

# DAGON

#680, APA-Q #591

November 2016

## WHY THE OCTOBER DAGON WAS LATER THAN YOU EXPECTED

On 20 September my daughter Deirdre duplicated, collated, and stapled **Dagon** #679, the October 2016 issue, destined for **APA-Q** #590. That evening I set out to send to Mark Blackman the 15 copies that he would put into that **APA-Q**, and to address and mail the copies that would be mailed individually to readers who do not belong to **APA-Q**. However, I soon discovered that Deirdre had not included pp. 7-8 when she collated the pages of **Dagon** #679. Since she would head to Paris the next day, nothing could be done about this at the time. I had to send Mark a quick letter explaining the situation, and hoping that he could delay mailing out the October **APA-Q** until I could mail him correctly collated copies. By now **APA-Q** members will know whether he could do that, or whether they are seeing that issue of **Dagon** for the first time along with **Dagon** #680 and the rest of the November **APA-Q**.

After Deirdre returned on 29 September, her next day of work was Tuesday 4 October. She was then able to duplicate, collate, and staple the corrected **Dagon** #679, and I could get it mailed out. Matters were further complicated when, after Deirdre left, the ink cartridge died in my Lexmark printer, and I had to send Deirdre for another when she returned. Also, she is the only person here who knows how to install it. This also meant that I could not write letters for over a week, unless I wanted to subject correspondents to my handwriting.

## THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY

This is **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. My land-line telephone has been put back on line; its number is still (301) 515-4271. **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 Street, Brooklyn, NY 11229. The copy count for **APA-Q** is 15 print copies.

I Inflammation **Dagon** also goes to others who have indicated an interest in its subject matter. Subscriptions are 10 issues for \$10 in the United States, and for \$25 elsewhere.

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#2215

Deirdre returned home on the evening of Thursday 29 September 2016,

reporting that she had completed her half-marathon in Paris, and incidentally settling my concern about a TV news item I had heard earlier that day. The report announced, among other upcoming news items, that they would have news about tourists in some unnamed country who had to be rescued from a volcanic eruption. Then the news yielded unto a long series of commercials, and I never heard the promised report about the volcano. This concerned me because I knew that on that day, she would have a stopover on Iceland on the way back, to see some of that island's remarkable scenery - and Iceland is a section of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge that is accidentally above sea level, and has numerous volcanoes. In fact one of them, Hekla, has added a minor swear word to the English language. Like many volcanoes, it was believed to be an entrance to Hell, and anyone ordered to go in that direction would be told in Scotland, "Gae tae John Hackleburnie's hoose!" This was eventually shortened to "Heck!", probably to avoid any Christian worries about openly invoking the name of the place. And as "Heck" it remains in our language, in what has been called "wooden swearing".

As my daughter told me when she got home, there had not been a volcano alarm in Iceland, and I never did find out where tourists were rescued from a volcanic eruption, though I suspect it may have been in Mexico.

Deirdre told me about her experiences sight-seeing in France, but a real enthusiasm rang in her voice when she described her day in Iceland. The people are very open and friendly, and English is quite widely spoken. (This is common in several small countries, where a much more widely spoken foreign language is often needed. I have found that to be also the case in the Netherlands.) In the unlikely event that I were ever to travel to Iceland, I would be sure to visit Bergþórrshvoll, the site of the climax of the *Brenna Njal Saga*, an epic which in my opinion is greater than the *Iliad* and the equal of the *Odyssey*. (It describes events that took place in the eleventh century and was written in the twelfth, but so little has the language changed that it can still be easily read by modern Icelanders. The characterizations are especially vivid.)

