

DAGON

#659, APA-Q #569, possibly

maybe December 2014

I GIVE YOU A DEFINITE "MAYBE"

Despite my announcement in the November issue, I have discovered a way to keep **Dagon** going, despite previous problems in getting it printed on time. I can get copies duplicated locally here at Montevue.

Dagon, a monthly fanzine of commentary on science, science fiction, fantasy, mystery novels, comic art, role-playing games (RPGs), and anything else that seems like a good idea at the moment, is published by John Boardman, Room 238, 1910 Rosemont Avenue, Frederick, Maryland 21702-8249. My land-line telephone number is 301-662-8718. My cell phone number is 718-736-4901. **Dagon** circulates through **APA-Q**, an amateur press association (APA) which is edited once a month (if enough contributions come in) by Mark Blackman, Apt. #4A, 1745 E. 18th Street, Brooklyn, New York 11229. The copy count for **APA-Q** is 18. (Note change.) For information about receiving or contributing to **APA-Q**, write to Mark.

Dagon also goes to others who have indicated an interest in its subject matter. Subscriptions are 10 issues for \$15 in the U. S., and for \$40 elsewhere.

As it needs to be updated, the **Dagon** mailing list will be in the next issue in January 2015. Please send in right away any changes in your address, telephone number, or e-mail address.

THE FOUR AND A HALF KINGDOMS - VI

(reprinted from **Graustarks** #232, 13 February 1971, and #629, sometime in late 1992, with thanks to Mark Blackman)

During the confusion at the fall of the Roman Empire, a tribe of obscure origin settled in the Balkan Massif. Though they were Slavic by language and culture, they claimed to be the lost thirteenth tribe of Israel. According to an oral tradition, after Tamar seduced Judah as described in Genesis 38, she set out to score the rest of the family. This tradition has it that her son Klutz was begotten posthumously by the ghost of Jacob, a tradition supported by Numbers 24:17, which they read as "...a Spectre shall rise out of Israel..." Prior to their conversion by Polykarp, the Tribe of Klutz worshipped deity called JEHoover, whom they hailed in the following hymn:

“He sees you when you’re sleeping,
He knows if you’re awake,

He knows if you’ve been bad or good,
So be good for goodness sake...”

The “Tribe of Klutz”, called Zapadoslavs by philologists, was converted to Christianity during the fourth century by the Roman Emperor Theodosius I, who threatened to slaughter the entire tribe if they refused. For his demonstration of the fundamental principle of Christian doctrine, he is still adored as a saint by their descendants.

However, the present faith of the Patrimony was established in the fifth century by Polykarp, who is worshipped to this day as the Nephew of God, Elder Brother of Jesus, and First Cousin Once Removed of the Holy Ghost. The fundamentals of the Polykarpian faith are contained in the Newer Testament, including the miraculous birth, deeds, martyrdom, and resurrection of Polykarp.

According to the Gospel of St. Einphul of Ayle, Polykarp was born to the three virgin sisters Woglinde, Wellgunde, and Flosshilde on the day the Visigoths sacked Rome. The Gospel According to St. Oned claims that Polykarp was born to St. Rheasyllvia, a novice at the Convent of the Holy Foreskin, nine months after the Holy Ghost appeared, disguised as a troop of Hunnish cavalry. Both these accounts are contained in the Newer Testament, and it is a crime punishable in the Patrimony by death to deny either of them, or to assert that they are in any way incompatible.

According to a dubious tradition not included in the Newer Testament, and denied by the Polykarpians, Polykarp as a young man modeled his conduct after that of St. Augustine - as a young man. A hostile tradition preserved in the Temporary Roman Empire has it that a woman named Mary the Maudlin once told him, “On these cold winter nights you’re better than a comforter”. The tradition is plausible, because shortly afterwards Polykarp began to regard himself as the person whose coming was foretold in John 14:16.

