

DAGON

#681, APA-Q #592

December 2016

QUIFFECIT (Lat. "WHODUNNIT")

I had expected to have, in this issue of **Dagon**, another review of a historically set mystery novel. However, none of the books I intended to review were present in the nearest branch of the Montgomery County Public Library, the last time Deirdre gave me a lift to it. So I put in a request that would bring from other branches some of the books I would like to review in future **Dagonim**.

Many authors of these mysteries write their novels in series, with the same detective(s) solving murder after murder. These are some of the authors whose books I have already reviewed, or plan to review, in **Dagon**, listed in the chronological order of their settings: Mark Blackman has provided almost all of the shorter listings, which he had published in his fanzine **Blancmange** #508, APA-Q #588 (August 2016). Historical characters are indicated by "^".

And if any **Dagon** reader would like to read any of these books, or any other historically set detective story, I would seriously consider printing that review in **Dagon**.

Lauren Haney: detective Lieutenant Bok, ancient Egypt, *The Right Hand of Amon*, etc.

Gary Corby: detective Nicolaos and priestess Diotima of Mantinea, *The Pericles Commission*, etc.

Margaret Doody: Aristotle^, *Aristotle Detective*, etc.

John Maddox Roberts, Decius Caecilius Metullus, *SPQR* series, late Roman Republic

Steven Saylor: whose *delator* (in effect, detective) Gordianus the Finder was active in ancient Rome in the last years of the Roman Republic. (Julius Caesar^ is a minor character.) I have reviewed some of his adventures in issues of **Dagon** published before 2013, but those are in storage now, and presently unavailable.

Lindsey Davis: author of a series of twenty mystery novels about the career of Marcus Didius Falco, who operated in Rome and its empire during the reign of Emperor Vespasianus^ (r. 69-79 CE) The sixteenth through twentieth books in this series are *Scandal Takes a Holiday*, *See Delphi and Die*, *Saturnalia*, *Alexandria*, and *Nemesis*, reviewed in **Dagonim** ##614, 615, 617, and #654 in 2011-2014. He then started a second series, in which the detective is Falco's adopted daughter Flavia Alba, whom Falco acquired years before when he was a soldier engaged in suppressing the Boadicean revolt in the province of Britannia, and she was a waif who knew nothing about her name, nationality,

or parentage. Eventually she became the baby-sitter of the two daughters of Falco and his wife Helena. (Why the daughter of a Roman senator has a Greek name is not explained.) By the time that the first novel of her detective career, *The Ides of April*, takes place, she has been married at 17, widowed at 20, and is now 28 and an experienced *delator*. (Or perhaps *delatrix*?) Her foster-father is now retired on a legacy from his father, an unscrupulous auctioneer and suspected forger and fence of antiquities. The year is now 89 CE, in the reign of Vespasianus's son Domitianus[^] (r. 81-96). A review of *The Ides of April* may be found in **Dagon** #651 (April 2014). I have not yet been able to find whether Davis has written any further cases of Flavia Alba.

Robert van Gulik: Judge Dee (Dee Goong An), based on magistrate Ti Jen-chieh[^] of the Tang dynasty, set in Ming Dynasty China, *The Chinese Maze Murders*, etc.

Alys Clare: Lassair, a healer in 11th-century England, *Out of the Dawn Light*, etc.

Alys Clare: Josse of Acquin and Abbess Helewise, 12th-century England, *Fortune Like the Moon*, etc.

Ellis Peters: Brother Cadfael (a Welsh monk in a Shropshire monastery), middle 12th century, *A Morbid Taste for Bones*, etc.

Ariana Franklin: Adelia Aguilar, 12th-century forensic medical examiner, *Mistress of the Art of Death*, etc.

Roberta Gellis: Magdalene la Bâtarde, a madam, *A Mortal Bane*, etc.

Michael Jecks: writes of a team of two detectives. brought together by their mutual interests as office-holders in early 14th-century Devonshire. They are Sir Baldwin Furnhill and Simon Puttock, and they operate in and around the town of Crediton in Devonshire, a maritime county in southwestern England. Sir Baldwin had been a crusader, a member of the Knights Templar, an order of men who were both knights and monks until they were expropriated by King Philippe IV[^] of France, as described in the first book of the series. (See **Dagon** #644 (August 2013), in which the first five books of the series are listed, together with the issues of **Dagon** in which they had been reviewed.) Sir Baldwin escapes to England, where he has just inherited his older brother's castle. Nearby is Lydford Castle, of which Simon Puttock is bailiff

The fifth book in the series, *The Abbot's Gibbet*. was reviewed in **Dagon** #637, and the sixth, *The Leper's Return*, in #649. By 2010, Jecks had written 28 books in the series, and I have no doubt that more have since been written. When I can locate and read some of the rest of this series, they will also be reviewed.