Another sight which impressed Deirdre greatly was one of the most brilliant auroral displays that has ever been seen. (There was a brief article about its Icelandic effects in the *New York Times* of 20 September 2016.) The aurora borealis ("northern lights") are due to the "solar wind", a stream of highly energetic and mostly charged subatomic particles continually emitted outward at high speed by the Sun. They are attracted towards the Earth's magnetic poles, and when they collide with the molecules of the Earth's upper atmosphere they give off much of their energy as light, most of it in the visible spectrum. The Earth's north magnetic pole is located on the northern coast of Canada, so the western hemisphere sees the most brilliant northern auroras. (There is also an aurora australis, "southern lights", seen in Antarctica.) And the solar wind is thickest near the maxima in the Sun's 11.3-year sunspot cycle. We are now in a period of maximum sunspot activity, which is why the solar wind is

producing so much auroral activity. While Deirdre was there, the Icelandic government turned off street lights in Reykjavik, the capital, for a few nights until midnight so residents could get a better view of the aurora.

While Iceland became Christian in the eleventh century by order (or else!) of the King of Norway, a few remnants of Scandinavian Paganism still seem to remain in the country. Deirdre told me that, while she was there, road workers in the north were plagued with storms, heavy rainfall, mudslides, and a flooding river. This, they claimed, was due to the elves, whose homes were being disturbed by the road work. Belief in the elves was shown by a recent survey to be held by 54% of Iceland's people. The Icelandic author Alma Sigmundsdottir, has written *The Little Book of the Hidden People*. "They are thought to be regal and human-like... and a good way to think of them, Ms. Sigmundsdottir said, is as 'the Icelanders' version of karma.'" Furthermore, she claims, "Modern scholars believe that this was one way the Icelanders tried to control their destinies in a land and climate that was incredibly harsh and unforgiving." (*New York Times*, 28 September 2016).

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The Republican elephant and the Democratic donkey were created in the late 19th century by the New York newspaper cartoonist Thomas Nast. He probably chose those animals because, to him, they represented the relative size and dignity of the two parties. Nast also created anti-Catholic cartoons that treated Catholics, particularly new immigrants, as harshly as Donald (T)Rump and his supporters are presently caricaturing Muslims. Apparently, in bigotry, nothing ever changes except, occasionally, the targets.

No other parties have received animal symbols, except, very briefly, the bull moose that represented Theodore Roosevelt's third-party Progressive movement in 1912. But now we have another political animal symbol on our hands. He is a uniformed frog named Pepe (pronounced "Pay-pay"), and he represents Donald (T)Rump's fanatical faction, which now owns the Republican Party.

The rest of us were told about Pepe by Rachel Maddow on her MSNBC program on 16 September 2016. Pepe could probably best be described as a tough-looking Nazi frog, if you look at some of the emblems on his uniform. He is represented this way in a crowded picture which shows him with (T)Rump and many of (T)Rump's supporters, including Mike Pence, Ben Carson, Chris Christie, and Rudy Giuliani. According to Maddow, who is the most perceptive and diligent reporter on cable television, he is particularly favored by (T)Rump's most loyal supporters like David Duke of the Ku Klux Klan, and other white supremacists in Alt-Right, Aryan Nations and such organizations. Meanwhile, the Anti-Defamation League of the Jewish fraternal organization B'nai B'rith has denounced Pepe as a symbol of anti-Semitism.

Unless every publicized poll result is a forgery, as (T)Rump hints, Pepe will become an order of frog's legs after Election Day. But, even if (T)Rump abandons his mendacious poli-

tical career, his more fanatical supporter might very well stick with Pepe.

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In 1945, Adolf Hitler disappeared. In 1945, Donald (T)Rump appeared.  
Do you believe in reincarnation?

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There was really no need to listen to the debates between the two major-party presidential candidates. The salient points were all delivered to us in that week's news coverage. Each of Donald (T)Rump's lies were reported to us in detail. I read them (with their refutations) in a full-page report in the *New York Times* of 25 September 2016, and two days later in two shorter reports in the *Washington Post*. It is clear that (T)Rump believes that the truth is malleable, and that his lies could be believed as the truth if he repeats them often enough. (When Clinton pointed some of them out during the debate, he interrupted her to protest *eighteen times* according to ABC-TV news. He is not only a liar, but also has deplorable manners.) And he refers to media that point out and correct his lies as "biased" against his candidacy. This is by no means the first campaign in which the Republican Party claims "media bias"; Trump is not a political maverick, but a faithful follower of his party's line.