Polykarp began his career of preaching by visiting the court of the Eastern Roman Emperor Theodorus the Odorous and calling him to repentance. Theodorus replied by making Polykarp his Court Jester. Seven months later Theodorus was overthrown and murdered by his brother-in-law Isaac Yursiti - an act which Polykarpians regard as one of divine vengeance. The new Emperor exiled Polykarp to Sinope, whence he escaped as a divinely ordained hurricane struck the town and killed 13,000 people.

Returning to the Balkan Massif, Polykarp gathered about him thirteen disciples, seven women and six men. One of the women was Mary the Maudlin, who according to St. Oned was “converted to the ways of the Holy Polykarp by the manifold virtues of His own tongue.”

Sometime around the year 440, the Zapadoslav ruler Vataslob decreed that Polykarp and his disciples be stopped from their preaching. This led to a confrontation between the prophet and the tyrant, described thus by St. Einphul of Ayle:

“Polykarp did lead His disciples and many another person before Vataslob and his men of might.

And did say unto the tyrant, ‘Wherefore dost thou let me from walking up and down the land, preaching My Gospel unto these My people?’

And the tyrant answered Him, saying ‘Thy teachings do disturb the greater number of the Tribe of Klutz, wherefore in their name I bid Thee stop, lest a worse thing happen to Thee.’

Polykarp answered unto him, saying, ‘Thou seest a great multitude with Me, hearkening unto My Gospel and doing My will, and with thee standeth but a small number. Wherefore then dost thou act in the name of the greater number of the people of Klutz?’

And Vataslob answered unto him, saying ‘Man of little vision, the Tribe of Klutz is not only they who now live, but also the mighty number of the dead who went before us, following the traditions which now Thou breakest. I bid Thee stop, in the name of this Silent Majority.’”

Finding that his persuasion was of no avail, Vataslob eventually ordered Polykarp to be impaled. To this say, the Sign of the Stake is the symbol of the Polykarpian, who imitate this gesture with a finger in prayer or at times of great emotional stress.

Oddly enough the Gospels are relatively silent on the exact content of the teachings of Polykarp. More detail is provided by his principal disciple St. Bedrzych the Bedridden, whose feeble body did noit prevent him from writing several accounts of Polykarpian doctrine. According to St. Bedrzych, who was incapable of any physical activity other than dictating these commentaries to his sister-in-law Phania of the Hill, the teachings of Polykarp were an extremely other-worldly doctrine, which forbade all manner of mundane pleasure. Between dictations, St. Bedrzych prayed continually to Polykarp to cure his illness. Finally, on the saint’s 89th birthday, his prayers were answered and he sprang from his bed in joy. Three days later, he “died in the odor of sanctity”. Unfortunately, Phania fell away from the Faith as a result, and according to the Epistle of St. Iphrod lived the rest of her life as a brothel-keeper in Constantinople. Polykarpian legend puts her in charge of that portion of Hell where lechers are punished.

St. Humbert the Humble succeeded St. Bedrzych as Patriarch of the Polykarpian. In 477 he led 5,000 of his co-religionists to the palace of vataslob’s son and successor Vursaslob to persuade him of the errors of his ways. After three days of disputation, Vursaslob and his followers were so overcome with remorse at their evil ways that they all precipitated themselves from the highest tower of the castle, leaving the rule of the Zapadoslavs in the hands of the Polykarpian. St. Humbert thereupon proclaimed the Pravoslavnian Patrimony of Polykarp.

Despite many wars with the orthodox Christians of Wogastisburg-Schlampenbüttel, the Polykarpian maintain their theocracy to this day. They are ruled by an elective Patriarch whose title is “Supreme Pompous of the Pravoslavnian Patrimony of Polykarp”. He is assisted

by thirteen members of the High School (*Scholia Alta*) of Bluejays, from the bright blue color of their robes, and who choose his his successor. This form of government has been proclaimed by the 18th-century Polykarpian St. Burkenhare as “the perfectest form of democracy, for the Patriarch elects the Bluejays and the Bluejays elect the Patriarch, leaving nought to any outside influence.”

