

???

QUESTIONS ON THIS ISSUE
Rate all items given on a 1 to 100 scale, with 1 awful and 100 great.

ARTICLE	RATING
Keeping A Campaign Alive	_____
Epilogue	_____
Breakfast In R'Lyeh	_____
Call of Khalk'ru	_____
Arts Arcane: Beastmastery	_____
Gods of Imperial Rome	_____
Dwarves	_____
Berserkerang: The Octopus	_____
ARTIST	RATING
Mike Cranford(3,11,12,13,19)	_____
Tom Curtin(4,5)	_____
Valerie Olson(10,	_____
David Randrup(10,14,17)	_____
Nequi Dharsee(15,18)	_____
Gavin Aho(19)	_____
Cover	_____
Titles/Graphics	_____
What's the worst FRP game aid or other product you've ever bought?	_____

FEEDBACK

RESULTS #18		ARTICLE	RATING CHANGE	QUESTION	EYES
In the Speculum	83	-1	36 Pages at \$2:	44%	
Mini-Adventure #7	67	-18	28 Pages at \$1.50:	42%	
The Arts Arcane	73	-4	Same Size, Monthly:	52%	
Berserkerang	97	--	More SF:	56%	
Primitive Tribesmen	70	--	More Scenarios:	50%	
Virtue & Vice	92	--	More Creatures:	58%	
The Liberators	88	+5	More Magic Items:	52%	
YRS Examined	83	--	More Fiction:	56%	
			More Humor:	80%	
Titles	91	-5	More Commentary:	74%	
Cover	92	+2	More Variants:	36%	
Valerie Olson	92	-5	Letters Section:	54%	
Tom Curtin	67	--	Other Magazines Read:		
Nequi Dharsee	95	--	THE DRAGON	48%	
Mike Cranford	97	+22	ALARUMS & EXCURSIONS	32%	
			SORCERERS APPRENTICE	30%	
			DIFFERENT WORLDS	28%	
			WHITE DWARF	18%	
Overall	83	--	THE WILD HUNT	17%	
			PEGASUS	16%	
			SPACEGAMER	12%	

Results rated last issue as good as #17, THE WILD HUNT which is pretty good. The questions were less rewarding. It seems the questions were a failure. At least they got rather equivocal responses. In fact, they gave us almost nothing to work with or draw conclusions, except that maybe we should go monthly, we should have more humor and commentary, and we shouldn't have more variants. Magazines read were more or less as expected.

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SS

June 1982

V4, N4

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Mark Cutler

Beastmastery
Eric Olson

Roman Gods
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Fiction
Lew Bryson

Dwarves
Ron Pehr

The Octopus
Jon Schuller

FIRST CLASS MAIL

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Editorial

The first thing you'll probably notice about this issue is that it has a new price on the cover. From now on the face value of an issue of ABYSS will be increased to \$1.25 to try to offset costs a little bit more. Note that the subscription cost will not go up at all, at least not yet.

The format change mentioned in the Feedback section last issue will take place starting with the 1st issue of 1983, though just what the change will be is still a mystery even to us.

This issue features some new things of interest. The special articles on *Call of Cthulhu* are a new idea, and we've brought back another of the popular series on religion.

In #20 we should have some sort of write-up of *GENCON EAST*, if we go, plus the first in a new series by Lew Bryson, and another religion article. Some of the 'regular' features which have been taking a rest will be back, including *Guess What's Coming to Dinner*, *Vidar's Forge*, and a double-length *In the Speculum*.

As always, your suggestions, questions, and comments are solicited. It is hard to edit in a vacuum, and it is your response which guides many of our decisions.

Dave Nalle

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If there is an X on your label after the issue number, or in pen under the A on the return address, your subscription expires with this issue. You should renew immediately at the low cost of \$5 for 6 issues or \$10 for 12. If the number given on the label is 19 or 20 you should renew soon as those issues are coming fast and the rate may go up.

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 Mike Cranford: Cover, 3, 11, 12, 13, 19; Tom Curtin: 4, 5; Valerie Olson: 10; David Randrup: 10, 14, 17; Nequi Dharsee: 15, 18; Gavin Aho: 19.

KEEPING A CAMPAIGN ALIVE

MARK CUTLER



Mark Cutler is new to these pages. This issue we are pleased to present his ideas on spicing up a fantasy campaign and maintaining interest and novelty.

