

DAGON

#664, APA-Q #575

June 2015

THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY

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, 12716 Ginger Wood Lane, Clarksburg, MD 20871. (Note new address.) My new land-line phone number is 301-515-4271, and my cell-phone number will remain 718-736-4901 on the rare occasions when it functions. (When I try to recharge it, it responds by unplugging itself.) **Dagon** circulates through APA-Q, an amateur press association (APA) which is edited once a month (if enough contributions come in) by Mark L. Blackman, Apt. #4A, 1745 E. 18th St., Brooklyn, NY 11229. The copy count for APA-Q is 15. For information about receiving and/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.

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This is the first issue of **Dagon** to be written in my new address, a house which I am sharing with my daughter Deirdre in Clarksburg, MD. I actually moved in on 6 April, and I began to receive mail regularly when the U. S. Postal "Service" actually provided Deirdre with a working key to her mailbox, which now also has my name on it. It took a little while for the two newspapers I receive to actually be delivered here, but the *Washington Post* began to arrive on the 10th, and the *New York Times* on the 11th. I send several out-of-state readers clippings from these papers on topics which interest them, since they do not have locally newspapers anywhere as good as these, so they may miss a few such items.

My move was slightly delayed by other commitments that Deirdre had on Easter weekend. On Easter, she and her daughter Melissa prepared a big family dinner at the latter's residence in Germantown. Also present were Deirdre's boyfriend Robert, Melissa's boyfriend Rashad, their daughter Elliána (3½ years), Deirdre's older son Anthony, his wife Karen, their daughter Charlotte ("Charlie", 15 months), Deirdre's first cousin on her mother's side Shannon, Shannon's 13-year-old son John. and myself. (Children's ages are as of the beginning of June.) Deirdre's other son Michael and his wife Bethany were in Florida, where they had become parents at the beginning of March. Their baby, Carmen, had been born prematurely, but after a stay at the hospital she is now home and doing quite well. And Anthony and Karen are expectibng a second child in November.

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The revised version of the **Dagon** mailing list will appear in the July issue, since the

things I had planned to mention in the April issue had to appear instead in the May and June issues. This will give readers another month to send me any changes or corrections in the last mailing list published in January.

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Some of the things I had planned for this issue, and for the Calhamer Memorial Postal Diplomacy Game, will have to be postponed until my gear is completely unpacked at my new address. In the move, everything had to be quickly packed into large boxes and moved. Unpacking them and putting things away is taking more time, and some things have simply not yet surfaced from the many boxes we had to use. This will somewhat delay adjudications in the Calhamer Memorial Game, as my Diplomacy set has not yet surfaced in the incomplete unpacking. I am particularly grateful to my daughters and their families, who did most of the work.

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Many conservatives are currently expressing the opinion that their religious liberty is endangered in America. However, this does not mean what it meant some four hundred years ago in England, when its government was trying to compel all the English to belong to the Church of England, and threatening to imprison those with other religious opinions. (This policy caused some of my ancestors to emigrate to America, and others to the Netherlands, which had undertaken the radical new policy of allowing everyone to worship as they pleased.) "Religious liberty" apparently now means that anyone who gets into legal trouble for refusing to deal with homosexuals on allegedly religious grounds is having his or her religious liberty endangered. We are told that anyone who refuses to rent a hall for the wedding of a same-sex couple, or to bake a wedding cake for them, is exercising religious liberty and must not be subjected to laws against discrimination.

When asked for the source of this religious opinion, they point to biblical passages strongly condemning male homosexuality. (Nowhere does the bible condemn female homosexuality.) In some states they are even passing "Religious Freedom Restoration Acts" ("RFRAs") to protect such discriminatory conduct from the terrible menace of Civil Rights Acts. However, not the bible but the Constitution is the basis for American law. Moreover, claiming that there is a legitimate religious basis for discrimination is certain to bring up, sooner or later, the Curse of Ham.

This "curse" derives from the biblical tale of Noah and his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth (or "Yafet"). The usual biblical interpretation is that these three sons were respectively the ancestors of the Asians, the Africans, and the Europeans. Later in Genesis, a divine curse was cast against Ham, and particularly against his son Canaan. (I would give you chapter and verse for this curse, except that some of my books are in storage, and the rest were hastily packed into about 20 large boxes when I moved to my present address, and I have no idea

whether a bible is even among them. But I am sure that some reader will be able to furnish me with the exact reference.)