Umberto Eco: Robert of Baskerville, a 14th-century Franciscan friar , *The Name of the Rose*, etc.

Candace Robb: Owen Archer, 14th-century, *The Nun's Tale*, etc.

Margaret Fraser: has written several novels set in England in the 15th century, in which the mysteries are solved by Dame Frevisse, a nun. All the issues of **Dagon** which review accounts of her cases seem to be in storage. so I have available no information immediately about them.

Roberta Gellis: Lucrezia Borgia[^], *Lucrezia Borgia and the Mother of Poisons*.

Kate Sedley's: detective is Roger Chapman, who solves murders in late 15th or early 16th century England. As with Fraser's books, I cannot provide further information about them.

Edward Marston: (a name which I strongly suspect is a pseudonym) wrote a series of mysteries whose setting is a company of actors in the London of the 1590s. Two of these books, *The Silent Woman* and *The Roaring Boy*, (fifth and sixth in the series) were reviewed in my gaming fanzine **Graustark** in 1995. Thanks to Mark Blackman, I was able to reprint these reviews in **Dagon #663** (May 2015). These murder mysteries remind us strongly of the Queen's Men (later, in the next reign, the Lord Admiral's Men), a company of actors for whom Shakespeare wrote several plays. However, "Lord Westfield's Men" for whom Marston's character Nicholas Bracewell serves as stage manager and prompter, does not deal with plays, or with actors, of Shakespearean quality. One of the second-rate playwrights whose works were put on stage by the real-life equivalents of Lord Westfield's Men was named "John Marston". This led me to suspect that the author of this series of murder mysteries may have taken the name "Edward Marston" as an in-group joke.

Maan Meyers: detectives of the Tonneman~ family in Nieuw Amsterdam and New York in the 17th century. A member of this family was a *Schout* (combination sheriff and prosecuting attorney under Dutch rule), *The Dutchman*, etc.

Robert Lee Hall: Benjamin Franklin~ during his sojourn in England as an agent for the Pennsylvania Colony.

Jonathan Carriel: Thomas Dordrecht, Anglo-Dutch merchant in pre-Revolutionary New York, *Die Fasting*, etc.\

Elsa Hart: Li Du, librarian in 18th-century China, *Jade Dragon Mountain*.

Wilder Perkins: Captain Bartholomew Hoare, in the period of the Napoleonic Wars, *Hoare and the Portsmouth Atrocities*, etc.

Stephanie Barron: Jane Austen[^], *Jane and the Unpleasantness at Scargrave Manor*, etc.

Barbara Hambly: Benjamin Janvier/January, 1820s New Orleans freedman, musician, doctor, *A Free Man of Color*, etc.

William J. Palmer: Charles Dickens[^] & Wilkie Collins[^] *The Highwayman and Mr. Dickens*,

etc.

Louis Bayard: young Edgar Allan Poe^ at West Point, *The Pale Blue Eye*

John Dickson Carr: Edgar Allan Poe^, "The Gentleman from Paris", a short story

Avi: Edgar Allan Poe^, *The Man Who Was Poe*

Marc Olden: Edgar Allan Poe^, *Poe Must Die*

Manny Meyers: Edgar Allan Poe^, *The Last Mystery of Edgar Allan Poe: The Troy Dossier*

Harold Schechter: Edgar Allan Poe^, *Nevermore*, plus *Davy Crockett*, etc.

George MacDonald Frazer: did not chiefly write murder mysteries, though in some of his books about the scapegrace army officer Henry Paget Flashman there occur mysteries that require solution. Twelve Flashman books have appeared under Frazer's name; all of them are listed in chronological order in **Dagon** #649 (January 2014). The character's name did not originate with Frazer. In Thomas Hughes's popular 19th century novel *Tom Brown's Schooldays* there appears a fellow-student named Flashman, a disobedient and dissipated rascal who is eventually expelled. Frazer takes up Flashman's career after his expulsion. He uses family connections to get an army commission, and is then seen as far from actual military action as he can manage, in several British campaigns of the middle 19th century. (At one point, in India, he briefly meets Tom Brown again, a meeting not appreciated by either.) I have read and greatly enjoyed all these novels except for the last, *Flashman on the March*, a copy of which I have not yet been able to find.

