

DAGON

#692, APA-Q #603

November 2017

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 number is (301) 515-4271. Deirdre has just got me a new cell-phone; its number, like that of its predecessor, 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 L. Blackman, Apt. 4A, 1745 E. 18th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11229. His telephone number is (718) 336-3255, and his internet address is <marklblackman@juno.com>. The copy count for APA-Q is 15 print copies.

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. I also trade with other amateur publications.

#2227

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Regular readers may recall that the “**Dagon** Directory” was last published in the January 2017 issue of **Dagon**. It is my intention to publish the annual directory of **Dagon** recipients in each subsequent January issue, which means that I will be assembling the next directory in the latter half of December 2017. Anyone whose address at that time was not published in the January 2017 **Dagon** should get in touch with me and give me his or her correct address for 2018. This is particularly important for any reader whose copy of **Dagon** did not arrive at the correct address at any time in 2017, including those whose copies I have already reported as coming back to me in the mail.

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As anyone who has seen a copy of **Dagon** #691 (October 2017) would know, there were a few problems involved in its production. To start with, I originally made the margins too narrow, which meant that letters or parts of letters were cut off at the beginnings or ends of lines. Deirdre noticed this, and printed the pages of that issue over again, using a font size of 13½ rather than 14. The size difference between those two font sizes was practically indistinguishable, but it was enough to fit all of each line between the margins. However, it also meant that some words that had been hyphenated in order to fit between the margins did not now have to be hyphenated, but the hyphens were accidentally not removed. The new printing also left a few smudges on page 1.

If anyone cares, this issue like its predecessors is printed with a size 14 font, which I find convenient. It fits my eyes more easily than would a smaller size.

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In May I found in the *New York Times* an allegation of “Communist” influence in a New York City public high school, and referred to it briefly on p. 8 of **Dagon # 687** (June 2017). The accused principal’s name is Jill Blomberg, and the first report about those ridiculous (and, incidentally, anonymous) accusations against her appeared in the *Times* of 5 May 2017, though they had been going on since January. However, people are not so gullible about sinister Communistic conspiracies as they were a generation ago. The “conspiracy” allegedly involved her objections to “policies that Ms. Blomberg says perpetuate a segregated and unequal system and that penalizes black and Latino students”. This clearly set off a belief still held by a few people, that anything meant to end racial segregation, or different treatment for people on the basis of race, must be “Communitic” in origin. I was reminded of the situation in Kentucky several years earlier, when a white couple sold their home to a black couple, and local politicians immediately raised the cry that Communism must somehow be involved in this real estate transaction.

After several months of “investigation”, Ms. Blomberg was cleared of “Communist organizing” and several other silly charges. (Kate Taylor, *New York Times*, 1 September 2017) So she remains the principal of Park Slope Collegiate, a combined middle and high school in a comfortable middle-class Brooklyn neighborhood where Perdita and I had lived for six years before buying a house in nearby Flatbush.

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Another mass shooting by a gun enthusiast with a huge arsenal of automatic weapons took place on the evening of Sunday 1 October 2017 when a man named Stephen Paddock opened fire from a room on the 32nd floor of a hotel in Las Vegas on a huge crowd attending a country music festival. He murdered 58 people, and wounded over 500, before police and numerous concerned civilians located him as he took his own life. News media at first identified this massacre as “the largest mass shooting in American history” before someone apparently called attention to a somewhat larger mass shooting that began in 1861, and killed many *thousands* of Americans before it was brought to an end four years later. Then this new one was called “the largest mass shooting in *modern* American history”. Nobody was ever brought to trial for either massacre.

Once the blood was mopped up, people started asking “Why?” As of present writing, this question has not yet received a satisfactory answer. Nor did the killer’s motives, although it has been discovered that he was a devotee of casino gambling, which had allegedly made him very wealthy. If this sounds as odd to you as it does to me, you are probably also aware that heavy patronage of casinos by presumably compulsive gamblers makes people poor, not rich. This has not been explained so far, but we are still waiting.

(CAUTION: Bad pun warning! If a man named Paddock is addicted to gambling, why wouldn’t he bet on horses rather than go to casinos?)