In America, for many years, the biblical Curse of Ham was regarded as a divine instruction condemning Africans to an inferior legal and social status, and even for their enslavement. If banning homosexuals from social or economic contacts is regarded as an act of religious liberty, then sooner or later some racist will refuse to do business with African-Americans, and publicly claim that the Curse of Ham justifies his conduct, and that attempts to enforce the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts against his actions are a violation of his religious liberty. So it will be emphasized by our courts that whenever some religion's scriptures require one thing, and the Constitution and laws of the United States of America require another, the laws of the United States of America *must* prevail.

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Michael Tresca's lead article in the April issue of **CAR-PGa Newsletter** takes up the phony "religious liberty" issue promoted by Indiana's Governor Mike Pence (a Republican, of course), who has just signed a "Religious Freedom Restoration Act". This is relevant because Gen Con, a major gaming convention, meets annually in Indianapolis, and has a legal commitment to meet there through 2020. Adrian Swartout, Gen Con's CEO, has expressed his disappointment at this alleged law, and has pointed out that after 2020 Indiana might well lose the huge amounts of money spent by Gen Con attendees. "At heart is the issue," Tresca writes, "as to whether the Indiana RFRA discriminates against gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender con goers." The language of the Indiana RFRA applies also to cases to which the government is not a party, so that a private person, such as the operator of a Gen Con hotel, could get away with excluding homosexuals.

This April issue also contains a long article by Paul Cardwell entitled "Gaming the Horse", about how to handle horses and other mounts in a RPG. Specific topics include donkeys, mules, onagers, and cattle and their kin. Unfortunately, it does not also include such popular RPG mounts as centaurs, unicorns, pegasi, and the currently popular flying unicorns, for which the cacophonous term "pegacorns" has been coined. Incidentally, I am not certain that the word "pegasi" is a proper plural. "Pegasus" may not be a Latin but a Semitic word, since "sus" ("סוס") is Hebrew for "horse". The correct plural may well be "pegasusim".

This topic is continued by Cardwell in the May **CAR-PGa Newsletter** with the article "On the Other Hand, Don't Get a Horse". Basing his article on **Mythworld Bestiary**, he continues the topic with the varieties of camels and their kindred, llamas. He then goes on to the RPG uses of other animals historically used in some regions as mounts or pack animals: elephants, goats, dogs, and reindeer.

As usual in each issue, Cardwell includes "New Material" about contributions to RPGaming suggested by other players. In the May issue, for example, Derek Rawlings

describes “Making class matter in your game”, and Johnn Four describes “Twelve villain archetypes” and “How to use meddling gods to make life interesting for your players”.

Each issue of **CAR-PGa Newsletter** contains a long listing of all upcoming RPGaming conventions and their sites. To receive **CAR-PGa Newsletter**, which is published monthly by Paul Cardwell for the Committee for the Advancement of Pole-Playing Games, send \$1.50 a copy or \$45 a year to him at 1127 Cedar, Bonham, TX 75418. (Costs are \$2.25 a copy or \$20 a year to addresses outside the United States. Paul also offers a subscription anywhere by e-mail for \$5 a year.)

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Possibly the religious bigotry displayed in these so-called “Religious Freedom Restoration Acts” is a reason for the results obtained by a recent survey by the Pew Research Center, and reported in the *New York Times* of 13 May 2015, under the heading “A Big Decline in Americans Identifying as Christians”. The most recent such survey has just concluded that “Seventy-one percent of American adults were Christians in 2014, the lowest estimate from any sizable survey to date...It is not confined to the coasts, the cities, the young or the other liberal and more secular groups where one might expect it.” People seem instead to be identifying themselves as Atheists, Agnostics, or just not caring about religious matters, categories characterized as “None”. Ex-Christians now number about 19% of the population.

Evangelicals and Roman Catholics are maintaining their numbers among Republican voters, and Republican presidential candidates are appealing to these groups, but as they decline as percentages of the general population, the Republican vote is also likely to also decline. This could have an effect on next year’s elections.

Sp,e conservatives object to this decline in religious observance. The cartoonist Scott Stantis sometimes protests this decline in his daily comic strip *Prickly City*, which runs week-days and Sundays in the *Washington Post* and takes a conservative view of the world. *Prickly City*’s principal characters are Carmen, a little girl who seems to express the artist’s own views, and Winslow, a “liberal” coyote whose appearance and actions do not at all resemble those of Wile E. of that ilk. When overtly liberal viewpoints are required by the story line, parodies of them are provided by Senator Kevin, a wild-eyed, buck-toothed rabbit who is apparently intended to combine the characters of Presidents Clinton and Obama, and by the senator’s wife Hunny Bunny, who is trying to replace him in the next election.