Polls taken after the first debate show that the voting public, even including (T)Rump voters, is aware of these facts. A poll published in *Newsweek* asked potential (T)Rump voters whether they would accept the results if their candidate lost the election. Only 21% of potential (T)Rump voters said that they would just accept a loss by their candidate. This is certainly lower than the percentage of the 1860 voters who would have said that they would simply accept it if their pro-slavery candidate, John Breckinridge, were defeated by Abraham Lincoln. And we all know how *that* came out.

But who *are* today's (T)Rump voters? Surveys published in the media tend to claim that they are mostly older white males without college educations. They have blue-collar jobs (if any at all), and many of them are poverty-stricken residents of small towns or rural areas. The American dialect of English has long described people like this as "hillbillies". Years ago, there was even a comic song which proclaimed that "Hillbillies are 'Mountain Williams' now..."

A local election may give you a hint on election night as to what will happen in the next Congress, and how Donald (T)Rump's disastrous candidacy will affect "down-ballot" elections for seats in Congress. Virginia's tenth congressional district is presently represented by a Republican named Barbara Comstock. This suburban district in northern Virginia reports its results early, and Comstock is being challenged by LuAnn Bennett, whose television commercials point out that Comstock is trying to reverse the Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade*, opposes the legalization of abortion, and has voted to allow federal contractors to fire gay employees. If, while listening to the early returns on election night, you hear that Comstock

has been defeated by Bennett, you may be justified in concluding that Democrats could win control of the House of Representatives

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Ask most people when is Election Day this year, and they will probably answer "Tuesday 8 November". (Donald (T)Rump told an audience that Election Day will be 28 November, which is actually the Monday after Thanksgiving. I actually heard him say this on a televised report of his speech; it remains to be seen how many (T)Rump supporters will believe it and fail to vote on the 8th.) But the real Election Day will be Saturday 17 December or maybe Monday 19 December. (I have heard both dates on different TV news reports.) On that day the 538 electors chosen by the voters on 8 November will meet in their state capitals and vote for - hopefully - the candidate for whom they pledged to vote when they were elected. In a few presidential election years, a majority of electors have *not* voted for the candidate whose name was checked on the ballots by a majority of ordinary voters. That happened last in 2000, and you may remember the turmoil which that fact created in the courts. It could happen again this year, because the distribution of voters and the drawing of district lines in 2014 meant that while more Americans voted then for Democratic than for Republican candidates for the House of Representatives, more Republicans than Democrats won election to that house of Congress.

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The Jenny Baker mystery deepens. During a break in major league baseball's All-Star Game in July, the San Diego Padres, who were hosting the game, announced that they had signed the major leagues' first female player, a pitcher named Jenny Baker. (I have yet to see her name in print, so I don't know whether it is actually spelled "Jennie".) A few weeks later, the Padres announced that she would be starting her first game for them. I was unable to find a channel that was broadcasting the game, and I later read that the Padres had won it, though I don't know whether she was the winning pitcher. Then - silence. She was never announced as a starting pitcher again, though it would have been rare for a starting pitcher to be relegated to the bullpen after only one failing start.

Then, in the *New York Times* of 24 September 2016, with only a week to go in the regular season, there was an article by Gretchen Reynolds, headed "A Script for Women Awaiting The Majors". She cited several cases where women were playing on formerly all-male teams, usually as pitchers, on college teams or minor-league or independent professional teams. There is even a new Fox TV drama called *Pitch*, "about the first female pitcher in Major League Baseball". The show premiered on 29 September 2016. But Reynolds's report does not mention Baker or the Padres. Instead, she asserts that "(T)o date no female pitcher outside of scripted television has signed an M. L. B. contract."

