's family - I'll cue you in on all that when you go over the reports on the case.

COOPER: Well, there's one thing about the case I'd like to say now. Gracie, these are absolutely the best corn muffins I ever ate.

GRACIE: Gee - thank you, Agent Cooper. (The telephone rings, and GRACIE answers it.) Twin Gaps Sheriff's Office. (Pause.) Yes, Justice Tschikens. (She puts one hand over the mouthpiece.) Sheriff, it's Justice Tschikens of the Court of Last Chancery. He has a question about that lawyer who was working all night, trying to break a widow's will.

NIXON: Tell him I'll call back later, Gracie. After all, what is more important - corn muffins or a Justice?

(This will be continued whether you want it or not.)

GETTING CAUGHT UP

DAGON is published every third Saturday, though that may change - see later on for details. Its publisher, editor, writer, and printer is John Boardman, 234 East 19th Street, Brooklyn, New York 11226-5302. DAGON circulates through APA-Q, an amateur press association which is collated at this same address and frequency. The copy count for APA-Q is 35, and the next deadline date is SATURDAY 23 JUNE 1990.

I would like to apologize for the lateness of the last APA-Q Distribution, #315. It was nearly a week getting collated and into the mail, a fact which can be attributed to a combination of business, illness, and accident. Just at my busiest time of the year - the end of the spring semester - I came down with a long and enervating

chest cold, complete with a bad cough and laryngitis. This sapped my energy to the point where nothing but necessary academic duties could be accomplished. I even ran out of stamps and couldn't find time to get to the post office.

I finally finished turning in my grades yesterday, and can now turn to another postponed task - not fan-pubbing, but cleaning up my workroom. Sometime on the night of 23-24 May, two heavily laden shelves in my workroom fell down, pulling their brackets out of the walls, and that mess still has to be cleaned up. If you have a back issue order coming from me, it may be delayed for this reason. The sorting and stacking job is going to be horrendous.

This, incidentally, means that a number of back issues are going to have to be thrown out. For the July First Saturday, on 7 July 1990, there will be in the entry a Give-Away Box. This box will contain all my war-gaming and s-f/fantasy fanzines dating from before 1989. (Filksinging 'zines are excepted from this eviction order.) Anything that is not picked up before or by that date will be thrown out.

In the last APA-Q I suggested extending the separation of our deadline dates from 3 to 4 weeks, because the Distributions have been rather meager of late. Furthermore, because of demands on my time during the academic year, my contributions have been rather meager as well. During summer, I have more time available, which is why I have no objection to maintaining the three-week schedule over the summer. But when the new academic year begins, I would like to go to a four-week schedule. To the right is APA-Q's summer schedule, with the proposed date for going over to a four-week schedule. I would like the comments of members on this proposal.

#317	23 June 1990
#318	14 July 1990
#319	4 August 1990
#320	25 August 1990
#321	15 September 1990
#322	13 October 1990 ???

Of course, the meagerness of this present Distribution is largely my own fault, since the last one got into the mail so late. It will consist of this DAGON, two pages each from Lee Burwasser and Mark Blackman, a generic cover with date hastily stamped in, and this DAGON.

In addition to circulating through APA-Q, DAGON also goes to other people whom I think might be interested, or who have paid \$10 for a 12-issue subscription. If you want to get APA-Q, send in a few dollars for a postage account, and I'll keep you posted on your balance. For that information, see "The Ministry of Miscellany", elsewhere in this issue.

This is

Quant Buff! #180 (Malay): I am now about halfway through The Knight and Knave of Swords, having read all but the last and longest story in it. For the first time, there is extensive mention of a theme which was hinted at in the very beginnings of the Fafhrd and Grey Mouser series - that they are somehow the sundered halves of a legendary hero of old, each bearing half his character. Since Fritz Leiber began the series only a few years after the suicide of Robert E. Howard, my feeling was that this mythical forebear may have been Conan, with Fafhrd having the thews and barbarian heritage, while the Mouser had the complexion and slyness. But for the first time he is given a name in The Knight and Knave of Swords: "Gusorio the Growler". In a couple of years some of the Conan stories will enter the public domain, so we may know for sure then.