The small first panel of Stantis’s Easter strip displays Carmen at prayer, saying “...and let us remember the true meaning of today...” Then, in a panel which takes up most of the strip’s space, Winslow comes running through, shouting at the top of his lungs, “CHOCOLATE BUNNIES!!!” The last panel, also very small, has Carmen continuing “...maybe next year. Amen.”

Actually, Christmas presents and chocolate bunnies are a lot more believable than are

virgins having children and dead men coming back to life. However, most people seem to believe that anything they are taught before they were six years old is unquestionably true. Maybe this is what Carmen is getting at in her prayer.

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The next presidential election is *seventeen months* away, and yet candidates are already announcing their candidacies. This reminded me of former Vice President Henry Wallace, who announced his 1948 presidential candidacy in December 1947 and was soundly condemned in the media for such an early campaign.

It still seems likely to me that the 2016 Republican convention's nominee will be vigorously rejected by many Republicans, who will nominate another candidate at a well-named "rump convention". There is ample precedent for this. In 1912, the renomination of President Taft was opposed by the supporters of former President Theodore Roosevelt, who withdrew and nominated Roosevelt on a "Progressive" ticket. Naturally, this split the Republican vote so badly that the Democrats elected their first presidential candidate in twenty years. In 1948, two nominally Democratic candidates, including Henry Wallace, similarly rejected President Truman and ran against him, with no effect on Truman's eventual surprise win.

Although Jeb Bush will probably be nominated by the Republican National Convntion in 2016, he is so bitterly disliked by more conservative Republicans that they are likely to nominate one of their number as a rival candidate. Some of the likely rival conservative Republican candidates are Governor Scott Walker, a popular vote-getter in Wisconsin, former governor Mike Huckabee of Arkansas, a particular favorite of conservative evangelicals, and former Senator Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania. (Oops - pardon my mistake. "Santorum" is his name. "Sanitarium" is where he belongs.)

Some conservative Republicans are already preparing for such a party split. They have organized a "Council for National Policy" which will interview prospective presidential candidates in sessions closed to the press and to the general public. They clearly intend to settle on one of them, who will then be the candidate of most conservatives. In the likely event that Jeb Bush is the nominee of the 2016 Republican National Convention, the Council for National Policy is fully capable of putting their choice forward as a "third-party" candidate in the November 2016 election.

Already, before any such Republican split, Hillary Rodham Clinton is such a popular Democratic presidential candidate that polls give her a lead of more than 10% of the total vote over any Republican who runs against her. So the country may as well get used to four, and possibly eight, years of her as President.

A comparison between the qualities of the two parties' candidates can easily be made. Only one Democrat has ever been nominated on five presidential tickets, winning on four of them. Only one Republican has ever been nominated on five presidential tickets, winning on

four of them. The Democrat was Franklin D. Roosevelt. The Republican was Richard M. Nixon. This says it all.

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The tragic Amtrak derailment near Philadelphia on 12 May has raised a lot of questions about why a train went 106 miles per hour on a curve where the speed limit is only 50. Questions have also been raised about upkeep of the rail system's infrastructure, and the training of engineers, and also on whether the engineer is serious when he tells everyone that he does not remember what happened before and at the instant of impact. And it now appears that throwing missiles at passing trains is a popular poastime among local boys.

But another question has risen as far as I am concerned. It seems that the chief executive of Amtrak, who has been interviewed on television about some of these matters, is named Joseph Boardman. For all of the fact that Samuel Boardman and his cousin, with their wives, two sisters from a family named Betts, moved from Claydon, Oxfordshire to Ipswich, Massachusetts in 1638. I have not found very many Boardmans in this country. (I did meet one in Brooklyn, but he had just come over from England.) I do not know whether Joseph Boardman is a relative, and I have no way of finding out unless my daughter Deirdre can turn up information on a Boardman genealogical website she has located, but kinship does seem likely.

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Johár Tsárnayeff, the surviving one of the two brothers who set off a bomb at the finish line of the 2013 Boston Marathon, has just been sentenced to death. (I have transliterated his name from the Kirillic alphabet in such a way that Americans can pronounce it accurately.) Unfortunately, it will probably take considerable time to settle the appeals and get him executed, and we can only hope that in this time this proven killer does not kill anyone else.