Pitcher would be the best position for a female baseball player. She would not have to cover vast stretches of outfield to chase down a fly ball, or get involved in collisions with a

base runner. But a pitcher must sometimes also be a fifth infielder, and I have seen pitchers making outs or assists in close and sometimes violent collisions at bases. Moreover, in the National League, to which the Padres belong, pitchers take their turns at bat, which could involve hitting a ball as far as most male players can, or encountering violence as a base-runner.

No matter what happens to Jenny Baker, eventually there will be a first female player in major league baseball. As more women get into the game, there will be other firsts - the first woman to pitch a no-hitter, the first woman to assist in a double play, the first woman to hit a home run. But don't expect any of them to be the first woman to be thrown out of a game by an umpire. That has already happened. I don't recall when or where it happened, but it resulted from a contested decision in a very close play in a major league game. The whole umpiring staff had to confer about the matter, and they eventually came to a decision that went against the home team. Most of the spectators booed the umpires vigorously, but they're used to that. But then the stadium organist sat down at her keyboard and played "Three Blind Mice". That was too much for the umpires, and they ejected her from the stadium.

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By the time you read this, the baseball play-offs will have concluded with the World Series. That used to be a series of games between the champions of the National League and the American League, won by the first team to win four games from the other. But that was in the days when there were only eight teams in each league, and in 1962 the leagues began expanding. There are now fifteen teams in each league, divided into three regional divisions of five teams each, designated the Eastern, Central, and Western Divisions. So the divisional champions play one another, with the first team in each Divisional Series meeting in a League Series. Only then do the champions of each league meet in the World Series.

This creates another problem, since they cannot play a League Series among *three* divisional champions. (This was tried once under quite different circumstances, of which more later.) So in each league, *two* Divisional Series are played among the three divisional champions and one "wild card" team, chosen from the two teams whose records are the next best among the other teams in each league. So two "wild card" teams in each league play a single game with each other, and the winner of that game becomes the fourth team in the two Divisional Series, whose winners then play in the League Series. A Divisional Series is won by the first team to win three games, and a League Series, like the subsequent World Series, is won by the first team to win four games from the other.

Once before, a somewhat different attempt was made to get one winner from a game involving three teams. This happened during World War II, and the game did not figure in the official standings, but was a benefit designed to supply money to military hospitals and other charitable purposes. At that time there were three major league baseball teams in New York

City - the New York Giants (now the San Francisco Giants) and the Brooklyn Dodgers (now the Los Angeles Dodgers) in the National League, and the New York Yankees in the American League. They worked out an ingenious way of having three teams play one another in a single game, with a distinct score for each team. Let us say that in the top of the first inning, the Yankees were at bat, and the Dodgers were in the field. Then, for the next half-inning, the Dodgers would be at bat, the Giants would be in the field, and the Yankees would be resting in their dugout. (This would require three dugouts in the stadium, but I suppose that was managed somehow.) Then, at the beginning of the second inning, the Giants would be at bat, the Yankees in the field, and the Dodgers resting. The next half-inning would have the same arrangement as at the beginning of the first inning. After a nine-inning game each team would have spent six half-innings at bat, six in the field, and six not playing. Each team would have scored all the runs they made in their six half-innings at bat, and each would have its own score. To the best of my knowledge, this arrangement was never repeated after that one charity game.

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Have any fantasy or science fiction authors ever won the Nobel Prize for Literature?

Well, s-f fans have our own awards, the Hugos, named for Hugo Gernsback, founder about ninety years ago of the first science-fiction magazine. (Fans prefer the initials "s-f" to the mundane media's artificial term "Sci-Fi".) But have any authors from our favorite field ascended to the heights of a Nobel Prize?

