

DAGON

#679, APA-Q #590

October 2016

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.

At **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.

Great Karina and Dean Wright have moved to 1009 Faber Drive, Orlando, FL 32622 - just in time to get acquainted with Hurricane Hermine. And I finally have Beki Taylor's address right. It is 511 North Avenue #603, Girard, OH 44420. Also, she is a member of **APA-Q**.

Intervals

This

Appears

To

Inflame

Optic

Nerves

Deirdre's hobby is running. It has given her a much trimmer figure, and probably improved her health. She usually undertakes five-kilometer runs, which is a little over three miles in medieval measurements. But she went with several other American runners to Paris, for longer runs according to their individual capabilities. Some of them will be doing marathons, which is about 42 kilometers or a little over 26 miles. Deirdre will be trying for her first half-marathon. The marathon distance is, in ancient Greek history, the distance run by a certain Pheidippides who brought to Athens the news that an invading Persian army had been stopped and turned back by a few hundred Spartans at Marathon, a narrow pass between cliffs and the Aegean Sea.

Deirdre flew to Paris on Wednesday 21 September, and arrived there the next day. They visited the French Disneyworld from Friday through Sunday, ran Monday the 25th and Tuesday the 27th, and flew to Iceland on the 28th. They planned to spend a day sightseeing in Iceland, which has several places of geological or historical interest. (The *Brenna Njal Saga*, the last, greatest, and longest of the medieval *sögur*, mentions several places of interest which had roles in the saga, including the site of the tragic fire in which Njal's enemies killed him and most of his family, and from which Njal's son-in-law set out to kill as many of the Burners as he could find. The language of Iceland has changed so little from Old Norse that anyone who can read

an Icelandic newspaper can read the twelfth-century *Njala*, as it is familiarly called.)
 Deirdre expects to be back on Thursday 29 September.

*

The use by runners of metric distances is an encouraging sign after the attacks we have heard in the United States against using the same system of weight, length and temperature measurements that the rest of the world uses. Deirdre has told me that when she was at school in the 1970s, pupils were taught about the metric system and how to use it. This is no longer done, as a result of the attacks on its use which I have quoted in previous issues of *Dagon*. Some of the opposition called the metric system "Communistic", possibly because Russia began to use it after the Russian Revolution. But by that time, most of Europe already used the metric system. It originated in France after the French Revolution, and Napoleon I extended it, as well as driving on the right side of the road, to those parts of Europe then under his control. After the 1990s, when anti-Communist prejudice collapsed of its own implausibility, an opponent of the metric system instead called it "all an Arab plot with some Frenchies and Limeys thrown in." (Bob Greene, founder of We Ain't Metric [WAM].)

But while America abandoned instruction in the metric system, as the result of such arguments, the (British) Commonwealth of Nations decided to use it. This left the United States of America as the *only* nation whose population (aside from scientists) is required to use a medieval system of measurement. However, the metric system is nevertheless creeping in by such usages as "5K" (five-kilometer) runs.

*

At the moment I am not certain whether there will be a November 2016 issue of *Dagon*. If there is one, it will come out on my usual schedule - copies of the issue in the November APA-Q Distribution, and copies mailed in late October to *Dagon* recipients who have not joined APA-Q. But if you do not receive a November 2016 *Dagon* by then, the next one will be the December issue.

This is happening because I am rather behind in the preparation of this present *Dagon*. This is probably because I am finding the presidential election rather tiresome to deal with, and this October issue may be a little shorter than the usual ten pages. Also, I needed to prepare this issue early so Deirdre could get it duplicated before she left for Paris. More generally, if I fail to print any issue of *Dagon*, readers will know it by the first week of the month for which it is dated.

*

The *Washington Post* published on 7 September 2016 a survey or poll results and other indications of how each state will probably vote on election day (8 November 2016). There are two maps in the article. One of them gives color keys to whether each state shapes up as solidly Democratic, leaning Democratic, solidly Republican, leaning Republican, or a toss-up.

The other map has the same color key, but shows the area of each state as proportional to its number of electoral votes.

