

DAGON

#698, APA-Q #610?

May-June 2018

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, Room 108, 2250 S. Semoran Blvd, Orlando FL 32822. My land line number is (407) 270-5613. The number of my new cell-phone, 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. Members who send print copies to Mark should also send him an electronic copy; ask him for details about how to do this. Meal hours here are daily at 8 AM, 12 M, and 5 PM. People who try to reach me by telephone should keep in mind that I am probably not reachable by telephone at those hours.

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It is easy to buy the *New York Times* just about anywhere in the United States. (Al Noft gets his delivered every day in Texas, and I have seen copies on sale in vending machines in California. When I lived in Maryland, Deirdre was easily able to get it delivered to our address in a suburb of Washington, as well as the *Washington Post*. So when I moved to Orlando, I assumed that I could get both papers delivered here. I asked Karina, who lives elsewhere in Orlando, to subscribe to both newspapers using my present address. The *Times* started arriving regularly, but the *Post* did not. I finally found out why, at an excellent meal of barbecued ribs and macaroni salad at Karina's house, which was enjoyed by us, Deirdre, and Karina's daughter Diana. It seems that actual paper copies of the *Washington Post* are not obtainable everywhere in this country, and in some locations one can only order this news "paper" to be delivered electronically, by e-mail. And Karina and I do not live in one of the ZIP codes where actual paper copies of the *Post* can be delivered. And it is obviously somewhat difficult to clip and mail items from an e-mailed newspaper to people who might be interested in them.

So this is why nobody has been receiving clippings or any other information out of the

(continued on page 5)

THE THONG OF THOR

In days of yore the great god Thor would ramp around creation.
He'd drink a pint and slay a gi'nt and save the Nordic nation,
Or kill a Wyrn to watch it squirm and vainly try to fang him,
Or lock up Loki in the pokey and on the noggin bang him.

Once he did bawl through Thrudvang hall that on a trip he'd wander
In a disguise from prying eyes, in Midgard way out yonder.
So all his slaves and carles and knaves packed up his goods and gear-O,
And off he strode on Bifröst road, a perfect Aryan hero.

In Midgard land he joined a band of hardy Viking ruffians,
And off they sailed and rowed and bailed, among the auks and puffians.
Whene'er they'd reach a foreign beach they'd stop to raid and plunder.
Each Nordic brute got so much loot their longship near went under.

But though they rolled in coins of gold they had one joy forsaken,
For on each raid Thor's party made, no women could be taken.
Each drab and queen fled from the scene when Viking sails were sighted,
And Thor felt needs for certain deeds that had gone unrequited.

Thor's brows were black as they rowed back to Oslo's rocky haven.
Unto his crew he said, "Beshrew me for a Frankish craven,
"If I don't wrench some tavern wench, or else may Freya damn her."
Replied one voice, "You have first choice. You've got the buiggest hammer!"

Into an inn this crew of sin debarked upon their landing,
Each tavern maid was sore afraid of pirates of such srtanding.
But golden coins warmed up their loins, and soon the ale ran free.
Thor's motley crew poured down the brew and made an all-night spree.

Thor's glances strayed unto a maid with hair as gold as grain,
A lisp so shy, a downcast eye, and scarce a trace of brain.
He swept her charms into his arms and to an upstairs bower,
And did not cease nor give her ease for many a happy hour.

When he arose and donned his clothes, she looked like one near death.
 Her limbs were weakl, she could not speak, and scarcely gasped for breath.
 “You ought to know, before I go, I’m Thor!” he bade adieu.
 “You’re thore!” said she. “Conthider me! I’m thorer,. thir, than you!”

This poem is an example of a “filksong”, a term which originated as a fanzine misprint of “folksong” but has since acquired a meaning of its own. If I have not set it to a tune, it is because I received a good education in writing, but not so much of an education in music, and so I could not think of or compose music to which to set it. (Suggestions from readers would be appreciated.)