Scene: A party of adventurers arrives in a small outpost town on the borders of the Wild Lands. They pass the guards at the gate and go straight to the tavern. After looking over the shady locals they step up to the bar and plop down a few pieces of silver. The bartender, used to adventurers, doesn't wait to hear their questions. "Yeah, about thirteen miles due south, just past the Roaring River."

The party smiles in anticipation.

"That's right," says the bartender, "a dungeon..."

Smiles become frowns and three of the stalwart adventurers faint, falling in a heap. The others groan with agony...

"A DUNGEON!!! By Thor's beard, not another! Gods, we've been through a sea of ruins, a flood of lost shrines, a swarm of haunted towers. WE'RE SICK OF 'DUNGEONS'! Let's get out of here."

Dungeons and Dragons is one of the fastest growing games around, and is popular in many countries. What makes it and most other FRP games popular are the thousands of variations and variables present in such open-ended games. It would be difficult to play a limited game like *Monopoly* as often as an FRP game. The charm of fantasy role-playing is the fact that so many different actions and possibilities are possible. Nonetheless, even the best FRPing campaign can get predictable and boring after a while.

One problem in many D&D campaigns is the concept of the 'dungeon'. Many of the modules published for D&D perpetuate this philosophy of static and unchallenging role-playing. Dungeons can be classified into two basic groups: Dead and Living.

Dead dungeons are those which follow the traditional, worn-out format, like *Lost Shrines of Tamoachan*, *White Plume Mountains*, and *Tombs of Horror*. This class includes randomly rolled dungeons, ruins, tombs, lost shrines, lost towers, lost, haunted and forgotten anything. The sample dungeon in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* is a perfect example of a Dead dungeon, combining most of the aspects of the type in one place. Dead dungeons may once have been Living, but they have generally been abandoned by their original inhabitants, and are usually filled instead with a mish-mash of unlikely, illogical, and ridiculous creatures who have no real reason for being there.

Live dungeons take a more logical and active perspective, such as the *Giant modules or Shrines of Kuo-Toa*. This group includes areas which are still being used for their intended purpose, and are filled with more-or-less expected creatures doing what they would naturally do. This includes towns, active temples, fortresses, guild halls, castles, or even the lair of a powerful being, like *Q-1 Queen of the Demonweb Pits*. Generally these adventure options are more flexible and open-ended, and have the feeling of existing as more than just a shooting gallery for adventurers.

A good campaign can have a mixture of the two types. A few rotting ruins is okay, but piling one after another on the players becomes too much like an assembly line.

The answer to improving the quality of your adventures is to use your imagination. Let it run wild if you have to. Think of a scenario so unusual that the players will be dying to see what will come next. You should strive to capture the excitement of your first adventure. For example, I once sent a party to rescue an asteroid from invasion by crystal men. They ended up defending the tunnels in the porous planetoid from the adventuring crystal invaders, a reversal of their traditional role.

There are many less radical options which can make good Living dungeons for a change from standard fare.

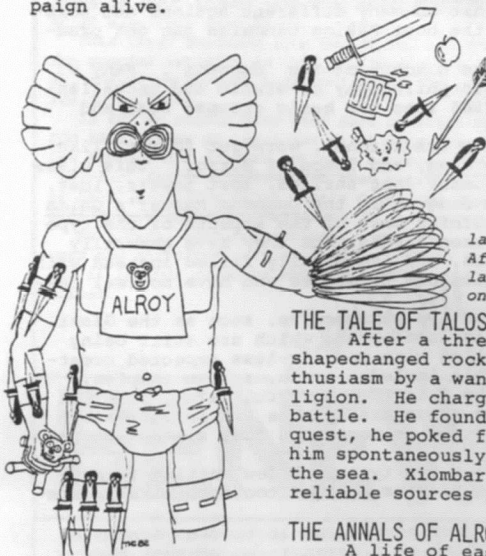
The fortress can provide fun for higher level adventurers, who will have to face a flood of low level troops, rather than a few high-powered monsters. If you use critical hits this can be particularly debilitating. It also lets Magic Users get in some little used mass-effect spells. The fortress should be easily defensible and very well organized. There should be alarm systems, easy internal access, and good communications, so that a group under attack by the party will be reinforced quickly. Naturally there will not be such things as wandering purple worms in a fortress. If you don't have encounters pre-determined, set up a special table for the fortress, or forget wandering monsters altogether.