Incredibly, attempts were made in court to prevent Tsarnayeff's execution. But his bomb killed three people, including a little boy, and wounded several others, some of whom lost a limb. Nor was any attempt made to follow my suggestion, that Tsarnayeff should be made a college president. That, after all, was what happened to Robert E. Lee, who killed a lot more Americans than the tsarnayeff brothers did.

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People who get all their news from words spoken on television or radio probably believe that many nations, movements, and individuals have very silly names. Chief among them must be Sodding Arabia, an absolute monarchy and religious dictatorship which therefore is regarded in Washington as America's most reliable ally. In boring old reality, "Sa'udi" is a three-syllable word, pronounced (approximately) "Sah-oo-dee", but nobody in the broadcasting industry seems to know this. Then, next door to Sodding Arabia, as if anyone wanted to be next door to Sodding Arabia, is Yemen. (Ye men? Ye gods!!!) Yemen's president is named Hottie, and he is being opposed by a group called the Hooties. (Hooties vs. Hottie? Really?)

Meanwhile, Sodding Arabia is in a sort of cold war with a nation called I Ran. This apparently has to do with two Muslim factions called Sunny and Shi'it. (No Shi'it?) Going further east, we arrive at a nation apparently called Alphabetagammastan, which sounds like a college fraternity on hashish. Its capital, where a lot of people like to explode things, is called Cobble. Then, in Europe, we are being told to care passionately about all the Ooks in Ook Rain, where there is a city apparently called Mar Yoodle. Further north, there is Russia and its troublesome president Putaine. (Parlez vous Français?)

GETTING CAUGHT UP

APA-Qover #573 (Blackman): Yes, Terry Pratchett will indeed be missed. By the way, the two cartoonists whose work is shown on the Qover gave him two different styles of beard.

Blancmange #493 (Blackman): I had known that Franklin Pierce had been president (1853-1857), and probably the drunkest president in our history, but hadn't known he was also a general, presumably in the Mexican-American War. (With that knowledge, I am surprised that we won that war.)

I am not surprised that "St." Brigid had been a Keltic goddess. In many peoples who were converted to Christianity, traditional figures from their previous religions were incorporated into their new beliefs. The names of the days of the week in most modern European languages incorporate the names of the Pagan gods once worshipped by those peoples. For example, "Mardi", French for Tuesday, is named for the Roman war-god Mars, and "Tuesday" was originally "Tiw's Day" for the war-god once worshipped by the English when they were still living in northwestern Germany. (When the decaying Roman Empire could no longer maintain its forces in Britannia, the English in Lower Germany saw their opportunity, and took it.)

I wonder whether Prince Charles had anything to do with Sir Terry Pratchett's knighthood. He is said to be the impetus behind Sir Arthur Clarke's knighthood, and he seems to be the royal family's contact with s-f and other elements of popular culture.

2199 And thanks for reminding us of Sir Terry's forthcoming last novel, *The Shepherd's Crown*. I will badger the nearest bookseller until it is published. And I shall also keep an eye open for Robert J. Sawyer's "Neanderthal Parallax" trilogy, which sounds like an interesting set of concepts. (Our type of humans extinct on a world populated by Neanderthals, one of whom somehow migrates to our world.) The titles are *Hominids*, *Humans*, and *Hybrids*.

The panic-stricken opposition to vaccinations has produced the obvious result - states are

passing laws requiring smallpox (and sometimes other) vaccinations for children to enter public schools. A rumor that vaccination produces autism is nonsense, and has been repudiated by the journal that once published this non-fact. (So far they have not yet rejected the idea that autism exists. I am convinced on the “evidence” I’ve heard that autism is a disease invented by psychologists who think that anyone whose personality doesn’t resemble theirs is sicksicksick.)

I agree that Elizabeth Warren, Martin O’Malley, or Bernard Sanders would be a better president than Hillary Clinton. However, Hillary Clinton would get votes from millions of people who would react to any of those others with the words “Who’s that?” And the important thing in 2016 is not “Put a Democrat in” but “Keep the Republicans out!” - of control of Congress as well as the presidency. For the reasons, just listen to what Republicans are saying. They can be quoted as wanting to ban same-sex marriages, abolish abortions whatever the reason, round up and deport twelve million undocumented immigrants, invade Iraq and Syria and maybe Ukraine, cut taxes for the super-rich, build a wall along the border with Mexico, allow some states to secede, and do something (they’re not sure what) about the 81 Communists who supposedly sit in Congress as Democrats. These are crazy people.