That depends on how you define the terms. With a broad enough definition, it might be possible to call Rudyard Kipling {1907} or Selma Lagerlöf {1909} or Anatole France {1921} the authors of s-f or fantasy in a few of their works. (The years of their Nobel Prizes are given in brackets {like this}.) But Kipling's sole s-f work, as far as I know, was a quite reasonable extension of the technology of his day, and of the legal changes it caused. Lagerlöf's *The Adventures of Nils Holgersson* told of a Swedish boy who flew the length of his country on the back of a wild goose, but as a way of instructing young Swedes in the geography of their country. And in France's *Penguin Island* a near-sighted missionary baptizes a flock of penguins that were then turned into humans by divine intervention to rescue that missionary's reputation. This book was the author's way of instructing the French in his opinions about the history of their country. However, neither Jules Verne nor H. G. Wells, two of the founding fathers of science fiction, ever received Nobel Prizes.

But in the *Washington Post* of 7 October 2016, Michael Dirda raised the possibility that Ursula K. Le Guin might win the Nobel Prize in literature. His article began with her *The Left Hand of Darkness*, which the *Post* had praised highly on its publication in 1969. He then goes on to recommend her *The Complete Orsinia*, a collection of her works set in the imaginary central European nation Orsinia. (Orsinia is probably intended to be a version of Hungary.)

Dirda goes on to give brief sketches of other Le Guin works of fiction and literary criticism. He makes a good case for awarding her a Nobel Prize. And the relevant Scandinavian committee ought to get to it quite soon, because she is 87, and Nobel Prizes are awarded only to living recipients.

However, the 2016 Nobel Prize for Literature was won by Bob Dylan, for the poetry of the lyrics of his many songs. (He is 75, so the prize committee may have taken into account that he was getting on in years.) Possibly there may be some people who do not think that song lyrics qualify as literature, but many s-f fans are also folk music fans, and most of them will certainly concur.

And s-f fans recently received ratings from an unexpected source - President Obama. (ABC-TV News, 13 October 2016) He rated his three most favorite s-f films as:

1. *2001, a Space Odyssey*
2. *Blade Runner*
3. *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*

In fourth and fifth places respectively he placed the *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* series.

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The September issue of **CAR-PG Newsletter**, the monthly publication of the Committee for the Advancement of Role-Playing Games (CAR-PGa), arrived on schedule. The newsletter is now edited and published by David Millians, Paideia School, 1509 Ponce de Leon Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30307. A report from CAR-PGa's chair, M. Alan Thomas II, gives the results of votes among CAR-PGa members. One vote recommended donating CAR-PGa's archive to an institution that will care for it. Thomas also reports on membership dissatisfaction over his actions as chair. There is also a report by Millians on Gen Con 2016, and a long and detailed listing of upcoming gaming conventions, both here and in Europe. Several readers have sent in reports on other material of interest. Subscriptions are \$15 a year (\$20 overseas), or \$.50 a copy (\$2.25 overseas), or \$5 anywhere by e-mail. Millians's e-mail address is <millians.david@paideiaschool.org>. CAR-PGa's e-mail address is <car-pga.org>.

## GETTING CAUGHT UP

**APA-Q #590** (October 2016): This Distribution arrived here on 13 October. The delay was partly due to me, for reasons explained on p. 1.

**APA-Qover #590** (Blackman): At this year's Lunacon I was informed that David Kyle, who also attended, was the oldest fan there at 97, and I was second oldest. It now appears that if Deirdre decides to drive a carload of fans to the 2017 Lunacon, I may be the senior fan there.

Included with this **APA-Q** was a card announcing the 8th Annual H. P. Lovecraft Festival on 13-30 October at the Kraine Theater, 85 East 4th Street in Manhattan. On Thursdays



through Sundays of each of the festival's three weeks, at 8 PM except for Sundays at 3 PM, two or more of these ever-memorable Lovecraft creations from Radio Theatre will be presented: "The Call of Cthulhu", "The Rats in the Walls", "The Horror in the Museum", "The Unnamable", "The Music of Erich Zann" "The Lurking Fear", "The Beast in the Cave". and "The Cats of Ulthar".