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

1610

In Rime Isle, these heroes have settled in with women whose characters agree well with their own, who remind me of the strong and forceful women of the sagas, and who also regard themselves as the twin selves of an ancestral witch-queen. And, in one of the stories, the Grey Mouser's consort, Cif, speaks of the possibility that they shall someday beget a daughter together. (Witch-women tend to be rather definite about these things - compare Leif Eiriksson's sole light-o'-love, the Hebridean sorceress Thorgunna.) If a daughter of the Mouser and Cif were to be matched with a son of Fafhrd and Afreyt, we could get reincarnations of both Gusorio the Growler and the Witch-Queen Skeldir.

Of course, in that episode, Cif tells the Mouser that she does not yet want to commit herself to pregnancy, and so presents him with "the slender translucent bladder

of a fish." To the best of my knowledge, this is the very first mention of such a device in the entire literature of fantasy, though some of L. Sprague de Camp's female characters have relied on contraceptive spells. But animal intestines were state-of-the-art when Colonel Condom first made the invention that will forever bear his name.

(Incidentally, do not use those fancy gadgets of intestinal tissue if you are worried about AIDS. The whole point of intestinal tissue is that it is supposed to be permeable. Permeability, in these circumstances, is not what you want. Stay with latex, which is cheaper anyway.)

I can remember, more than 30 years ago, writing indignant letters to F&SF, which then seemed to have at least one story in every issue that repeated the catch-words of the "Cold War" and took conflict, usually nuclear, for granted. For a literature that allegedly looks forward to anticipate the future of the human species, science-fiction has over the decades been remarkably slavish to contemporary political and military matters.

Now that the Sinister International Communistic Conspiracy has proven to be a total invention of paranoid American political leaders, all sorts of new menaces will be auditioning to replace it. Ecological catastrophe, Satanism in day care centers and D&D games, gay plots to spread AIDS, the "Yellow Peril", and sinister vivisectionist plots are all being trotted out before the American public to see which one(s) can be successfully marketed. The 1980s gave us "New Coke"; the 1990s may give us "New Conspiracy". Both will be utter failures.

I like your conclusion on the whole matter:

"Could the same organ that sees moo cows and horsies in cloud formations and ghosts in campfire flames be seeing the handiwork of Old Nick in the random screw-ups of imperfect human society? Maybe."

I am looking forward to Foucault's Pendulum, which I hope to find time for in summer reading. I am already wondering whether there is any significance in the fact that Foucault's Pendulum was the first experimental proof of the rotation of the Earth which does not depend on astronomical observation. The Church of William of Baskerville once threw its whole weight behind the proposition that the Earth does not move.

As for Holy Blood, Holy Grail, it is one of the funniest books I've ever read. This was not, as you may have guessed, the intention of the authors.

There is a deep division in conservative ranks, exemplified by the division you point out between Pat Buchanan and Ben Wattenberg on the Mapplethorpe controversy. Conservatives like Wattenberg, Stockman, Sowell, and the late Terry Dolan wanted to conserve the capitalist economic system. For them, the free movement of commodities and the free expression of ideas were part of the same free-market ideology. But Pat Buchanan, Bill Buckley, Jesse Helms, and to some extent John Sununu are what has been called "cultural conservatives". Their image of our society is a besieged Christian culture, rooted in Plato and the Bible, and threatened by a rising tide of obscenity, abortion, and pacifism. (For the past quarter-century or so, they have been reluctant to use the word "miscegenation", but you'll find it if you look hard enough.) During the 1988 Republican presidential primary campaign, John Kemp and Pat Robertson had it out with each other for intellectual leadership of American conservatism, with Kemp a "free-market" and Robertson a "cultural" conservative. Although Jack Kemp may now sit in the president's cabinet, it was Pat Robertson who decisively won this show-down at the polls. And, though "free-market" conservatives may recognize that the fight for compulsory pregnancy has been lost at the polls, the "cultural" conservatives will continue to regard an absolute ban on abortion as the litmus test for conservatism. The recent New York State Republican Convention, at which a man of total political obscurity and "pro-choice" views was nominated to run a futile campaign for governor, was an example of this. Pierre Rinfret is running on a platform which tries to accomodate both views within his party, but it's not good enough for the compulsory pregnancy lobby, who is going to desert him for a firmly

anti-abortion minor party ticket headed by one Herbert London, the Evan Mecham of New York. The Republican Party has not yet decided whether it is a political party that wants to attract as many voters as it possibly can, or the Holy Republican Church, casting all unbelievers into the outer darkness.