This is necessary, as the Constitution provides that a presidential election is not a matter for the entire country as a unit, but that each state must elect a number of electors equal to its total number of senators and representatives. (The District of Columbia also has three electoral votes.) The electors then meet in each state's capital and vote for president. It is thus possible for a presidential candidate to be chosen by a majority of the nation's voters, and still lose the election. This happened most recently in 2000, when Al Gore lost the election despite the fact that more voters chose his electors than those pledged to Bush the Son. If no candidate gets an absolute majority of electoral votes, a complicated process involving Congress must take place. Almost all candidates for elector pledge themselves to support their party's candidate, but there is no penalty if an elector votes for someone else, whether it happens deliberately or by accident.

Presently an absolute majority of electors must be at least 270 of them. The *Post's* survey came up with the following numbers of electoral votes:

Solidly Democratic: 14 states, 187 electors	Solidly Republican: 17 states, 108 electors
Leaning Democratic: 6 states, 57 electors	Leaning Republican: 3 states, 18 electors
Total: 20 states, 244 electors	Total: 20 states, 126 electors
Toss-up: 10 states, 168 electors	

This means that if all the states that are "solid" or "leaning" vote as expected, the Democrats need only 26 additional electors from the "toss-up" states to win. The *Post* expressed surprise that Texas was listed among the toss-ups, since it has voted Republican in every presidential election from 1968. Texas has 38 electoral votes. The other toss-up states are Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Mississippi, North Carolina, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

No matter how close the numbers of voters may be, the count of electoral votes will probably reveal a wider division among electors. And the candidacy of Donald Rump is already getting nervous about these developments. His support from a relatively new conservative organization called "Alt-Right", which calls itself "white nationalist", is repelling a lot of voters who might change the above figures in Clinton's favor. Hillary Clinton characterizes many Rump supporters as "a basket of deplorables"*. Some Republicans have objected to these words, but you can easily deal with such people by asking them "Why do you think that David Duke of the Ku Klux Klan is not deplorable?" You may get a lot of words in response to

* - When I first heard this, I thought she said "deportables". If Rump rises in revolt over her allegedly "rigged" election, as I have speculated, that might be workable.

this question, but you will not get an answer.

You can probably expect that on the morning of 9 November you will learn that a majority of the elected electors will have pledged to vote for Hillary Clinton. But you will also hear that Donald Rump claims that the election was "rigged" and that a *real* count would make him president. What he will then do about this is uncertain.

And it develops that I am not the only person who suspects that Donald Rump might resort to violence to claim the presidency if he feels that the announced vote was "rigged" against him. In the *Washington Post* of 11 September 2016, Thomas B. Edsall, a contributing opinion writer for the *Post*, raised the question "What will Donald Trump and his supporters do if he loses a close race?" Then he answers it, with quotes from Seth Masket, a political scientist at the University of Denver: "Were Trump and his supporters to continue to argue that the election had been stolen from them, it would mean that they reject non-violent solutions to political differences."

*

Donald Rump's campaign slogan is obviously, and ominously, "Make America great again!" Historically, nations often seek "greatness" by fighting a great war. And on 8 September 2016, the *New York Times* headlined a story "Trump Proposes Vast Expansion of U. S. Military - Adding 90,000 Soldiers - Plan Would Cost Up to \$90 Billion a Year, Experts Say". However, I am old enough to remember a leader who set out to make Germany great again. We all know how that came out.

Rump has suggested that if Iranian sailors make impolite gestures to American sailors on warships in the Persian Gulf, the American warships should "blow them out of the water". This, of course, would mean a major war, possibly with Russia as Iran's ally. While Hillary Clinton supported the wars begun in the Middle East under Presidents Bush the Son and Obama, and thus has a reputation as a "Hawk", she would clearly be unwilling to regard rude gestures as a legitimate reason to go to war. But now we know *how* "President Rump" plans to "make America great again".

*

Gary Johnson, a former Republican governor, is clearly trying to mobilize Republicans of the tiny "Never Trump" faction and build a "new" Republican Party under another name. But he is also adding to the hilarity content of this campaign. When he was asked, "What would you do about Aleppo?", he replied "What's a Leppo?"