At first I had thought of printing the proper nouns in this song using the letters which had been dropped from the English alphabet by William Caxton when he set up the first printing press in England in the late 15th century. During the Middle Ages, the English had added three more letters to represent sounds that did not occur in Latin. These were “edh” (Ð,ð), “thorn” (þ,Þ), and “yogh”, for which I cannot find a symbol on my computer. “Edh” and “thorn” represented respectively the voiced and voiceless sounds now represented by “th”, while “yogh” represented the sound of “ch” as spoken in German “Bach” and “doch” but not “ich”, and in the Greek and Kirillic alphabets by “X”. Caxton used type from Flanders, which represented only the Latin alphabet. So he replaced “edh” and “thorn” by “th”, and “yogh” by “gh”, which is why all the English words which contain “gh” are such nuisances to pronounce. So you don’t have to worry about pronouncing such proper names as “Þorr” and “Midgarð”.

If you attend science-fiction conventions, you have an easy way of getting acquainted with filksongs. They are often brought out for inspection at song sessions, particularly if they are presided over by Roberta Rogow, a New Jersey fan with a long repertory of them. Last year I picked up a new filksong, which I improved a little, and produced this:

CHRIST, THE MAGIC SAVIOR

(Tune: “Puff the Magic Dragon”)

Christ the magic savior walked upon the sea,
 And frolicked in the synagogues in the land of Galilee.
 His mother was a virgin, his father was a Jew,
 And why some people think he’s “god”, I can;t explain to you!

I think I could guess why the belief “born of a virgin” got started. Obviously, two thousand years ago there were no sex education classes in the middle schools.

President tRump has recently hinted that he might withdraw a few U. S. troops from South

Korea. This has evoked a few panicky outcries from people who fear that the United States might be less able to fight a nice profitable war. At present, we are more likely to hear reports that the U. S. has secretly sent troops into several of the most unlikely places in the world, and we know of these deployments only when casualty counts come back from those places. The constitutional requirement that Congress has to declare wars is apparently now a dead letter. And so from time to time we are surprised to learn that U. S. troops are active in Niger or Syria or Yemen. (Ye men? Ye gods!)

This got started in the administration of Woodrow Wilson, arguably the worst president in America's history. As nearly as we can now figure out, Wilson tried to put America on the same level as the European powers by his completely unjustified participation in World War I. His private correspondence indicates that from the beginning of that war he made efforts to get America involved in it. The details may be found in Patricia O'Toole's book *The Moralist: Woodrow Wilson and the World He Made*, and in its review by Jennifer Szalai in the *New York Times* of 2 May 2018.

There was much objection to Wilson's entry into World War I, even after he got the declaration of war through Congress. This was met by the song "Over There", which I believe was written by George M. Cohan. These objections culminated in the next congressional elections, which took place only a few days before an armistice was declared in November 1918. Those elections resulted in a solid Republican victory, as did the next three presidential elections. It was not until the Hoover Depression that the Democrats won the presidency and Congress again.

"Over There" was heard again, and much more appropriately, during World War II. Then, unlike in World War I, the United States got into the war through a military attack from one of the belligerents

The present secret invasions of many nations by U. S. troops elicited this version of the song. The words "Over *Where?*" should not be sung, but instead spoken in tones of incredulity.

OVER *WHERE?*

(Tune: "Over There")

Over there! Over *where?*
 We don't care what's unfair, over there.
 For the Yanks aren't coming,
 We won't go slumming,
 We're not succumbing
 Over there!

Over there! Over *where?*
 Send no men, send no cash, send no dare.
 For we're sober,
 We won't go over,
 And we'll all stay home
 Till it's over, over there!

THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY (continued from page 1)

Washington Post ever since I moved to Orlando. In fact, the last issue of **Dagon** that anyone has received prior to this one has been the April 2018 issue announcing my change of address. Since then I have tried several times to write a "May 2018" issue, but each time I had several pages on my computer before they all somehow vanished, and I was unable to recover them. I finally had to send Mark Blackman a note saying that I could not have a **Dagon** ready for the "May 2018" APA-Q. This issue is therefore the "May-June 2018" issue. I *believe* that I have determined why I lost all those attempts to get a **Dagon** ready for the May APA-Q, and believe that I can have this issue ready by June.