There is currently speculation on whether American laws will be altered to keep high-

powered automatic or semi-automatic weapons out of the hands of people whose motivation or sanity is dubious at best. This has been attempted before, though never following as many casualties as the Las Vegas Massacre. The National Rifle Association (NRA), or rather the firearms manufacturers who dictate its legislative agenda, are currently engaged in legislative efforts to allow people with mental health problems to purchase, or build, their own, high-powered automatic firearms. Therefore we can confidently predict that no legislative effort will occur to make it impossible for the next Stephen Paddock to arm himself as the last one did.

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The debate about gun laws centers on Amendment II of the Constitution. Its *full* text, which is often neglected in such discussions, is:

A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms shall not be infringed.

The italicized words are emphasized because they are so often neglected by gunnies in defending this law. Not many laws include the reasons why they were enacted, and so this clause is particularly important in any debate over gun laws. So this amendment applies *only* to members of the National Guard, as we now call the militia. Since police agencies seem to be “necessary to the security of a free state”, they might also be reasonably described as a militia, though it is possible to reject this notion if it upsets gunnies enough. So, in the language of the Constitution itself, Amendment II applies *only* to the weapons of the National Guard and maybe the police.

Obviously the perpetrators of the increasing number of mass killings by firearms are not going to agree to these conclusions, which can legitimately be drawn from the *full* text of the Second Amendment. It may, however, be useful, or at least satisfying, to display your attitude to gunnies in the frequent discussions which they are willing to devote to their cause of unrestricted gun ownership and use. In such discussions, address them as “gunnie” or “gunnie boy”. (You are highly unlikely to encounter any women in their number.) Ask them where and when they plan to carry out their next massacre, and who will be the victims. If they refuse to answer you, insist on a reply until they are unnerved, which can easily be accomplished. Keep contempt in your voice so they have no doubts about what you think of them and their cause.

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At about the middle of each November, the next year’s *World Almanac* traditionally goes on sale. This is the most useful reference book I own, and I consult it so often that the current edition rests on the table next to my recliner chair. I strongly recommend that you keep an eye open for the 2018 edition (the paperback edition should be sufficient for your needs) and buy it as soon as it is available. The term “World” refers not to its general coverage and utility, but to the fact that, decades ago, it was published by a now long-defunct newspaper, the *New York World*.

This year I would like to buy another 2018 almanac. It is a British publication, *Whitaker's Almanack*. I know of no shop in the Washington area that stocks British books. (There used to be one in New York City, on the east side of Manhattan, but apparently there was not enough demand for its stock to make it profitable, and it closed many years ago. I will inquire locally, but if it is unobtainable here, I will have to arrange to send to an interested British reader of **Dagon** a copy of the *World Almanac* in exchange for a copy of *Whitaker's*. I would prefer the hard-cover edition of *Whitaker's*, since it contains more material than does its paperback edition. The paperback edition of the *World Almanac*, by contrast, contains the same material as its hard-cover edition.

The weeks during which the next year's *World Almanac* is edited and printed are often filled with so many events of great importance that its editors can easily be excused for missing any deadlines for publication. I refer, of course, to general elections, the World Series, and the award of the current year's Nobel prizes. Time was, that the professional baseball play-offs were just one series of at most seven games, and unless some scandal like the "Black Sox" bribery case of 1919 intervenes, they usually go smoothly. But that was in the days when there were only sixteen major league baseball (MLB) teams, none of them south of Washington or west of St. Louis. Now there are thirty MLB teams in two leagues with a total of six divisions, and *three* successive post-season series in which the eventual World Champion must win at least eleven games, and might also lose as many as eight.

As for elections, this year is a relaxation after last year's shouting contest, in which we were expected to accept that the candidate who got the *second* largest number of votes is the winner. This year, there are state elections only in Virginia and New Jersey, and also city elections in New York City. In the New York City and New Jersey elections the polls give sizable majorities to the Democrats, and Virginia is the only place where the outcome is in doubt, as we are now in a process whereby Virginia is shifting from a normally Republican state (ever since the Democrats became the party of civil rights) to a state where Democrats win small but respectable majorities. There have been hotly advertised contests not only for Governor but also for Lieutenant Governor and Attorney General. All three offices are now held by Democrats, and Democrats are winning majorities of between 5% and 10% in polls for these offices. But the Legislature still has Republican majorities, and no columnist is predicting that these, though diminished, will not remain. Election Day this year is Tuesday 7 November. And, while we're on the topic, Daylight Saving Time ends on Sunday 5 November, so set your clocks back one hour on that date.