Anyone who keeps up with the news knows that Aleppo is a Syrian city in which the Syrian Civil War has created huge numbers of deaths and of refugees.

*

A new book entitled *Time Travel*, by James Gleick, was reviewed by Rosalind Williams in the *Washington Post* of 11 September 2016. In discussing s-f stories based on time travel

Gleick claimed that the first time travel story in science fiction was written in 1895 by H. G. Wells. This is a common belief, but it is incorrect. A few decades ago, *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* (familiarily "MFSF") was reprinting little-known stories from the pasts of those fields. I recall one of them, a time-travel story, which I think was originally published in the 1860s, but I have forgotten its author and title.

That story, as I recall it, dealt with a man who traveled back in time, to the biblical dispute between Joseph son of Jacob and his brothers, about the famous "coat of many colors". He settles the dispute among the brothers, so Joseph does not flee to Egypt as told in scripture, and never advises the pharaoh to build storehouses and fill them with grain to prevent famine. (One of Donald Rump's wackier supporters, Dr. Ben Carson, claims that those storehouses were the pyramids, in defiance of every Egyptologist who knows they were the tombs of pharaohs.) Egypt is therefore ruined by the famine, and ceases to be an important nation. The Phoenicians settle most of the Mediterranean coast and establish Carthage as their capital. Carthage defeats Rome, and the whole region breaks down in continual warfare. The last human beings are killed by a lightning strike in Palestine, on a date which the author hints was the date of the execution of Jesus in our own history.

If anyone can send me the title, author, and information about the publication of this story, I would appreciate receiving them. There are reference books that list all s-f and fantasy magazines, with data about when and where their stories were originally published. One of those reference books would be a good place to start.

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The media seem to be unusually reluctant to give out details about the signing of Jenny Baker by the San Diego Padres as the first female player in major league baseball. As far as I know, this was first announced during the broadcast of the All-Star Game in San Diego on 12 July 2016. Baker, a pitcher, was interviewed, and compared her role with that of Jackie Robinson. A few weeks later, she pitched in a home game.

That was a problem. I had expected to watch that game on the MLB Network. However, when I turned to the MLB channel scheduled for the game, there was only an announcement that the game had been blacked out. This is usually done by the MLB Network for regions in which another channel is being used for that game. (For this region, games of the Washington Nationals and the Baltimore Orioles are blacked out on MLB but broadcast on local channels, who can sell advertising space to local businesses.) However, no other channel was carrying that San Diego game. The San Diego Padres won the game, but I never found out whether Baker was the winning pitcher. And, as of 16 September, she has not pitched since. However, a brief announcement of her signing by the Padres has since been occasionally broadcast during a game, even in games in which the Padres were not playing.

THE FILKSONG FILE - VII

This is probably the first filksong I ever composed. It dates from an undergraduate English course I took at the University of Chicago, sometime around 1951. One of our assignments was a story by Henry James, entitled "The Turn of the Screw". I have never read anything else by Henry James, probably because of this story, and I feel that he could have used the professional services of his brother William, a psychologist.

The story tells of a governess who learns that the children in her charge have been targeted by a child-molesting alcoholic named Peter Quint. When she tells people this, she learns that Quint has been dead for several months, but the children still act as if they were being molested by him. We are left with the impression that Quint's ghost may be responsible, or perhaps that some other cause is behind their belief. A solution was never provided in the story for this dilemma.

The Ballad of Peter Quint

(Tune: "The Ballad of Joe Hill")

I dreamed I saw Pete Quint last night,
As drunk as he could be.
Said I, "But, Pete, you're six months dead."
"I never died," said he,
"I never died," said he.

"*Delirium tremens* got you, Pete,
"It killed you, Pete," said I.
"Takes more than gin to kill a man,"
Said Pete, "I didn't die."
Said Pete, "I didn't die."

And standing there as drunk as life,
And bleary in the eyes,
Said Pete, "What gin could never kill
"Went on to terrorize.
"Went on to terrorize."

"From upstairs hall out to the lake,
 "Behind each bush and tree,
 "I pounce upon those little brats
 "And act unspeakably."
 "And act unspeakably."