I’ve never seen, let alone printed, the words to “Ollie North, the Mute Marine”. Can anybody provide them?

I hadn’t seen the tally on Oscars awarded to the film *American Sniper*, but it got only one - for “Sound Editing”. Apparently someone in Hollywood said, “Well, it grossed so much that we had to do *something* for it.” And it seems the man who shot and killed Chris Kyle, the real-life “American Sniper”, was found guilty. *Consummatum est.*

I do *not* regard the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX) as representing *all* Catholics, just as I do not regard Jihadists as representing all Muslims, or the Ku Klux Klan as representing all Protestants. They are just another group of reactionaries who reject the adaptation of others to changes in our reality. The Catholic Church has the ritual of excommunication to deal with such people - something the few remaining moderates in the Republican Party might consider adopting in a secular version. Unless they themselves get “excommunicated” first.

I do not capitalize the words “god” and “bible”, but do capitalize the names of specific deities and scriptures.

I generally agree with your negative assessment of Andrew Jackson as a general, a politician, and a president.

Thanks for the information about the German chemist Alfred Einhorn. None of my reference books even mentioned him. I should have consulted the Wikipedia connection of Deirdre’s pocket computer, which I discovered to have quite unexpected, and detailed, information on my cousin Simeon Bushnell’s activities with the “Underground Railroad”, and on an obscure activist in the Bolshevik Revolution named Aleksandra Kollontai.

E-COMMENTS (Nofi): According to Mark Blackman, Fred Lerner is one of the people

who receives **APA-Q** (by e-mail). This is why a "(Q)" is opposite his name in the "**Dagon** Directory".

I had not known that the disease Ebola was named for a river. So the term is entitled to the capital letter - like West Nile virus.

SerCon (Phillips): Not all the authorities cited by Lovecraft in his fictional account of the history and translations of the *Necronomicon* were themselves fictitious. I don't know about Theodorus Philetas or Olaus Wormius, but John Dee was a subject of Queen Elizabeth I, and once cast her horoscope. He lived at a time when mysticism and science had not yet been separated from each other, and he wrote in both fields. If the *Necronomicon* had existed, he would have been the ideal translator.

letter (me): My cell-phone number was misprinted. It is actually 718-735-4901.

APA-Qover #574 (Blackman): Yes, it is about time to recognize that "The Only Confederate Flag That Mattered" was the white flag of surrender. The Rebels of 1861-65 were the most complete losers in American history, and their descendants' attempt to proclaim them as a valiant but ill-fated "lost cause", doomed by the fates rather than by the U. S. government and its supporters, is merely laughable.

Blancmange #494 (Blackman): My views on those phony "religious freedom" claims that are really expressions of prejudice may be found on pp. 2-4, above.

I don't quite see why one faction in the complaints about who gets s-f awards is called the "Sad Puppies" (SPs). But then, I don't get the point of the attacks on the "SPs".

"Which might explain NYUSFS" - Does NYUSFS still meet every Thursday afternoon in Washington Square Park, weather permitting? If not, what needs to be explained about them?

I am careful about printing out **Dagon**. I keep each issue set up in my computer until Deirdre duplicates some 60 or 65 copies of it in Frederick, which I then address and mail out. Only then do I remove the copy on my computer. And of course I keep a file of printed copies of back issues. However, at one time Karina kept a lot of the earlier copies set up on her computer, and when my things were moved from Somerford Place to Montevue a lot of my printed copies got lost. I have asked Karina to print out copies of the missing issues from her computer.

As for Fred Lerner's brief comment, there once was a card for the *Necronomicon* in the card file of the Columbia University library. However, he didn't put it there. I did.

SerCon (Phillips): Of course Mary Shelley had a "proto-Feminist attitude". Her mother Mary Woollstonecraft is quite properly regarded as a Feminist, perhaps as the leading Feminist of the 18th century. She died when her daughter was 11, and from there Mary was probably brought up by her father, a man named Godwin who was completely supportive of her mother's Feminist convictions. At the time she wrote *Frankenstein* in 1816, Mary Shelley was living

with, but not yet married to, Percy Bysshe Shelley. She was living with him, Lord Byron, one of Byron's mistresses, and a few other friends in Switzerland, out of the reach of any reaction their life styles would have caused in England. Shelley had a wife living back in England, but in 1816 she killed herself, leaving her widower free to marry Mary. *Frankenstein* was first published in 1818.

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John Boardman
12716 Ginger Wood Lane
Clarksburg, MD 20871