The remainder of this **Dagon** will therefore be a disjointed collection of items, bringing readers up to date on the opinions I wanted to send in April as they occur to me. I hope to have the 15 print copies in the mail to Mark well before the collation date for the June APA-Q, which I expect will be Saturday 2 June. When Karina or Deirdre duplicate and collate this issue, I expect they will, as usual, send Mark an e-mail copy so he can include it in the APA-Q issues which he e-mails out to the readers who receive it electronically.

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The "History" Channel on television seems to be badly mis-named. It is currently presenting a series entitled "Ancient Astronauts", which claims that serious evidence exists for pre-historic contacts between primitive human beings and space-traveling species from other planets. Early humans allegedly regarded these extra-terrestrials as gods, and their powers as the products of equipment far beyond the technology of present-day humans.

These stories are obvious nothing more than exaggerations of human powers of invention. In cultures all over the world we find beliefs in "gods" whose powers are nothing more than the products of human imaginations. The Pagan Norse believed in a god called Heimdall, who was allegedly the son of *nine* virgins. Greek and Roman mythology are filled with tales of gods who begot sons on mortal women. These sons inevitably grew up to be heroes with their own cycles of myths: Herakles ("Hercules"), Perseus, Romulus, Remus, and so on. There is even a tale that Hera, the wife of Zeus, had a son in the form of a cloud, begotten by a mortal man, whom I believe was named Ixion. (If I had a classical dictionary available, I would be able to give you further details.)

Such tales as this are imaginative applications of human powers of invention. Despite the popularity of this idea in early science fiction, human beings and extra-terrestrials would be unable to conceive a child with each other. A human being could more probably cross-breed with a turnip than with a creature that evolved on another planet. So cross-breeding of humans with extra-terrestrials, even if they are regarded as "gods", are a tribute not to ancient history but to the richness of human powers of imagination and invention.

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At the present moment (which is 3:45 PM EDT on Tuesday 8 May 2018) I am more than a little worried about my nephew Dr. Dana Boardman, DC. He is presently on the “Big Island” of Hawaii, where he has established his chiropractic practice in Hilo on the east coast of that island, though he lives elsewhere in Kailua Kona. (Like his late grandfather and father, he is a graduate of the Palmer School of Chiropractic in Davenport, Iowa.) He moved his practice from California to Hawaii a few years ago.

Mt. Kilauea, which is in a long, powerful, and devastating eruption, is also on the Big Island, though I have no idea how far it is from his home or practice. It is a shield volcano, not like the tall cone which is probably in your mental picture of a volcano. This means that its activity is taking place over a wider area than that of a conical volcano. Several additional fissures have opened up around its crater, which itself is larger than that of a conical volcano. The crater is throwing out boulders, great quantities of lava (molten rock), ash, and sulfur dioxide gas, which is poisonous. The eruption has been going on for several weeks, and does not appear to be diminishing in quantity

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Anent my comments in **Dagon** #696 (March 2018) about the editorial (and factual) changes made in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag in the 1950s by President Eisenhower, Paul Cardwell sent me the text of a quite different and greatly preferable “Constitutional Pledge”;

“I pledge allegiance to the Constitution of the United States of America and to the republic which it established. One nation from many peoples, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

Paul comments: “It has the advantage of concerning the principles of the country rather than a piece of cloth, is congruent with the Constitution, and can be said along with the embellished version” [which included Eisenhower’s addition “under God”] in public occasions where where this nonsense is required.”

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The official name of the building where I have lived since March is “Excellence: An Assisted Living Facility”. (I could think of a more accurately descriptive title - not “Excellence” but “Adequacy”.) However, someone in the facility’s management seems to have gift for puns. This became evident on the Friday 4 May, when a party was scheduled with the title “May the 4th be with you!” interested persons gathered in the dining hall in the early afternoon, but then had to wait because the party’s planner was called away on a family emergency, so events did not develop as originally planned. But refreshments were served, and music from the *Star Wars* films was played, chiefly, it would seem, the “Imperial March”. (Most people seem to know this with the filked words “Darth Vader’s mother wears old army shoes...” I would appreciate receiving the full text of this version.