The tune is that of a memorial to Joe Hill, a union organizer in Utah who was framed about a century ago for capital murder by "the copper bosses" after he tried organizing their miners. He was executed by firing squad, a form of capital punishment unique to Utah. "The Ballad of Joe Hill" was written later, words and music, by a folksinger with strong pro-union beliefs, whose name does not immediately come to my mind, though it may have been Woody Guthrie or Pete Seeger. In those years, folksingers were strongly pro-union, though this changed for me after the AFL-CIO sent goons to beat up people who protested against the American invasion of Vietnam. This made the AFL-CIO America's largest pro-war organization. So I resigned my membership, and my office in a local of the American Federation of Teachers, and I now cross AFL-CIO picket lines whenever I encounter one.

GETTING CAUGHT UP

Blancmange #508 (Blackman) - As in every month, the fanzine of **APA-Q** editor Mark Blackman leads off the August Distribution of **APA-Q**, its 588th. He announces that the 2017 Lunacon will be at the Westchester Marriott Hotel in Tarrytown, NY on 7-9 April 2017. The Writer Guest of Honor will be Ben Bova, the Fan Guest of Honor will be Roberta Rogow, and the Musical Guest will be the Boogie Knights.

Mark observes that Governor Pence, Donald Rump's running mate, is a creationist and a climate-change denier, while Dr. Ben Carson, another enthusiast for Rump, "warned that the US risks God's wrath if Mrs. Clinton wins the election." Apparently he has not yet run across any of the Republicans who claim that President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was a mistake, but a recent news report on ABC-TV reported that a sizable number of Republicans believe it.

My cell phone has also died, and I have decided not to replace it. A few weeks ago, an electrical storm knocked out my land-line phone, but Deirdre got someone to fix it with no trouble. (See p. 1)

Religious freedom, as Americans now know it, seems to have originated in the Netherlands at a time when, in most other nations, the prime minister, the archbishop, and the king were convinced that anyone who didn't belong to the king's church was a potentially disloyal heretic. (For different nations, it was often different churches, but the idea remained constant.)

Much Dutch territory had been inherited by King Phillip II of Spain, owing to various marriages of his female ancestors, but the Dutch fired him, kicked out his troops, and declared religious freedom. This included not only various Christian factions, but people of all religions, probably including the ancestors of Anne Frank, which is why the Netherlands has the largest Jewish community in northern Europe. By the 1630s, there were also objections in England to the religious monopoly claimed by the Church of England. (This is why, in 1638, Samuel Boardman, his cousin, and their wives fled to Massachusetts. That was forbidden by English law, so my family arrived here illegally, just like the people Donald Rump is so worried about.) English rebels eventually expressed their objections by beheading the prime minister, the archbishop, and the king.

The document by which the Dutch fired an unsatisfactory monarch, listing their disagreements with him, was called "The Abjuration of Phillip". Americans did the same thing in 1776, so there is certainly Dutch influence on the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution with its guarantees of religious freedom. More generally, the Dutch influence came largely from New York with its large Dutch population, and three of our better presidents came from there, including one (van Buren) whose native language was the New York dialect of Dutch.

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Before Mark wrote that Confederates were not terrorists, he should have obtained the opinions of a few African-Americans. Nor did it end with the suppression of the Rebellion. Early in the 20th century, local whites forcibly ran all African-Americans out of Forsyth County, Georgia, killing several of them brutally, and kept them out for decades. The county then had no segregated facilities, since there was no one to segregate.

I thank Mark for the many references to historically set detective novels. I plan to incorporate them in my list, and look for some of them in local libraries. Unfortunately, the replacement of card catalogs by computer terminals means that, instead of ranging among the cards by myself, I have to tie up a terminal and the time of a librarian to make such a search.

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filksong. Also, the Estonian Vader died in 1978.

Dagon #677 (me) - Dylan Roof, who murdered nine African-Americans at a prayer meeting in Charleston, SC a couple of years ago, in hopes of starting a race war, was taken into custody almost immediately afterwards but has not yet gone on trial. Moreover, the prosecution is not asking for the death penalty. Possibly the government of South Carolina fears that the many South Carolinians who share Roof's hatreds will rise in violent indignation over his execution.