Owing to their small numbers, the Polykarpians rarely send missionaries outside the Balkan Massif. Their missionaries are thrown to the lions in the Temporary Roman Empire, married to the Queen in Skandalutz, stoned in the streets in Pundschruck, and laughed at in Wogastisburg-Schlämpenbüttel.

The principal city, and seat of the Patriarch, is Polykarpolis. Nearby, on the border of the Temporary Roman Empire, is the Mare Altum, where the famous “High Sea Scrolls” were discovered. The principal exports of the Patrimony are missionaries, peasant handicrafts, and the numerous exports of the Polykarpian Holy Relics Factory, the most advanced industrial complex in all the Four And A Half Kingdoms. Principal imports are junk and old clothes from neighboring countries, which are bought by the Holy Relics Factory. Several philologists also frequent the Patrimony, since obscure Slavic dialects extant nowhere else are spoken there.

THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY

The above report on one of the Four And A Half Kingdoms was copied from a back issue of my gaming fanzine **Graustark** and sent by Mark Blackman. If he can get me any more of these reports, originally published in **Graustark** in 1971 and reprinted there in 1992, I will print them in future issues of **Dagon**, as I do not have access to my own **Graustark** files, which are in storage.

In the above reprint I refer to the term “silent majority”, which had a great vogue in 1971 but might mystify today’s readers. In the early 1970s, domestic opposition to the American invasion of Vietnam was gaining strength, and war-lovers tried in vain to make it appear that this opposition came from a noisy but negligible minoirity. It was their contention that supporters of the war were a majority, but a silent one since they did not speak out and demonstrate in favor of war. This contention collapsed when the U. S. government, against its will, was forced by circumstances to withdraw U. S. troops from Vietnam, with the general approval of public opinion. If opposition to American “boots on the ground” in Syria and Iraq reaches the same level, we may again hear the term “silent majority” from our government - and just as vainly.

And, since I had sprung the term “silent majority” on you in a report from the Four And A Half Kingdoms, I want to thank the readers who have expressed their interest in these reports.

The Winter Solstice again approaches, often celebrated with references to religion - in this country, usually as Christmas or Hanukah. However you observe this holiday, have an enjoyable time, and also a happy and peaceful new year.

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The lead item in the November **CAR-PGa Newsletter** is a long article by Paul Cardwell on a new problem for gamers: "While CAR-PGa has concentrated on tabletop role-playing games and LARP (Live-Action RPGs)," he writes, "we have kept a watch out for similar attacks on board games, videogames, trading card games, and even cosplay (costume plays - live recreations of comics, manga, and TV stories.)" It seems that threats are mounting against videogames. Gamergate has been the principal target. Zoe Quinn has designed a game which deals with the problem of depression. "A rambling online attack by an ex-boyfriend triggered a general attack on all women in the video game industry, claiming a current boyfriend was giving her games favorable reviews (he had not reviewed any of her work.)" The attack chiefly concentrates on "first-person shooter" games, based on the belief that anyone who plays such games is on the way into becoming a "first-person shooter" in reality. So many people believe this mythology that these attacks are likely to stir up denunciations of such games. As a result, threats of violence are being directed against videogame designers. "Quinn has had to leave her home because of their rape and/or death threats." Another female videogame design-er, Anita Sarkeesian, "was prevented from speaking at Utah State University by a combination of online death threats...and the refusal of the police to provide extra security at the event."

"The principal instigator of this attack," Cardwell continues, "is *The Week* columnist James Pethokoukis on October 9." Cardwell goes on to quote and demolish Pethokoukis' attack on gamers as people who are trying to "escape reality". **Dagon** readers should read **CAR-PGa Newsletter** regularly if they wish to keep up on these attacks.