Raymond Saunders, an American author, apparently discovered and enjoyed Frazer's Flashman series, and decided to put a Flashman type into an picaresque American novel. His "hero", Fenwick Travers, is about a generation younger than Flashman. He gets a young lady inconveniently pregnant in Illinois, enlists in the army, and goes quickly off to New Mexico to fight the natives. (I believe we get a brief sketch of Captain Arthur MacArthur, who commanded a fort in that area, but I don't recall mention of his son who also lived there, a boy named Douglas.) He earns an appointment to West Point which he really doesn't deserve, but rejoices at escaping actual fighting in order to read about other people's wars. That, of course, doesn't work, and he finds himself wearing second lieutenant's bars in Cuba, fighting the Spanish in America's shortest and most badly managed war. America won that war only because Spanish troops were led even more incompetently than the Americans. This was noted by several neutral military observers, including a young German officer, whose reports led the German army to believe that it had nothing to worry about if America should ever send troops to Europe to fight Germans. In a later book, Travers meets the German again during the troubles in China that are usually called "the Boxer Rebellion". We get strong hints that Travers and the

German will eventually meet again, as generals in World War II.

Reviewers do not regard Saunders's books as highly as Frazer's. Only three books about Travers were published before the author's death: *Fenwick Travers and the Years of Empire*, *Fenwick Travers and the Hidden Kingdom*, and *Fenwick Travers and the Panama Canal*.

Barry Tighe: is an author who apparently enjoyed Frazer's Flashman series so greatly that, when Frazer died after publishing *Flashman on the March*, he set out to write another Flashman novel. By the time *Flashman on the March* was written, hints in the books made it fairly clear that Flashman's next military misadventure would be in America, getting involved in the Slaveholders' Rebellion. Hints in the previous Flashman novels seemed to indicate that at various times he would fight on the government and rebellious sides. This is what Tighe seems to have done in his Flashman novel, which was entitled *Flashman and the War between the States* - a ridiculous usage which seems to be popular among neo-Confederates who would apparently think they would enjoy another round. The official title of the U. S. government's history of the war was entitled *The Rebellion Record*. If further details are needed, as they may be more than 150 years after the end of the war, just say who rebelled and why. The term "Slaveholders' Rebellion" fits perfectly.

Tighe's book apparently upset someone near to the late Frazer - his family, or perhaps his publisher. Someone objected, and under its original title Tighe's book is now quite a rarity. But Tighe responded. He renamed the book's hero "Thomas Armstrong", and re-titled it *Thomas "British Tommy" Armstrong and the War between the States*. Apparently this new title, though very cumbersome, could not stir up a legal case about the book, and it is now in libraries, though I have as yet been unable to locate a copy. If I do, I will read it, and review it in **Dagon**.

Owen Parry: is setting his series of murder mysteries against a background of much greater slaughter than Frazer's - the outbreak of the Slaveholders' Rebellion. The first two books in the series, *Faded Coat of Blue* and *Shadows of Glory*, were respectively reviewed in **Dagonim** #632 and #638 in 2012 and 2013, issues which I do not now have readily available. The third book, *Call Each River Jordan*, was reviewed in **Dagon** #675 (June 2016). His hero, a Welsh veteran of the British Army, had served in the Crimea and India before coming to the United States, and in the most recent book I have read is a major in the U. S. Army, fighting the Rebels and solving non-military murders of uncertain origin.

Jack Martin: also set his murder mysteries during the Rebellion, but I have so far been unable

to find any of them in local libraries. Curiously, the title of each book is also the name of a song popular at that time. So far they are *John Brown's Body*, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, and *Marching through Georgia*. I was particularly interested in the first and fourth of these books, since my cousin Simeon Bushnell enlisted with John Brown but was too ill to go to Harper's Ferry with him. (He died of tuberculosis two years later.) And my great-great-grandfather's brother, Sergeant James Boardman of the First Minnesota Light Artillery, was on the March through Georgia.

Peter Heck: Samuel Clemens a/k/a Mark Twain[^], *Death on the Mississippi*, etc.

Roberta Rogow: Rev. Dodgson[^] & Dr. Arthur Conan Doyle[^], *The Problem of the Missing Miss*, etc.

Loren D. Estleman: Old West Marshal Page Murdock, *The High Rocks*, etc.