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Lately I have often been watching baseball games on television, hampered by the fact that only very seldom are games broadcast which do not feature Florida's two major-league baseball teams, the Miami Marlins (National League) and the Tampa Bay Rays (American League). The Tampa Bay team started out about twenty years ago as the "Devil Rays", since their titular fish has two projections above its eyes which fancifully resemble horns, and everybody knows that devils have horns. I would guess that Christians complained about attaching the word "devil" to their favorite team, even though nobody seems to worry about a professional hockey team called "the Jersey Devils", or using the name of mythical beings for the American League's "Los Angeles Angels". As for the use of "Tampa Bay" rather than just "Tampa", the team represents Florida's second largest metropolitan area, including the city of Tampa on the west coast of Florida but also St. Petersburg and other nearby places.

Fortunately, the television sets here send out program schedules which display announcements of sporting events in green, compared with red for movies, purple for local political events, and blue for everything else. So I get information about several different sports, including softball. I looked at some of these knowing very little about softball, but in the absence of interesting baseball games I gave it a look. Softball seems to be a sort of "baseball light". It has most of the rules of baseball, and seems to be played only by teams of female college students. The game is seven innings long, rather than nine. The field is also smaller. The number on the outfield fence of one softball field is 190 feet (58 meters), rather than well over 300 feet (90 meters) for major league baseball fields. On one softball infield there was no grass, only a dirt surface. I am not sure whether this is mandated in the rules, or simply a result of the fact that softball fields are maintained by traditionally cash-strapped colleges rather than by well-to-do professional baseball teams.

But the most obvious difference in the play of a softball team are the pitchers. They are required to throw the balls underhand rather than overhand. This may be an attempt to save their arms from the strains that are causing broadcasters to keep listeners informed about how many pitches have been thrown at each stage of the game. But aside from pitches, all the throwing done in softball game is actually overhand, which comes more naturally to most people. If the catcher throws the ball back to the pitcher, or a fielder throws the ball to stop a base-runner from stealing a base, it is done with an overhand throw.

The actual pitches are thrown with a motion that is difficult to watch. If the softball pitcher is right-handed, as practically all of them are, she seems to pitch with an almost stiff right arm, which pivots around her right shoulder in a counter-clockwise direction, and releases the ball at the bottom of this circular motion.

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We usually get to see the games of professional baseball teams other than the two Florida teams only when they play one of the Florida teams, either on their own fields or when they visit

Florida teams. But many of these teams from outside Florida have long histories, much longer than do Miami and Tampa Bay. Sixteen of the thirty major league teams date back to the decades when there were no major league teams south of Washington or west of St. Louis. When there was recently a short series between the Miami Marlins and the Cincinnati Reds, we got to see a team whose unbroken existence stretches back to 1869, when they became the *first* professional baseball team. They are now playing their 150th season! They began playing baseball professionally before basketball was even invented, when ice hockey was played only on natural lakes by a few Canadians, and when American football featured the “flying wedge” and was therefore little more than an instrument for producing concussions. The National League was organized in 1876, and after a long and bitter debate the American League was organized in 1900.

And they are still the “Reds”. During the years in which anti-Communist prejudice threatened to replace baseball as our national sport, a feeble attempt was made to call them the “Redlegs” but this was laughed out of existence and has long been forgotten. By the standards of major-league cities, Cincinnati is a rather small place, but it appears in post-season play often enough to remind Americans what originated there.

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Karina and her family are about to undertake some major travels. On 22 May, she and her daughter Diana will go to Alaska for the beginning of travels by plane and by rented car which will eventually bring them all back to Orlando by the middle of June. In the course of this trip they will visit Alaska (in the only season in which residents of the “lower 48” will find the 49th state comfortable), join Karina’s husband Dean en route, and then drive to California to help her son Deanie begin to pack up and move his things with them to Florida. Here they will all settle. Before the end of the year Deirdre will also move to Florida, after she has trained her replacement in her present job in Maryland.