Town adventures are different from any other variety. The exact composition of the town will depend on the type of world and terrain it is situated in. As a rule, towns should be well organized. Allow sufficient militia to face up to 200 marauders, plus an efficient watch. A strong leader might fit in, but is not essential. A puppet government may exist, controlled by local nobles or other major economic forces, like a powerful guild. Town adventures tend to be more subtle, with possibilities for more intrigue.

Castles are a good merger of Town and Fortress, as they often protect towns and are even in them. They are well defended, well-organized, and also link into the complex social structure of the town.

Temples and Shrines can take many forms. They can be treated like guilds, fortresses, or other types of communal dwelling or working places. The level of their visibility in the area will depend on their acceptability to the community. Many may be active, high-profile, types, but others may be secretive and mysterious. Remember that temples, shrines, and monestaries are places of worship, and this should be abundantly clear in background description and in encounters. Most temple servants will fight to the death, as they are defending what is sacred to them. Any defilement of the temple (i.e. pouring holy water on an idol of Demogorgon) will have grave consequences. The faithful will probably go berserk on the perpetrators, especially if they see the act. In this fury they would be much better in combat, and immune to charm, fear, and the like. The deity himself might even appear or send an agent, if called by enough important worshipers, or sufficiently offended. Treasure may well abound in a temple, of both clerical and secular types.

Many other interesting and unusual scenarios can be created by you as DM, or can be suggested to your DM by a player. If you are tired of seeing your druid dragged underground where he is useless, tell your DM that you want a wilderness adventure. As DM, look out for when your players get restless and anticipate their need for change and meet it before they have to act. Remember that a DM does not have an ESP spell and cannot read the players' minds. While a responsive DM helps, when you get right down to it, it's the players who keep a campaign alive.



EPILOGUE LEW BRYSON

But you thought Lew's 'Brewski' epic was over last issue. But no, he returns with an epilogue. After all, our heroes didn't just implode after the last installment. Their lives went on, and on, and on...

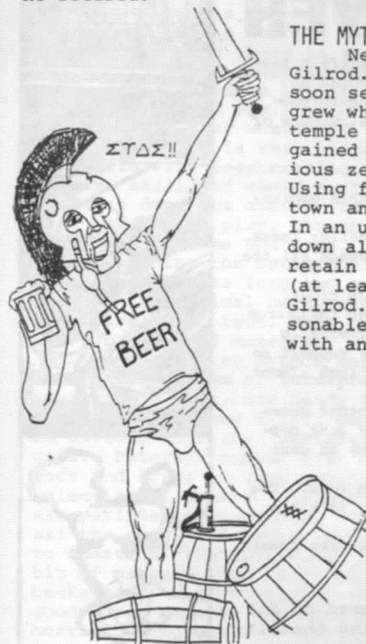
THE TALE OF TALOS

After a three year fling at making a lifestyle as a shapechanged rock, even Talos grew bored. Fired with enthusiasm by a wandering priest of Xiombarg, Talos got religion. He charged off on adventure to find the heat of battle. He found it. On the first day of his second quest, he poked fun at a Djinn named Antonik. Antonik made him spontaneously combust, and scattered the ashes over the sea. Xiombarg couldn't be reached for comment, but reliable sources reported that he was "very relieved".

THE ANNALS OF ALROY

A life of ease wasn't for Alroy either. After a set of jobs as a bodyguard, ending in an embarrassing series of accidental flower-thrower and lover slayings, he went adventuring with Implotius again. Together they assaulted the tower of the demon prince Vadrayffe. After

hacking through the lower floors they prepared to face and defeat the demon. The demon had other ideas. He telepathically convinced Alroy (not too hard) and two others to turn on Implotius and their three companions. The Greek escaped by a bit of quick subterfuge, but the others were doomed. The gods were unhappy. With striking good sense, Vadrayffe split, leaving Alroy and his buddies at the mercy of 3 nasty but whimsical deities. Alroy found a fitting punishment. The demon Shargalth took his Hawk Helm and rammed it solidly onto his head, making them one. Alroy was left death and with tunnel-vision. In the smartest move of his career, he retired.