The Republicans are not going to win elections for state-wide offices with some of the policies their Virginia candidates are endorsing. Ed Gillespie, the Republican candidate for governor, endorses the abolition of abortion, a highly unpopular policy, and also proposes giving public money to private schools. His Democratic opponent, Lieutenant Governor Ralph Northam, wants more money for *public* schools, a policy which never cost any candidate an election. (But

how to get that money is quite another matter.) And the Republican candidate for Attorney General, John Adams (yes, that's his real name), runs television ads showing him standing next to the second president of the United States!

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The *Washington Post* of 14 October 2017 has a long article about the comic strip character Wonder Woman. But on the back of that page is an article about a real "wonder woman", a Dutch woman named Margarethe Zelle (1876-1917) who is far better known as (allegedly) a German spy named (by herself) "Mata Hari", during World War I.

An exhibit on her career recently opened in the Museum of Friesland in Leeuwarden, the Dutch town where she was born. We learn that at the age of 18 she left an unhappy home life to marry an officer in the Dutch colonial army, Rudolph MacLeod. In the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) where he was posted, she learned about and took up native dances, and first used the name by which she later became known: "Mata Hari".

(In case you are curious about why a Dutch officer had the Scottish name "MacLeod", a few centuries earlier the Netherlands had become the first nation to guarantee freedom of religion. This policy attracted immigrants from many countries, including one of my own ancestors, an English Puritan named Joseph Waldron. Two centuries later, some of Waldron's Anglo-Dutch descendants made sure that this guarantee would also be in the American Constitution.)

Eventually, Mata Hari divorced her husband, leaving their daughter with him, and in 1903 she moved to Paris, where she supported herself as an exotic dancer, later saying "I thought all women who ran away from their husbands went there."

During wars, hot or "cold", military people are not really fussy about who is or who is not a spy. Mata Hari admitted taking money from the Germans during World War I, and French counter-espionage agents were not really particular about her reasons. The British also thought she might have been retailing military secrets to the Germans. Early in 1917, the French intelligence agent Georges Ledoux interrogated her and was convinced from her replies that she was providing information to the Germans. Accordingly, on 14 October 1917 she was executed by firing squad. We are expected to believe that as the firing squad raised their rifles at her, she blew kisses at them. All the story needs now is a claim that during World War II her daughter spied for somebody or other.

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Several readers of *Dagon* know that I provide for them clippings on topics which interest them, and which come from the two daily newspapers I read, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. (Anyone else who may be interested in clippings from what are arguably the country's two best newspapers should let me know the topics on which they want information, and I can do this for them also.) This means that every so often I need to mail large manila envelopes full of clippings. For that I use the postal rates for envelopes by first class mail, which

may be found on the "United States Postal Service Retail Quick Reference Sheet", which should be available at any post office.

But a problem developed the last time Deirdre and I went to a post office to mail some of these envelopes, and to buy stamps for future use. The postal clerk insisted that these large envelopes were not envelopes at all, but "packages". So the clerk charged us \$4.11 for an envelope weighing 13 ounces (the upper limit for first-class mail), rather than the \$3.50 specified in the "Reference Sheet".

But Deirdre saved the day. She told me to surreptitiously put envelopes already provided with stamps back into my book bag, and not give them to the clerk. Afterwards, we left the post office and she told me that when a postal worker took envelopes from an outdoor mailbox, he or she did not check them for the proper amount of postage stamps, but just put them into a bag, and eventually cancels the stamps and sends the mail on its way. Since then, I do what I had been doing for years: put the proper amount of stamps for first class mail on envelopes and drop them into an outdoor mailbox. None of them have ever come back to me in the mail, nor do I tempt fate by trying to mail a 13-ounce envelope with a 1¢ stamp.

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The Pentagon has at last made public what it apparently believes is its authorization to send American troops into just about any country in the world. You can be certain that this authorization is *not* a declaration of war by Congress, as provided in the Constitution. It has been 75 years since that was last done. Instead, it is alleged to be a congressional order to send American troops into any country where the forces of the "Islamic State" (ISIS) are alleged to be active. This is not a "Declaration of War", mind you, but just a congressional willingness to kill somebody.