Each issue of **CAR-PGa Newsletter** contains a listing of upcoming RPGaming conventions. To receive **CAR-PGa Newsletter**, which is published monthly by Paul Cardwell for the Committee for the Advancement of Role-Playing Games, send \$1.50 a copy or \$15 a year to him at 1127 Cedar, Bonham, TX 75418. (Costs are \$2.25 a copy and \$20 a year to addresses outside the United States.) Each issue contains a long listing of gaming conventions and sites. Paul also offers a subscription anywhere, by e-mail, for \$5.

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The Calhamer Memorial Postal Diplomacy Game has now reached the game year "1906". The players of Germany and Italy will apparently drop at the end of the game year to one supply center each. Germany is being squeezed between England and Russia, while France and Turkey are moving into Italy. Turkey is also picking up any supply centers left unguarded in the Balkans. A draw is being proposed by some players, but it does not include some of the others, which is not according to the rules of Diplomacy. Either the draw proposal will have to

be abandoned, or the players not included in it will have to be first eliminated by the others

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At last saner people seem to be dealing with the panic about ebola and about people who conspicuously do *not* have this disease. And panic has been very severe. For some reason, the media have even gone so far as to write the word “ebola” with a capital “E”. a measure extended to no other disease except those with proper names in their own names, such as “Alzheimer’s disease” or “Spanish flu”.

A major victim of the panic over ebola has been Kaci Hickox, a nurse who traveled to Africa to help with the outbreak of the disease there. Upon her return to her home and fiancé in Maine, its government tried to quarantine her from contact with other people even though she has no symptoms and is completely free from the disease. Hickox completely ignored this nonsense, and is moving about her town with complete freedom. Governor Paul LePage, a Republican of course, met her actions with the comment, “We’re trying to protect her, but she’s not acting as smart as she probably should.” (Mark Berman and Brady Dennis, *Washington Post*, 31 October 2014; Ruth Marcus, *ibid.*, 2 November 2014) LePage went on to say that he doubted the state could “protect” her if she broke quarantine. This sounds like an incitement to murder. Or maybe he was just thinking of his bid for re-election. If so, it worked; he was re-elected by a big margin in a normally Democratic region of the country. Other people who have been to Africa have also been quarantined even though they were thousands of miles from places where people have had ebola, one in Zambia and another in Tanzania, clear across the continent from Liberia and nearby nations where people have been stricken with the disease.

And thousands of people who are panic-stricken about ebola have not bothered to get vaccinated against flu, which has killed many more Americans. And the disease which has historically produced more panic than any other is the bubonic plague, sometimes called the “black plague”. (“Pneumonic plague” refers to the same disease, transmitted differently.) That epidemic came into Europe from Asia in the 14th century, transmitted by fleas on the omnipresent rats, and is estimated to have killed about one third of the population. The plague is still endemic on wildlife in California, and from time to time a hunter contracts it and gets cured, but this occurs without causing such panic as the much less common ebola does.

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Regular readers of **Dagon** know that I am fond of that disreputable verse form, the limerick. Most of them are of uncertain origin, and refer to events or situations that are more or less permanent or undateable. But they can also be written about current events, and here are a few of my own recent compositions. The last one should probably be read for better effect, rather than recited. I had to throw in a Latin phrase for lack of a suitable rhyme in English, and the newly created acronym “POTUS” seems to be intended for print rather than speech.

There once was a gang called the Taliban
As bestial and brutal as Caliban.

 Their leader's alive
 And hopes to survive,
But I just don't see how the hell he can.

It now seems to make perfect sense
To add to Olympic events

 The popular act
 (Though lacking in tact)
Of jumping the White House's fence.

There once was a man with ebola,
Who caught it somewhere in Angola.

 But he's free as a bird
 Because he was cured
By chugging six gallons of cola.

There was a young lady named Monica
Who didn't obey *lex canonica*.

 But now she gives notice,
 "I didn't screw POTUS,
"I only blew on his harmonica."