THE MYTHS OF MITHRANDIR

Never satisfied, Mithrandir joined the priesthood of Gilrod. He rose meteorically in the young church, and was soon second only to High Priest Manalich I. His stature grew when, as a reward for throwing back an attack on the temple single-handedly, he underwent an apotheosis, and gained powers direct from Gilrod. With these came a religious zeal which led him to a Coup d'Etat in Brewski Gardens. Using fanatic hobbit shock troops, he took control of the town and handed it over to the church as a new holy city. In an uncharacteristic display of sentimentality he faced down all opposition and insisted that Implotius and Unferth retain visiting privileges, even though they both belonged (at least nominally) to faiths pledged to the downfall of Gilrod. This won him totally undeserved respect as a reasonable man. He just wanted someone around to raise hell with and kick a few hobbits.

THE INFAMIES OF IMPLOTIUS

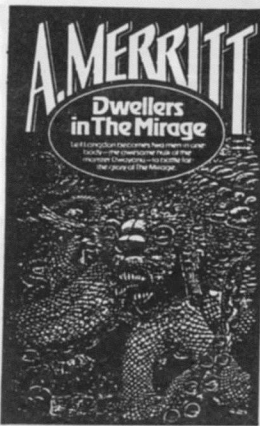
The Greek soon left Lancaster, returning only for periodic three-day binges, which became known as "Greek Weekends". He became champion of Mimir, an obscure and pointless Norse pseudo-deity. His sword, linked to his god, learned to speak (fortunately in Greek), and with its guidance he became a neutral paladin, following the razor thin path of balance. This didn't fill him with a sense of destiny, so he continued to knock about Hyperborea, and finally plane-hopped to Ysgarth where he found a people who actually spoke Greek. He settled in that land, called Achaja, and formed a company of mercenary lancers, though even this grew dull and he returned to freelancing. This led him to a progression of quests for Mimir, ending in the ill-fated quest for the eyes of Ymr and the quest for the pool of Mimir. Smeared with glory after these dubious victories, he headed across the vast abyss to meet with Mithrandir and Talos in Wyrldworld, where they quelled a religious disturbance for the priesthood of Ahriman. After Mithrandir sent numerous Witherwings down in flames, they reached the stronghold of Khaldatah, a local messiah. To serve neutrality Implotius suggested that the party take a bribe and spare the pitiful fanatic. All but one member agreed, and Implotius unleashed the power of his sword on him, causing him to simply vanish. Awed by this power Implotius retired to a quiet life of Brewmaster in Lancaster.

THE UNDERTAKINGS OF UNFERTH

The mighty viking took to administration with a vengeance. He was kept busy with the details of running a thriving amusement park, especially testing the quality of new recruits for the courtesan corps. After Mithrandir's coup he refused to find a new job and just hung around the Actor's Guild in Ptolemeias. After a scandal involving bribes and a transvestite troll he hopped (quickly) aboard his handy dragon ship and returned home to Gaeldoch to tend his older brother in his strange and incurable decline, and wait for his dad to succumb to old age, or a hunting accident, or a fall on the long castle steps, or a bit of bad bread, or any handy 'coincidence'. He's only a few unsteady heartbeats from the crown.

THE LAY OF LANCASTER

The town grew into the mecca of fun, and money Unferth had imagined. Hyperborea was a continent in tumult, the people dedicated to dullness. So Unferth and Mithrandir decided to move. They gave three years profits to a powerful Sorcerer, and he gated the town and brewery to a mountain range in Ysgarth, about 60 miles from Ptolemeias. After the coup Manaluch sent Gilrod after the Sorcerer and started funneling the profits into the church. Lancaster became a center for pilgrims of both amusement and Gilrod, and the flow of money became a golden flood.



CALL OF KHALK'RU? J.R. DAVIES

This article is from another newcomer to ABYSS who we hope to see more from in future issues. Here he examines the possibilities of unusual literary sources for modern role-playing.

Call of Cthulhu presents a system for role-playing in the 1920s in a background of the 'Cthulhu Mythos' of H.P. Lovecraft. It is natural that they should have selected the extremely popular literary source as the basis of the game, but there are some limitations inherent in such a choice, and some problems with the source material.

The 'Cthulhu Mythos' is so well known that the players in many campaigns will be as knowledgeable as the GM, and this may lead to problems arising from their ability to anticipate occurrences and their edge in dealing with the perils of the campaign. This can take away the fear of the unknown which makes such a campaign good.