This desire by the Pentagon or its subordinates in Congress to kill somebody, preferably Islamic, is apparently the reason why Americans have recently been mildly surprised to learn that American troops have been fighting in Somalia and Niger, and also taking casualties there. The situation in Niger was a particular surprise. Within the past month we have learned that four Green Berets were killed in Niger in early October. As few people seem to know, Niger is a landlocked and formerly French colony in western Africa, north of the formerly British colony of Nigeria and extending north into the Sahara Desert. Its name is now usually pronounced in the French fashion, but if the fighting continues much longer, it will probably be pronounced by American newscasters with a short "i" and a hard "g". The U. S. government has been singularly reluctant to explain why the Green Berets went to Niger, or the circumstances of their deaths. However, U. S. soldiers who were on the scene have been giving us more details, and we will probably eventually learn still more information about fatal events there.

This evasion of the Constitution is why American troops seem to get engaged in combat in so many parts of the world, sometimes secretly though the intervention seldom remains secret for long. Apparently all that needs to be said is "ISIS has troops there!", and off go American troops

to Afghanistan or Syria or Somalia or Niger or maybe Antarctica or Mars.

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A need for U. S. troops may soon crop up a lot nearer than Niger. The current version of what we may be forced to call "Civil War II" has been expelled from Charlottesville, VA to, as it has developed, Gainesville, FL. After being forbidden the use of several other speaking platforms in regions where racially segregated facilities used to be considered lawful, Richard Spencer landed a speaking date at the University of Florida on 19 October 2017. There he was hooted down by a huge throng, and was apparently able to persuade no one to rise in revolt, or even to join his "alt-right" racist organization. I am all in favor of allowing such an apparent reincarnation of John Calhoun or Jefferson Davis to speak anywhere that he can be guaranteed safety. This will impress people with the danger he presents to our country with his violent attempts to establish his white supremacist beliefs as law in America. This will rally Americans in opposition to him, prevent him from leading a violent resuscitation of the self-styled "Confederate States of America", and getting his followers thrown into or under a jail.

Some of the media are calling groups like Spencer's "white nationalist". However, the correct term, as may be seen in their speeches and writings, is "white supremacists".

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As of 23 October 2017 the October issue of **CAR-PGa Newsletter** has not yet arrived here. When it does, I will give a brief account of its contents for the readers of **Dagon**. Readers of the **CAR-PGa Newsletter** are urged to send announcements of upcoming gaming events, and reports of recent RPG conventions which they have attended. These reports should be sent to David Millians, the editor of the **CAR-PGa Newsletter**. For a subscription to **CAR-PGa Newsletter**, send \$1.50 a copy or \$15.00 a year to David Millians, Paideia School, 1509 Ponce de Leon Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30307 or <millians,david@paideiaschool.org>. (For foreign readers that is \$2.25 a copy or \$20.00 a year.)

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Can anyone help me with information about a book which I once owned but have now long since lost and mostly forgotten? I think that I bought it on Paris in 1958 during a trip to Europe to attend a scientific conference, in a shop ("*Librarie Anglaise*") which dealt in English-language works not then allowed in the United States. The book was originally written in the early 20th century and was possibly an English translation of the original, though I do not know from what language. Its title is something like *The Adventures of Mony Vibescu*, and its hero was a soldier of fortune and sex, mostly sex. I think that he may have originally come from somewhere in the Balkans, as his name sounds Romanian. I recall that, towards the end of the book, he was fighting for Russia in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05). At one point in that war he met a Polish nurse in the Russian service, who deliberately maltreated or killed Russian soldiers as vengeance

(continued on p. 9)

CHRISTOPHER WHO?