Bill Pronzini (with Marcia Muller): Sabina Carpenter, a Pinkerton detective's widow working in her fallen husband's profession, *Quincannon*, etc.

Peter Lovesey: Sergeant Cribb, a Victorian-era police detective, *Wobble to Death*, etc.

Peter Lovesey: Albert Edward[^] ("Bertie"), Prince of Wales (the future King Edward VII), *Bertie and the Tinman*, etc.

William L. DeAndrea: New York City Police Commissioner Theodore Roosevelt[^], *The Lunatic Fringe: A Novel Wherein Theodore Roosevelt Meets the Pink Angel*

Jed Rubinfeld: Sigmund Freud[^] visiting New York City, *The Interpretation of Murder*

Victoria Thompson's series of "Gaslight Mysteries" gives her heroine Sarah Decker Brandt a most unusual occupation for someone involved in solving murders. She is a midwife, and her cases come to her attention when a relative or neighbor of a patient is mysteriously killed. This series of at least eleven mysteries is set from 1895 on, in Manhattan, and so far I have read the first three. *Murder on Astor Place*, published in 1999, was reviewed in **Dagon** #639 (March 2013), *Murder on St. Mark's Place* in **Dagon** #652 (May 2014), and *Murder on Gramercy Park* in **Dagon** #644 (August 2013). The next book in the series is *Murder on Marble Row*, which I will review as soon as I can find a copy.

Like her "contemporary" Sherlock Holmes, Sarah Brandt has useful contacts with the police, although Detective Sergeant Malloy is more competent than Lestrade or Gregson. Malloy is a widower, who lives with his crotchety old mother and his three-year-old son in a Manhattan apartment. Sarah Brandt, by contrast, comes from a family of the city's Dutch aristocracy, but broke with them when she married a mere physician. After his mysterious and still unsolved murder, she began work as a midwife. Malloy is an honest officers in a department riddled with graft and corruption, but an attempt to

clean it up is being made by its new Commissioner, a member of the aristocracy from which Sarah comes, a certain Theodore Roosevelt^.

Ron Goulart: Julius "Groucho" Marx^, *Groucho Marx, Master Detective*, etc.

Stuart M. Kaminsky: Toby Peters, a private detective in World War II Hollywood, with real notables^appearing, *Bullet for a Star*, etc.

To his contributions to this listing Mark added a brief afterword: "I've read most. The list is inexhaustible. "Recommendation: *Historical Whodunits*, ed. Mike Ashley re ancient world, medieval & "gaslight era" mysteries; also his *The Mammoth Book of Historical Whodunits*. I have excluded Holmes pastiches, fantasies & alternate histories."

I would appreciate it if readers could inform me of any other historically set murder mysteries which I could review, or maybe even send me their own reviews of such books.

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.

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.

When I put copies of **Dagon** #680 into the mail on 21 October 2016, I compared the number of copies with the number of stamps I had left, and concluded that three copies of the fanzine had gone into the mailbox without stamps.

So if your surname begins with "V" or with any later letter, and you didn't receive a copy of **Dagon** #680, please let me know at once, and I will mail you a copy.

I plan to put into the next issue of **Dagon** an updated mailing list. I would appreciate it if all readers could check my latest listing of their addresses, and let me know if any need to be corrected or updated. The January 2017 issue will probably be written about the middle of December 2016.

GETTING CAUGHT UP

Blamcange #510 (Blackman): I may have missed something in my remarks about the comic book cited as *Asterix and Obelix All at Sea*. The earlier book I had in mind was entitled, in the original French, *La Grande Traversée*. I translated that title in **Dagon #680** as “*The Big Crossing*”. I have not yet seen *Asterix and Obelix All at Sea*, which I presume is an English translation of the comic book Mark calls *The Galley of Obelix*. The earlier books in the series, including *La Grande Traversée*, were written by René Goscinny and illustrated by Albert Uderzo, but Goscinny died about ten years ago, and Uderzo now both draws and writes the Astérix books.

Incidentally, I found that my command of French increased greatly after I read several of the Astérix books, and I feel that comic books might be an effective addition to a foreign language course.

Children were also evacuated from Great Britain to America during World War I. One family came as far as Iowa, where their daughter met and married my mother’s first cousin, and settled down with him when he inherited his father’s farm. She probably startled several people who had not expected to meet the wife of an Iowa farmer, speaking a dialect that was pure Yorkshire.

A structure called the “Labyrinth” actually existed in ancient Crete. It was not a maze to throw prisoners into, but a royal palace.