A way to solve this problem is to create a more original campaign based in some parallel, but much less well known sources. Call of Cthulhu can make a good basis for such a campaign, but the familiar perils and challenges can be replaced by other material which will retain more horror and mystery. Three excellent sources come to mind, A. Merritt, Robert W. Chambers, and Manly Wade Wellman. All three authors create fully developed backgrounds with at least as many interesting elements as the Cthulhu tales.

A. MERRITT

A. Merritt wrote in roughly the same period as Lovecraft, using a contemporary '20s and '30s background. His career was roughly twice as long as Lovecraft's, starting earlier and ending later. As a result he was more prolific, so produced more material to base a campaign on.

His fiction is of two types. Many of his tales are based on his own myths, which has some parallels to Lovecraft's, and others are based on ancient mythologies, satanism, and voodoo. He is particularly good with possession, secret societies, and lost civilizations. His style is cleaner and less mystical than Lovecraft's, and is reminiscent of Conan Doyle, Saxé Rohmer, or Talbot Mundy. Essentially his works are better suited to role-playing because they are more concrete and action oriented, though they do have a heavy element of the fantastic. His characters also tend to be better developed than many of Lovecraft's, and he developed background just as well.

Merritt's major books currently in print include: *The Black Wheel* (with Hannes Bok), voodoo curses and pirate ghosts in the Caribbean; *The Ship of Ishtar*, adventure in Babylonian Mythology where the characters become ancient gods; *Dwellers in the Mirage*, adventure in a world of alien gods, including Khalk'ru, similar to some of Lovecraft's work; *The Face in the Abyss*, a hard to describe story of ancient evil and a lost race of snake people; *The Metal Monster*, an Asian valley full of alien robots; *The Fox Woman*, a collection of short stories in several settings; *Seven Footprints to Satan*, a battle against a secret satanic society. These books are all available from Avon. *Burn*, *Witch Burn*, *The Moon Pool*, and *Creep*, *Shadow*, *Creep* are out of print, but it is safe to assume that they and others will be reprinted.

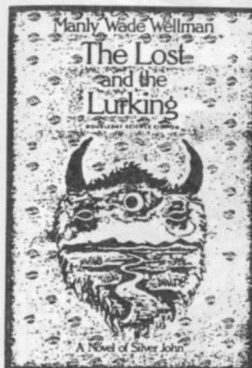
MANLY WADE WELLMAN

Wellman has the distinct advantage in this examination of being the only one of the three who is alive. He also has a unique and fascinating milieu, very different from any other author.

Wellman writes fiction set in America. He has been writing steadily but slowly for a long time. His main series of interest to Role-Players is his 'Silver John' series, about a folk-singer/evil-fighter with a silver-stringed guitar, a bit of arcane knowledge, and a strong will, who makes his way around the Appalachias fighting all sorts of evils, generally of Indian or satanic origin, but all very interesting and original. A lot of good background is also given.



The setting of these stories would be an outstanding and original role-playing campaign and a real change for most role-players. Most of Wellman's material is in short stories, though there are a couple of novels, many stories are also only available in anthologies or magazines. Other material of note includes his short-stories about Judge Pursuivant and John Thunstone. Not yet available are his Kardios stories set after the fall of Atlantis, but they don't fit into this article particularly well.



Wellman's work tends towards strong central characters and very well developed back-up characters. A lot of good background facts are given, including quotes and references to real and spurious mystic sources, tie-ins to the Cthulhu Mythos (though not enough to draw the stories into the mythos), and many connections between characters in history, other writer's works, and between his own stories. Wellman provides a coherency of background and style even stronger than Lovecraft's, and a body of work which is fairly easy to assimilate and

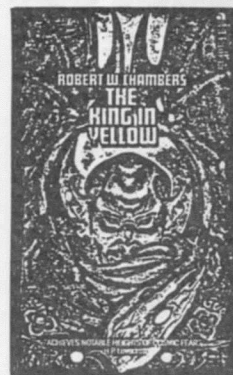
put into play. He has not been all that prolific, so his basic framework might have to be built on for a full campaign. The fact that so much of his writing can be used together in a related campaign helps.