On my fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth birthdays my parents successively gave to me A. A. (Alan Alexander) Milne's books *When We Were Very Young*, *Now We Are Six*, *Winnie-the-Pooh*, and *The House at Pooh Corner*. The first two were collections of Milne's poetry, written for an audience of children, and delightfully illustrated by R. H. Shepard. But my real favorites were the latter books, two series of short stories about Milne's son Christopher Robin and his collection of stuffed toy animals. Over the years, my brothers and I developed our own collection of stuffed toy animals, including a bear that we of course named "Pooh", though many of our other animals took precedence in our play. But in most children's stuffed animal zoos, the bear is pre-eminent. As the name of the bear often suggests, this results from an act of Theodore Roosevelt or, as I recently discovered I was entitled to call him, "Cousin Teddy". After his term as president, he took a hunting trip in Mississippi, where he hoped to bag a black bear. However, his guides were at first unable to locate any, until a guide came into Roosevelt's encampment, dragging on a rope a bear cub for him to shoot. However, such a thing was not hunting as Roosevelt understood it, and he ordered the guide to let the cub go.

Eventually this story got out, and in Roosevelt's honor a toy manufacturer started a line of toy bears to capitalize on the event. These were inevitably called "teddy bears", and the name was eventually attached to all toy bears, and still is.

I do not know whether the term "teddy bear" got to England by the middle 1920s, but by then Milne's son Christopher Robin (nicknamed "Moon") had a bear he named "Pooh" or "Winnie the Pooh". (Did "Winnie" refer to a disgraced First Lord of the Admiralty named Winston Churchill?) Other animals also inhabited the Hundred Acre Wood, which was the setting of Milne's prose works about Christopher Robin and Pooh: Pooh's friend and subordinate Piglet, the sardonic old gray donkey Eeyore, and two creatures intended as real-life wild animals, Owl and Rabbit. If other characters were needed, Rabbit had a large supply of "Rabbit's friends and relations". By the time that *The House at Pooh Corner* was written, three more toys had joined Christopher Robin's collection: Kanga and Roo, and the madcap Tigger. Tigger became so obviously a clown that subsequent treatments of the Milne characters (mainly the Disney versions) have made him more prominent and treated him as pure comic relief. As I grew older, I recognized Pooh as a traditional English club-man, consuming "hunny" rather than port wine. And I saw Rabbit and Owl as caricatures of businessmen and intellectuals respectively.

But what led Milne to turn his son's toys into allegories, and other authors to develop these allegories further? Before World War I he had written serious novels, plays, and poems with adult characters, plots, and themes. But the war changed his outlook profoundly. World War I was the first war that Great Britain had fought in sixty years against other European powers, and in that time the technology of warfare had developed greatly in the (American) Slaveholders'

Rebellion, the Franco-Prussian War, the Spanish-American War, and the Russo-Japanese War. As a result the death toll in World War I had increased enormously, as had its effects on survivors. These facts and effects produced a huge impact on Milne, which is displayed in a new film on Milne and his wife and child: *Goodbye, Christopher Robin*.

No one should expect *Goodbye, Christopher Robin* to be a film suitable for children. The film gives us scenes from the trenches of World War I, scenes which explain why many of the soldiers who survived that war came home as emotional wrecks. They also explain why a man who had seen what Milne had seen on the front lines made him write poems and stories for small children as a way of cleansing his mind and vocabulary from those experiences.

Three reviews of this film appeared on 13 October 2017 in the newspapers which I read, two (one by Jane Horwitz and one anonymous) in the *Washington Post* and a vitriolic review in the *New York Times* by Jeanette Crysoulis.

There appears to be practically nothing written by or about Christopher Robin Milne as an adult, though we are naturally curious about his later life. One of the reviews mentions in passing that he wrote his memoirs, but says nothing about them or him. We can easily imagine what would be said to anyone who identified himself as "Christopher Robin Milne". I would not be surprised to learn that upon becoming an adult he would have changed his name as a nuisance. I even heard that he had been shot down over the Channel in 1940, but survived, but I don't believe this at all.

THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY (continued from p. 7)

for the Russian Empire's annexation of most of Poland. Recently this book partially occurred to me, though I do not know why, and since then I have had trouble getting it out of my mind.