(Yes, I know that Lovecraft's racism was notorious, but he expressed it mainly in the amateur press about 100 years ago, and it seldom appeared in his fiction. I consider him the greatest horror author who ever wrote, and that is why I gave this fanzine the name of his first published story.)

**Blancmange #510 (Blackman):** Concerning ass trolgy (which is the spelling I prefer), I have found that a useful rejoinder to ass trolgy fans is to say, "Well, we have one thing in common. I am also an Atheist." When the ass trolgy fan replies that he or she is a True Believer, I reply, "Ask a clergyman of your faith about it." All the Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) reject ass trolgy as contrary to, and opposed to, their own beliefs. (One Christian reply is, "I was born under the sign of - the Cross!") As I mentioned several issues ago, I have composed a cycle of twelve limericks, one rhyming each sign of the Zodiac, and poking fun at the whole concept of ass trolgy. As for the spelling "ass trolgy", that is not my own, but comes from the ancient Greek comedic playwright Aristophanes. In his *The Clouds*, a man suspects that his son is learning nonsense in the academy of Socrates. So he goes there to inquire of the faculty. His guide points out a man who is peering into a deep hole in the ground. When he asks what this student is doing, he is told that he is studying the mysteries of the Earth. "And why is his ass pointing at the sky?" the visitor inquires. He is told, in a permissible translation, "His ass is studying ass trolgy on its own account."

The reference to a "Trump sandwich" was probably received well. ("White bread, full of baloney, with Russian dressing and a small pickle and white American cheese, served by a Mexican or Muslim".)

I've read the comic book *Asterix the Legionary* but had never even heard of *Asterix and Obelix All at Sea*. And there are no French-language book shops nearby where I can buy a copy. There was an earlier book, *The Big Crossing*, in which they go to sea, but they do it for the Druid Panoramix ("Getafix" in the English translation). He needs fish for the magic potion, but cannot get any because the oxcart drivers are on strike against the high price of hay. (Remember the gasoline shortage due to a strike about the fuel's high price?) So Asterix and Obelix borrow a boat and go out to get some fish. They run into a storm, then encounter pirates whom they fight off, and then are hit by another storm. At last they are washed ashore. Obelix rejoices to get home again, but Asterix says that it doesn't look like Gaul. While they are discussing the point, a turkey walks out of the underbrush. Any American will recognize where they have landed.

**Dagon #679 (me):** After almost every presidential election, a feeble attempt is made to persuade electors to break their commitment and vote instead for someone else. These have so far had little effect, but we may see a few of them obey such exercises in futility when the electors chosen in November meet in their state capitals to elect the president. However, I do not expect such appeals to the electors to change very many votes. If any states are carried by Gary Johnson (Libertarian) or Jill Stein (Green) I will be very much surprised.

The report about France's changes in internal boundaries (*New York Times*, 8 September 2016) does not call these subdivisions "departments" or "provinces" but "regions". I have no idea what this change in terminology means.

when I commented on Mark Blackman's explanation that the self-styled "Satanists" were actually Atheists poking fun at Christian attempts to put worship services into publicly financed institutions such as schools, I overlooked the likelihood that Christians might respond by claiming that Atheists are really Satanists. But some Christians go so far as to claim that Galileo was going against scripture when he claimed that the Earth goes around the Sun, and that Pope Urban VIII was right in condemning him for this claim. They're the "Society of St. Pius X" (SSPX), and they feel that recent popes were wrong in apologizing for Pope Urban's action. In return, the papacy claims that the SSPX are not Catholics in good standing. I would guess that the SSPX will eventually elect a pope of their very own, and the two popes will then exchange excommunications for Christmas.

Other comments on APA-Q #590 will have to be postponed to the next Distribution.

**Dagon #680 (APA-Q #591)**  
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 interest to you on page \_\_\_\_.