I’ve never seen *Nature Girl*. However, there is an animated cartoon show on the Qubo channel from Canada, entitled *Nature Cat*.

Anent Mark’s discussion of “crooks”, and the 2016 presidential campaign, I have noticed that when Republican presidential candidates win landslide victories, they had made their reputations in fields other than politics. As examples, Eisenhower was a general, Reagan was an actor, and Nixon was a crook.

I mailed Beki Taylor a **Dagon** accidentally, and it came back in the mail, since I had mis-written her address.

I apparently did not realize, when I saw the San Diego Padres announce at the All-Star Game that they had purportedly signed Ginny Baker to pitch for them, that the whole thing was a publicity stunt to promote the new TV show *Pitch*. And Baker’s name was not mentioned in the report I read in the sports pages of the *New York Times* of 24 September 2016, where I got the information about *Pitch*. Well, maybe we will also learn that the Donald (T)Rump campaign was just a promotion for a new TV show about a wacky president. And *Pitch* may be seen on the Fox channel on Thursdays at 9 PM EST. Recently the opening episode of *Pitch*,

shown originally on Thursday 29 September, was re-broadcast on Saturday 5 November, so I got to see Ginny Baker pitching for the Padres as a TV show.

I had started printing the name of "ISIS" as "Da'esh" because I had heard on a news broadcast that the Muslim extremists did not like that name. But you give their name as "Al-Dawla", and claim that they do like that name. Is this just another publicity stunt like "Ginny Baker"?

How to... #119 (Del Grande): Thanks for the information about why typed text sometimes vanishes unaccountably. I haven't had any trouble with this problem since.

With the Cleveland Indians playing in the World Series, there have been some suggestions that they change their name and the iconic "Chief Wahoo" whose picture is on a patch on their uniforms. There have been, to the best of my knowledge, no similar suggestions about the Boston/Milwaukee/Atlanta Braves, although a genuine Original American using the name "Chief Nakahoma" ("knock a homer") no longer cavorts at their games. But the Original Americans are brave - they were outnumbered, outgunned, and outfought, but they cannot be denied bravery. (I prefer the term "Original American", since everyone born in this country is a "native American".)

And I have no objection to the term "political correctness", since I have a dictionary, and know what the words "correct" and "political" mean. As a result, I regard the term as a compliment.

Your more detailed form for the Einstein equation which describes general relativity is a preferable way of writing it. Apparently the History Channel program about general relativity derives from papers published before the "lambda" term was regarded as a necessary part of it. And the constant "c" is included in your version of the equation, but some papers had been published that were calibrated in units such that the value of "c" was taken to be "1". This simplifies the expression of relativity greatly, but omits a rather important constant.

Dagon #679 (me): The following filksong verses are not important enough for inclusion in "The Filksong File", but they are some of the few that satirize a television show not worth the bother of recalling. *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, satirized by *Mad* as "Voyage to See What's at the Bottom", and afflicted with low ratings, has long since vanished from prime time. The tune should be obvious.

Sailing, sailing,
Under the bounding main.
They're taking every *Star Trek* plot
And using them again.

Ratings, ratings,
Sinking just like a rock.
A dolphin is no substitute
For aliens like Spock.

And of course Mr. Spock was yet another example of that prime impossibility of early science fiction, a character whose parents were from two species that had evolved on different planets. However, I do recall hearing once, on the show, that special procedures had to be used to make his conception possible.

The MSNBC commentator Rachel Maddow also caught the error in Donald (T)Rump's TV announcement that Election Day will be on 28 November. She pointed out that 28 November *is* an important dater for (T)Rump, but not because it is Election Day, which obstinately remained at 8 November. It was the day that (T)Rump has to be in court in New York, to stand trial on the charges related to the frauds involved in his phony "Trump University".

And I have finally found the accurate date on which electors have to meet in their state capitals and elect the next president. It will be Monday 19 December. And one probable elector has announced that, no matter which presidential candidate carries his state, which is Washington, he will vote for someone else. This man, whose name I did not hear clearly in an MSNBC report on 4 November, is of Original American stock, and is on the ballot as a Democratic candidate for elector. If he is elected, which means "if Clinton carries Washington" (which she did), he will instead vote for someone else, as a protest against the way the Original Americans are treated by the government. Under Washington state law this will make him liable for a fine of \$1,000, which does not bother him in the least. I do not know at present for whom he will vote, but I would guess that it might be the chief of his tribe.

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