Blancmange #235 (Blackman): Not long before the American Revolution broke out, Benjamin Franklin wrote a satire which attacked the claims that the King of England should rule America simply because America had been settled by English colonists. (Also Scots and Irish, and in addition Dutch, Germans, Jews, and French. America was already a polyglot and ethnically mixed society at the time of the Revolution.) Franklin wrote a "claim" by the King of Prussia to rule England, based on the fact that the English settled Britain in the 4th and 5th centuries by emigrating from what is now Germany. Some copies of Franklin's satire got to Germany, where it kicked up a diplomatic fuss among people who did not realize it was a satire.

Unless it simply slipped his mind to renew, in the turmoil of moving and starting in a new job, Dispatch from the Farm #11 may have been Tom Byro's valedictory. He has let his APA-Q subscription lapse.

In that same passage in Genesis that you quote, Abraham informs the king that his wife Sarah is indeed his half-sister. The relationship is precisely as close as the one between Lord Byron and his sister, about which all the fuss was made.

Tsimmes #1 (Blackman): "Ideas, like Californians, must flow freely." - VERY good. Who's Had Who has just been released in this country, more than three years after it appeared in England. (Let's hope they've corrected the historical inaccuracies that I pointed out when I reviewed the copy you got for me.) Apparently Britt Ekland learned that in U. S. law the truth is an absolute defense against libel - a little matter that dates back 255 years to the Peter Zenger trial.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the 1980s was the preference for symbols over reality. The Reagan presidency was this and this alone. It is going to be necessary to point out, emphatically and repeatedly, that a piece of bread is not god, a piece of cloth is not a nation, and a piece of a womb is not a human being.

Tsimmes #1.5 (Blackman): If you think that modern technology makes the publishing of fanzines too "easy", take a look at what gets on a computer bulletin board. A couple of weeks ago Al Nofi showed me a randomly selected evening's worth of natter on GEnie, which I understand is one of the more moderate boards.

I could have guessed the things you said about Jean Auel, after reading two of her books. For all their length and apparent depth, they are quite insubstantial as fiction. And her sex scenes are about as sexy as a Maxfield Parrish nude.

Not only do feudal societies appear overly often in fantasy novels, but so do arenas. In all the cultures of this planet, the only one that ever threw people to wild beasts in arenas before huge audiences. (The ancient Romans are supposed to have picked this up from the Etruscans, and then run away with it.) And yet, in innumerable s-f and fantasy novels, the hero wanders into a strange city, gets into trouble through no fault of his own, and is sentenced to fight something horrendous in an arena.

THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE

The blank to the right gives the current state of your APA-Q account, including costs of mailing this current Distribution. Accounts that fall into arrears will be suspended. Presently suspended accounts are:

Robert J. Baker	-\$1.10	Liz Ensley	-37¢	Lana Raymond	12¢
Vinnie Bartilucci	-76¢	Harold Feld	-19¢	Frank Schildiner	-15¢
Andre Bridget	-72¢	John Hartzell	-79¢	Joyce Scrivner	-75¢
Shelby Bush	-\$5.98	Mark Keller	-86¢	Peter G. Trei	-73¢
Tom & Barbara Byro	-85¢	Barbara Koksai	-20¢	Gary Tesser	-90¢
John Colton	-88¢	Ted Pauls	-39¢	Daniel B. Holzman	-\$1.05
John Desmond	-39¢				

THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY

Well, it had to happen sometime. There is apparently a shadowy group operating out of Atlanta, called "Christians Against Science Fiction". In itself this is not so surprising - Christians are apparently against everything, and so our turn had to come eventually.

CASF first came to my attention in the copy of Radio Free Thulcandra #20, on which I commented in the last DAGON. Marty Helgesen, editor of that "Christian fanzine", said that he had been sent a copy of a CASF flier by P. D. Caruthers-Montgomery. (In the last DAGON I overlooked the information in RFT; Caruthers-Montgomery is a woman.) Helgesen was not sure whether this flier was a hoax, and I can see where he has a dilemma on his hands. Helgesen is a firmly committed Catholic, and considering all the support that his church gave to his beloved war against Vietnam, I suppose he has good reason for it. But if it is also the Christian thing to do, to oppose science fiction, Helgesen is going to be in a hell of a bind.