APA-Qover #589 (Blackman) - As in APA-Q #588, Mark Blackman and I are the only contributors who have fanzines in this Distribution. Not only is this APA-Qover dedicated to the 50th anniversary of *Star Trek*, but the U. S. Postal "Service" has produced stamps commemorating this anniversary. If I can get them, this issue of *Dagon* will be mailed with these stamps.

Blanemange #509 (Blackman): Mark writes that the 2017 Lunacon will also have Artist Guest of Honor Bob Eggleton and Special Guest Artist Marianne Plumridge.

My own electronic equipment also misbehaves occasionally for reasons unknown to me, which is why I put on page 2 of this *Dagon* a notice of how you will know when I cannot produce an issue.

Mark also describes how the "Satanic Temple" deals with attempts by Christians to get their religious proceedings into public spaces and institutions. The "Temple" merely asks those public institutions to also publicize their own allegedly Satanic rituals. When Christians attempt to put a "Ten Commandments" plaque in publicly owned spaces (schools, for example) they simply come in with a statement of their own alleged beliefs, and also ask to put them into that place. "The Satanic Temple," Mark writes, "has now taken aim at Christian prayer clubs in public schools." Moreover, and obviously, "the Satanists are really just atheists with a finely honed sense of humor."

At the time of the Slaveholders' Rebellion, a proposed constitutional amendment was introduced into Congress, declaring among other things that the United States is a Christian nation. Needless to say, it failed.

Where can *Too Many Songs* by Tom Lehrer be bought or ordered, and at what price? And I thank Mark for correcting my text of his "Be Prepared!"

Obviously it was not Martin Luther who was upset by Galileo, but he was upset by earlier astronomers who thought that the Earth went around the Sun. I don't have the quotes at hand. Protestant objections to the heliocentric solar system faded out early, possibly because Protestants took issue with the geocentric model just as they took issue with almost everything the Catholics did.

Yes, "the Republican Party isn't going away". On the contrary, after Rump's defeat there will probably be several of them. One of them already has a presidential ticket in the

field - formerly Republican governors Johnson and Weld, who are on the ballot in all fifty states as "the Libertarian Party". Polls give them about 10% of the total vote, most of it already taken from the Republican Party and therefore diminishing their total against Clinton. They also advocate diminishing the power of the federal government, which Libertarians regard as an oppressive alien power, out to destroy their freedom to ignore or repeal civil rights and voting rights laws.

Technically, I think that Theodore Roosevelt was my fifth cousin, three times removed. This seems reasonable, as "TR" and my great-grandfather Martin Boardman II were born in the same year. (Great-grandfather Boardman's mother-in-law, and therefore also my ancestor, was born a Waldron, a descendant of Sheriff Resolved Waldron, from whom the Presidents Roosevelt are also descended.) Since "TR" and "FDR" were of the same generation, I am probably as distantly related to them as they were to each other, disregarding the degrees of removal.

Dagonim #674 and #678 (me): There was an report by Raphael Minder in the *New York Times* of 8 September 2016 concerning one of the smaller nationalities which inhabit southwestern France and northern Spain, and whom Bob Rodriguez told me about during our conversation at Lunacon. The Catalans live in eastern Spain, but a few "Catalans of the North" live across the Pyrenees in France. They speak a Romance language, and Al Nofi once told me that his mother, who could speak Italian, was able to understand Spanish Catalan quite well. Apparently France is now rearranging its internal subdivisions for greater administrative efficiency. This will mean combining the regions Languedoc-Rousillon and Midi-Pyrénées into one region, Occitanie, where a Romance language other than French or Catalan is spoken. But the Catalans regard this as "erasing their presence from the map." The Spanish Catalans have a vigorous independence movement, which their French cousins may want to join if it comes to pass.

Dagon #679 (APA-Q #590)

John Boardman
12716 Ginger Wood Lane
Clarksburg, MD 20871

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you may find something of
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