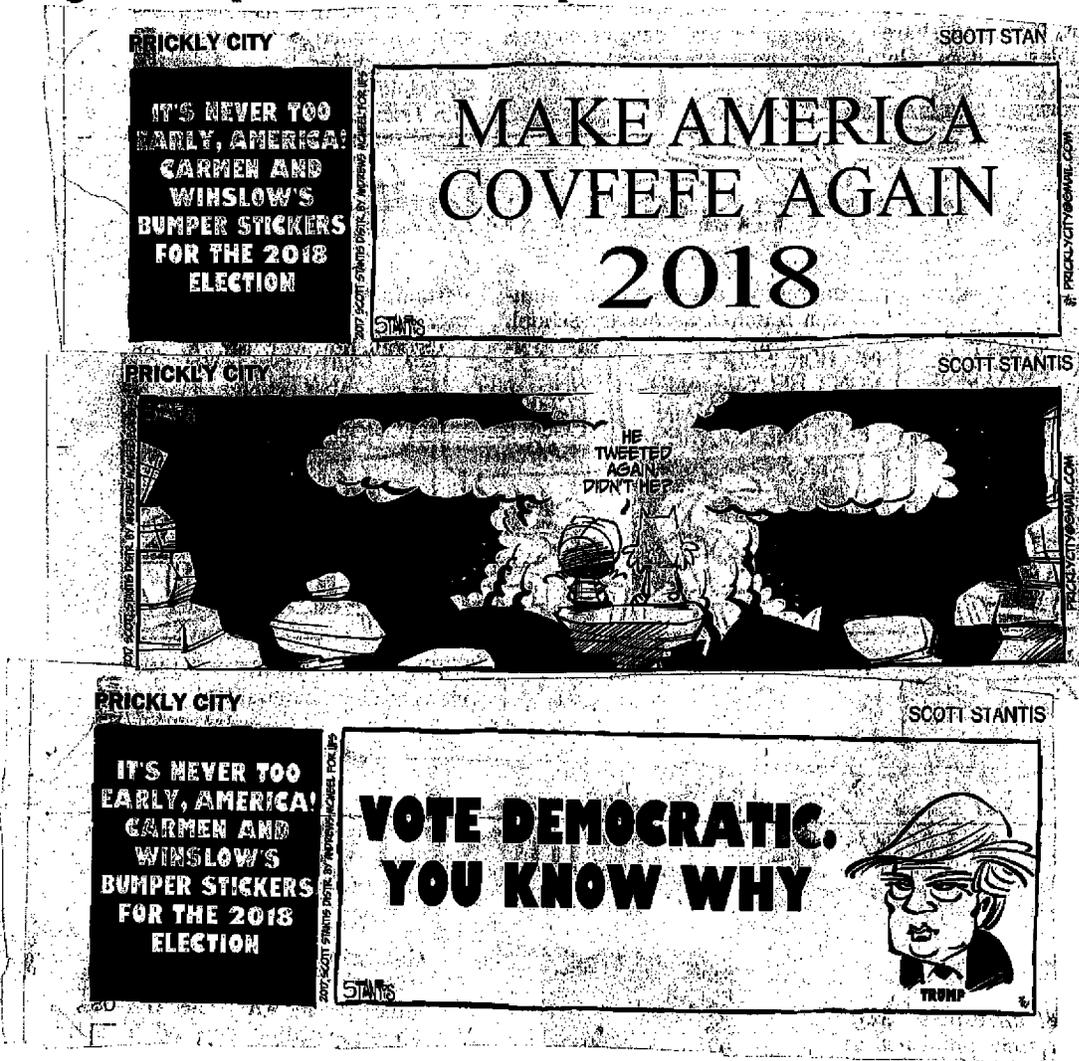
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Mark Blackman has assured me that Bob Rodriguez's address is still Apartment 7C, 3647 Broadway, New York, NY 10031. Apparently when I addressed his copy of the *August Dagon*, I left out his apartment number. So I have sent him the back issues that he did not get when I was uncertain about his address.

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The comic strip *Prickly City*, drawn by Scott Stantis, runs in the *Washington Post*. Its principal theme is current political events, from a conservative viewpoint. The principal characters are Carmen, a girl who defends the conservative viewpoint, and her liberal foil, a coyote named Winslow, whose arguments she always demolishes. But lately, Stantis has had trouble with these characters. The trouble is mainly "President" tRump, whose views and attitudes seem to greatly annoy Carmen even as tRump seems to pretend that he is the conservative messiah. When tRump himself appears in the strip, he is drawn as a skunk. And even when

he is not drawn, *Prickly City* pokes fun at him. Below are a few recent *Prickly City* episodes demonstrating Stantis's problems with the strip.



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interest to you on page ____.