I wrote to Caruthers-Montgomery for further information. She no longer had the address of CASF, which was on the flier she had sent to Helgesen. But she did give me some information about CASF that appeared in The Phoenix Quill, newsletter of the Phoenix Society of Atlanta. CASF may or may not have been linked to vandalism at two recent regional cons, Magnum Opus Con 5 and Chattacon. At the former, there were rumors of a group variously called "Christians Against SF" and "The Southern Hostility Suite", which allegedly were going to promote a little vandalism at the con hotel.

At Chattacon, according to Charles Rutledge, there was "a bunch of kids whose sole purpose seemed to be to destroy the hotel. And every story I heard about this group hit upon three things: they did not register with the convention, they arrived as a group either by bus or van, and there were 'Christians Against Science Fiction' flyers out on the freebie table."

It seems to me that there may be two different groups mixed here, whose only connection was that they were active at the same conventions. The "Southern Hostility Suite" may be a cornpone version of that New England Anarchist who uses the name "H. Howard Anderson", and who papers northeastern conventions with fliers asserting the right to "go a little crazy" at s-f conventions. But "Christians Against Science Fiction" may be an expression of the fact that the same Christians who have agitated for so long against comic books, fantasy role-playing games, neo-Paganism, and freedom of the press may have finally discovered the loose-knit, imaginative, unorthodox, ungovernable, and almost totally unbelieving community of science-fiction and fantasy writers, editors, readers, and fans.

There'll be more details in future issues, as answers come back to the letters of inquiry I've written about this development.

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Here's a little problem I'd like to put before DAGON's readers. Let us consider the two fields of human activity broadly distinguished as "the arts" and "the sciences". Define each of these two fields as inclusively as possible. Under "the arts" let us include writers, painters, sculptors, architects, actors, dancers, poets, singers, and other musicians including composers. Let "the sciences" include not only the traditional disciplines of the physical and biological sciences but also mathematicians, engineers, and technicians.

Now consider the ways in which these two fields are regarded by the general public - and by themselves as well. Artists, it is believed, study and interpret the human heart. Their fields analyze and comment upon human relations, and require for expertise, let alone success, a wide and deep understanding of the emotions, ambitions, feelings, and hopes of individual human beings. Sciences, on the other hand, are seen as being cold, dispassionate, and remote from such immediate human concerns, and scientists are supposed to be poor at the basics of human relations.

So why, then, is the divorce rate so much higher among artists than among scientists?

Just asking.

*

In the past few issues of DAGON, I have been commenting upon Richard Wagner's Der Ring der Nibelungen, and the plot changes Wagner made in taking this story from the Völsunga Saga. In the chart to the left

I have drawn up the changes in names that Wagner made in this adaptation. As always, "dh" represents the Old Norse letter edh, pronounced like the "th" in "father".

The names in the first column are from the Völsunga Saga, and in the second from Der Ring der Nibelungen.

There are a few complications. Wagner's Siegmund is the son of Wotan, but in the saga he is four generations from Odhin. The two half-brothers Sinfjötli and Sigurd are combined into one character by Wagner.

There is a dwarf named Mimir in the Younger Edda, but Sigurd's sneaky foster-father Regin is quite a different person. And it is Regin who turns out to be the brother of Fafnir; the treasure which Sigurd loots after slaying the dragon was actually wergild paid for the accidental death of a third brother at the hand of the gods. (The brother had shape-changed into an otter, and the gods happened to be on a hunting trip that day...) Nor is Hogni a bastard of Mimir or anybody else.

It is also in the Völsunga Saga that we learn that Brynhild is the sister of a king named Atli, who is nobody other than that Attila the Hun whose "leadership secrets" are a vogue just now. Also, Sigurd and Gudhrun had a daughter named Svanhild, with a complex and tragic story of her own.

Whatever historical basis there may be for this story may have taken place in Burgundy at the darkest point of the dark ages. See Isaac Asimov's The Dark Ages for further information.

*

Sometime Friday, Ira Donewitz phoned with two items of information - that Sue Rae Rosenfeld Balazs has been safely delivered of a seven-pound daughter, and that the sixth book of Terry Pratchett's Discworld series, The Wyrd Sisters, has at last been released in this country.

I'll review The Wyrd Sisters in a future issue of DAGON. The Balazeses can review their own kid.