I have also committed a cycle of twelve verses which poke fun at the popular superstition of ass trolgy. Each one rhymes one of the twelve "signs of the Zodiac", which have nothing to do with, and are not even in the same celestial position as, the constellations of the same name. I am not going to print all of them because **Dagon** goes through the mails, and I don't want to run afoul of any postal inspector who might be a prude, and also believes in ass trolgy. But here are two of them:

A baritone born under Taurus
Joined up with a folk-singing chorus.

 But he didn't last long,
 For with every song
He croaked like an old brontosaurus.

A poet, by birthright a Scorpio,
Was trying to rhyme the word "Scorpio",

 He tried and he tried
 Till in torment he died,
As if he'd been stung by a scorpio.

To add to the confusion, the eighth sign of the Zodiac is given by ass trolgers as "Scorpio", but the correct Latin name of the constellation, used by astronomers, is the Latin word "Scorpius". For some ass trolgers, the confusion of names is even worse. Since the Latin word for "crab" is also the name of a much-feared disease, some ass trolgers describe people born "under Cancer" as "Moon Children".*

The spelling "ass trolgy" is not my own idea, but refers to an event in *The Clouds*, a comedy by the ancient Greek playwright Aristophanes. The play is mainly a satire on Socrates and his investigations into what was then believed to be science. The protagonist is visiting Socrates' school in an attempt to stop his son from learning such subversive things. While being shown through the school, he sees a man who is peering closely into a deep hole in the

* - Isn't that cute?

ground, while the man's rump points upward. He asks what the man is doing, and is told that "He is studying the secrets of the depths, while his ass is studying ass trology on its own account." Where a great satirist like Aristophanes leads the way, some 24 centuries later I can but humbly follow. And could the portrayal of Socrates by Aristophanes be the first literary depiction of the stereotyped "mad scientist"?

Aristophanes' picture of Socrates differs radically from Plato's, with which college graduates may be more familiar. Plato's Socrates is an airy intellectual who does not bother with the merely material world. Xenophon, the only other ancient writer who described Socrates, presents him as a practical thinker. I have hypothesized that Plato, Aristophanes, and Xenophon once attended a banquet where the unwatered wine flowed freely, and discussed what subsequent generations might think of their writings. One of them, most probably Aristophanes, suggested that the three writers invent the character of Socrates and give him three widely differing descriptions in order to confuse subsequent scholars who read their works.

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For other science fiction fans, I have good news and bad news. The good news is, that a new science-fiction novel was reviewed on the front page of the *New York Times Book Review* of 2 November 2014. The bad news is that Michael Faber's *The Book of Strange New Things* sounds like the worst new s-f novel in decades. It tells of Earth's First Contact with an inhabited planet called "Oasis". On the next trip to Oasis, Earth includes a missionary - a Christian missionary. Apparently we are going to be exposed to the notion that the Oasans will be persuaded that someone executed on another planet two thousand years ago is a god - is the one and only god, who created the whole universe just a few thousand years earlier. And, even less believable, we are told that the Oasans have asked Earth to send them someone "to satisfy the Oasans' mysterious hunger for spiritual instruction." Apparently the Oasans, unlike our species, have not thought up home-grown mythologies to fulfill this "hunger".

According to reviewer Marcel Theroux, Faber's missionary learns that a predecessor has mysteriously disappeared on Oasis. (Theroux does not tell us how, but the experiences of some missionaries here on Earth suggest that he might have been eaten by the beings he is trying to convert.) Theroux apparently believes that *The Book of Strange New Things* will cause what he calls "speculative fiction", and everyone else calls "science fiction", to become "respect-able". I have news for him. S-f has been "respectable" since Jules Verne wrote *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea* and H. G. Wells wrote *The Time Machine* in the 19th century.

Faber is the author of two previous s-f novels, *Under the Skin* and *The Crimson Petal and the White*. I am not familiar with either of them and do not intend to be.