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Despite what may be written in the Book of Proverbs, I am convinced that calling things by the right name is the beginning of wisdom. However, this is not currently being done with regard to current controversies in the Middle East. For example, one of the factions there is called “Palestinians”. But no political entity called “Palestine” has existed for some seventy years. It would make more sense to call these people “Arabian”. They speak the Arabian language, they come from Arabia or their families did, and most of them adhere to a religion whose scriptures are written in Arabian. Why not simply call them “Arabians”?

Nir is “Native American” the right name for the original inhabitants of the American continents. Anyone born in America is by that fact alone a native American. The term “Original American” adequately describes the people incorrectly called “Native Americans” or, worse, “Indians”. Why is this latter term, originally a mistake by Columbus about where he had landed, still being used over five centuries later?

GETTING CAUGHT UP

This is the first time in several issues that I've been able to include comments on earlier issues of **APA-Q** and other comments from readers. If I have at long last worked the bugs out of my computer/word processor, there might be installments of this column in future issues of **Dagon**.

APA-Cover #609 (Blackman): Yes, it's the 17th anniversary of 2001 (the year, not the movie) and the 200th anniversary of Karl Marx (not the sixth Marx Brother). Apparently we are no longer expected to shudder at the name of Karl Marx.

Blancmange #529 (Blackman): Thanks for informing us that Karen Anderson is the person who originated the term "filksong", which she began as a fanzine misprint for "folksong".

Apparently tying "Stormy Daniels" to "Donald Trumpf" (the surname which his father or grandfather had when he came over from Germany) is developing further complications. For one thing, we are told that her real name is "Stephanie Clifford". Or is this still another pseudonym? There is already one Clifford in the popular media, if you look at animated cartoons as much as I do. One of the better animated cartoons is entitled "Clifford, the Big Red Dog". It is designed to encourage children to read. Its chief characters are a little girl named Emily Elizabeth and her dog Clifford. Clifford is a dog of elephantine proportions. This is not just an over-worked metaphor. In one episode Emily Elizabeth, Clifford, and some friends both human and canine go to where the circus has just come to town only to discover that the elephant is ill and cannot assist in the erection of the tent, and the show may have to be canceled. Clifford, who is as big and strong as an elephant, assists in the job, and the show is able to go on. Clifford is too big for Emily Elizabeth's parents' home, and so they eventually have to move to Birdwell Island. The artist who originally created this cartoon was named "Bridwell", so guess where the island got its name.

It is to be hoped that the television planners can keep these two Cliffords separate. Otherwise we might also get Donald tRump's affair with Stephanie Clifford and her big red -er, maybe we better not move any further in this direction.

Besides, what is all the fuss about tRump and Daniels anyhow? The affair a century ago between Woodrow Wilson and Mary Peck was no secret, but nobody made a huge fuss about it either. The worst that ever happened was a reference to President Wilson as "Peck's Bad Boy", which was the title of a popular humorous book of the period, which was not written as an attempt to satirize or to score points about Wilson.

Your reference to the "Electoral College" should have been accompanied with a call for its abolition and for instead electing a president by direct popular vote. Instead, we will continue to get situations like we had in 2000 and 2016, when the Democratic candidates for President got more votes but the Republican candidate won. Those were by no means the only times in American history where something like that happened, and we may well get more of them if a constitutional amendment is not enacted to fix it.

And the well-known proverb you quote needs to be amended. How about "Where there's smoke, there's a busy little fanatic with a smoke generator."

I have not yet discovered my new nine-digit ZIP code. What I have discovered is letters from several readers, claiming plausibly that the lack of a nine-digit ZIP code on my outgoing mail has probably not significantly delayed it.

Thanks for the information about John Maddox Roberts. I hadn't known that he also wrote murder mysteries set in ancient Rome. As soon as I can get a local library card, I'll look them up.

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you may find something of
interest to you on page ____.