*

The increasingly litigious character of our society has at last reached science. The first big battle was set off when Henry Barschall wrote articles in Physics Today and The Bulletin of the American Physical Society, analyzing cost effectiveness of 200 physics journals. Bottom place was taken by several journals published by the firm of Gordon and Breach. Gordon and Breach responded by suing Barschall, the American Physical Society, and the American Institute of Physics. Eventually, of course, the Gordon and Breach suit is going to be tossed out on the same grounds, for all practical purposes, that killed James Abbott McNeill Whistler's suit against the critic John Ruskin, 111 years ago. But in the meantime the Association of Research Libraries honored Barschall for his "contributions to research libraries and the scholarly academic community" despite "the personal risks he has taken in pursuit of access to scientific information."

In the meantime, the publicity has done no good at all to sales of Gordon and Breach publications to scientists. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that this ridiculous lawsuit, combined with the general contraction in research funding, could destroy Gordon and Breach.

But, as you might suspect, the biggest legal controversy in physics currently revolves around last year's claim by Pons and Fleischmann to have developed low-temperature ("cold") nuclear fusion in palladium electrodes. I have heard rumors that Fleischmann wants to bail out, but Pons is calling in the lawyers.

This particular issue began last September, when Pons finally agreed to a test

Odhin	Wotan
Sigmund	Siegmund
Signy	Sieglinde
Siggeir	Hunding
Brynhild	Brünnhilde
Regin	Mimir
Sinfjötli/Sigurd	Siegfried
Fafnir	Fafner
Glukings	Gibichungs
Gunnar	Gunther
Hogni	Hagen
Gudhrun	Gudrun

of his electrodes by six qualified laboratories. If his claims were correct, and the hydrogen atoms close-packed in the palladium had actually fused, there would be detectable helium traces in those electrodes. Pons has refused to release the results of these assays, and is suing the scientists who claim that they show no helium. Apparently the University of Utah, and the government of that state, are going to try to prove in court what they cannot prove in the laboratory.

There is a tremendous financial and emotional investment in this unworkable and probably fraudulent scheme. The "National Cold Fusion Institute", a creation of the Utah state government for which Utah's congressional delegation is vainly trying to solicit federal money, is offering shares in "cold fusion". They are trying to raise \$15,000,000 to fund research over the next three years, and you are offered up to 20% of future "profits". Shares are available for as little as \$300,000. Furthermore, the Salt Lake Tribune has "revealed that \$.5M listed in the quarterly report of the Cold Fusion Institute as 'external funding,' and described in a press release as an 'anonymous donation,' was in fact provided by the taxpayers of Utah through a University research fund. A faculty group from the College of Science is demanding a complete financial audit and scientific review of the cold fusion program."

(Robert L. Park, What's New, 4, 11, & 25 May & 1 June 1990)

Someday, some Frederick Lewis Allen or John Kenneth Galbraith will write a history of the great stock market crash of 199X. He or she will analyze and quote the grossly erroneous, fraudulent, or criminal actions which helped intensify the financial disaster. Minor stories will be cited to illustrate the frame of mind of the time, that could blithely set up and walk into the catastrophe. And among these stories will be the Great Cold Fusion Hustle - or, to quote an earlier example of financial fraud, which actually appeared successfully on the London scene in the "South Sea Bubble" year of 1720, "a company for carrying on an undertaking of great advantage, but nobody to know what it is."

*

The Central Park Shakespeare Theater plays this summer will be The Taming of the Shrew (22 June-22 July) and Richard III (begins 3 August). The former play will star Morgan Freeman and Tracey Ullman, and will probably draw lines extending around the reservoir, after all the hangers-on of the Big Stars have got their tickets under the counter. (Or at least that's what happened with Twelfth Night, last summer.) The Taming of the Shrew will be set in the "Old West" of legend; "the bets will be made in a saloon, and characters will speak in a southwestern drawl." (Allan Wallach, Newsday, 27 May) Petruchio's background includes a boyhood in the Civil War, and a career as a riverboat gambler. Robin Phillips, last seen in Glory, will be Richard III.

Now, how about my plan for doing Hamlet as a western? ("Ah'm slappin' leather, Laertes!")

DAGON #408

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F I R S T C L A S S M A I L

Beginning in this issue,
whether you want it or not:

TWIN GAPS!