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During the middle of the twentieth century, *Astounding Science Fiction* (later *Analog*) was edited by John W. Campbell Jr., who published and influenced the major science fiction

authors of the period. But the power behind the throne was exercised by his assistant, Kay Tarrant. And she was rigorously opposed to anything the least bit “suggestive” in their fiction, and grimly censored it out. Her fanaticism about this was so obvious that eventually several of Campbell’s authors put together a pool of money, to be awarded to the first writer who managed to slip a naughty past Tarrant.

I was reminded of this by a television commercial for the Tomcat brand of mouse poison. The pool was finally won by an author who wrote a story about a man who invented the proverbial “better mousetrap”. This mousetrap zapped any mouse which it caught, and the animal just disappeared. Eventually a huge number of mice reappeared, since the trap had teleported them all into the near future, where they caused a great deal of mischief.

Early in the story, the inventor demonstrated the trap to a friend, who was unconvinced. He said, “It’ll never replace the ball-bearing mousetrap.” When the inventor asked about that device, the friend said, “It’s a tomcat.”

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I’ll bet you didn’t know such a week existed, but the week of 21-27 September 2014 was declared “Banned Books Week” by the American Library Association’s Office for Intellectual Freedom. (*Washington Post*, 29 September 2014) These are, in order, the five books against which the most attempts to ban them were made in 2013:

1. *Captain Underpants* by Dav Pilker
2. *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison
3. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexsis
4. *Fifty Shades of Gray* by E. L. James
5. *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins

I have not read any of these books, and had not even heard of any of them except for *Fifty Shades of Gray*, an allegedly erotic novel against which many attacks were made when it was published.

GETTING CAUGHT UP

(With APA-Q #568 (November 2014), Mark Blackman sent me several back issues of my postal Diplomacy fanzine **Graustark**, ranging from 1979 through 2007, which include accounts of the Four And A Half Kingdoms and related topics. I will publish reprints from these ‘zines in the next several issues of **Dagon**.)

Blancmange #488 (Blackman): Mark reports the death of Velma Bowen, later Velma J. de Selby-Bowen, whom I remember from CCNY Sci-Fi and elsewhere in New York City’s science-fiction fandom.

Why am I a war-gamer? Because it’s fun, shows off historical knowledge, and is non-

violent. As for Napoleon I, he was fond of the use of artillery because, like many French revolutionaries, he supported the use of new science and technology. (It was the French Revolution that introduced the metric system, and several French scientists supported that Revolution.) As for Sergeant James Boardman, I do not know why he enlisted in an artillery regiment in 1861.

What is "crowd funding"?

Why are there English, Scottish, and Irish symbols in the Union Jack, but nothing for Wales? Because Wales was never a kingdom, but instead a mere principality. Every year, *Whitaker's Almanack* list two sets of Princes of Wales in its historical section - native princes and the eldest sons of British monarchs.

I also object to H. P. Lovecraft's notorious racism, but he was also a first-rate fantasy writer, better than Poe in my opinion, and his racism intrudes on very few of his stories. That's why this fanzine bears the title of his first published story.

I think that the opposition of H. G. Wells to Zionism was probably just an expression of his opposition to all nationalism. And his 1938 novel *The Holy Terror* depicted Rud Whitlow as a Fascist dictator whose more enlightened followers contrived to apply only his more positive views.

And there is probably some relationship of a Hispanic with a Carthaginian name in your sequence "Carthage→North Africa→the Moors→Spain→Latin America".

Thanks for identifying the de Camp novel I described as *The Dragon of the Ishtar Gate*. Had *Turn Left at Africa* been a provisional title of the same book?

Several readers have sent in comments on "Pop Goes the Weasel", but space is short, so I will have to take up the topic in the next **Dagon**.

Dagon #652 (me): A once-popular American comic strip was vaguely based on the colonial residents of the Grand Duchy's island possession. I wonder how many of **Dagon**'s readers are old enough to remember it.

Dagon #659

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You may find something of
interest to you on p. ____