Most of Wellman's books are in hardback only, with the exception of *Who Fears the Devil?*, his first collection of John the Balladeer stories, which is an excellent introduction. Available from Doubleday in hardback are: *The Old Gods Waken*, where druids awaken ancient Indian powers in the Appalachias; *After Dark* and *The Lost and the Lurking*, both of which continue with the adventures of John the Balladeer. Available in limited edition from Carcosa Press is *Lonely Vigils*, which contains short stories about Judge Pursuivant, Prof. Nathan Enderby, and John Thunstone, ideal examples of the psychic investigator type of story. Out of print from Carcosa is *Worse Things Waiting*, but it should be back.



ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

I had to include Chambers for his one classic, *The King in Yellow*. Many have tried to tie it into the Cthulhu Mythos, but it really should stand alone. It is similar in many ways to Saxé Rohmer's 'Fu Manchu' stories, but it surpasses them completely. It is the ultimate novel of racial and social paranoia, where the 'Yellow Peril' is embodied in strange and ancient magics. It is written in a somewhat mystical style, and is rather hard reading, but the mood which is built and the ideas presented are outstanding. While it is not enough to build a whole campaign around, it can be meshed in with either of the other two alternatives suggested, or the Cthulhu Mythos, or just about any early 20th century role-playing campaign. It is certainly must reading for GMs who want to run in that period. It is in paperback from Ace Books.



OTHER SOURCES

There are many other authors who provide good material for such campaigns. Not only the 20th century is available, but several earlier periods are also playable. For the early 20th century there are all the writers who wrote for the adventure pulps. For the Victorian period there is Conan Doyle, Kipling, Stoker, Dickens, Shelley and many others. For the pre-Victorian period William Blake and Robert Lewis Stevenson are particularly useful. There are ample opportunities for adventure in the fiction of much of the modern period.

PUBLISHER INFORMATION

Some of these books may not be available in stores, or may have to be ordered. This is especially true of *Lonely Vigils*, which is a special edition. Given here are the addresses of publishers mentioned in this article: AVON BOOKS, 959 8th Ave., New York, NY 10019; DOUBLEDAY, Garden City, New York; CARCOSA, Box 1064 Chapel Hill, NC 27514; ACE BOOKS, 1120 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036. Prices for both hardbacks and paperbacks are changeable, so you will have to find the current prices for yourself.

THE ARTS ARCAINE: BEASTMASTERY

ERIC OLSON

Eric Olson is another newcomer to *Abbyss*. He has helped out with RE at several conventions and plays in the Ysgarth 2 Campaign. He is a student at Georgetown University. These are his views on the Beastmaster character class.

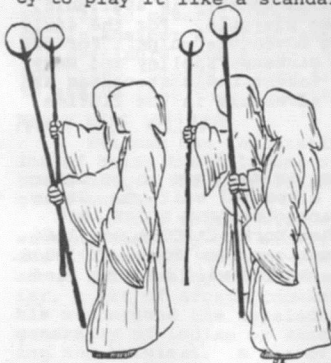
Beastmasters are the most misunderstood and misused class in the Ysgarth Rule System. Most players get a mistaken impression of the class by its inclusion in the Low Magic section and its low Experience Class(I). The class is actually very expensive, rivalling High Mage types in cost. It is also very slow in building strength. The most powerful spell in the class, **Beastform**, is tenth level, and when modified by a good affinity, say **Felines**, it becomes 12th level, well out of the reach of a lower level Spellcaster. Most other classes have at least some sort of damage spell at around 3rd level, for example, **Thorn Flight**, **Fireball**, or **Lightning Bolt**. But Beastmasters have little offensive power until they reach around 9th or 10th level.

Beastmasters are also weak when trying to increase in Magic Index to avoid fumbling. There are a total of 40 spell levels, while most others have at least twice that number. This can be compensated for by refinements like **Enhancement**, and by affinities, but this barely brings his MI up to par.

Affinities are also a problem. They are a great idea, but they cost an arm and a leg. To be a decent Beastmaster you should have 3 or 4 of the better affinities; say, **Canines**, **Avians**, and **Felines**. These are the most common larger creatures you will run into frequently and want to **Turn** or **Control**. Say that somehow you have the Skill Points, and have acquired all of the listed spells and those affinities already mentioned. That would cost you 61 LSP. You have probably spent about 30 LSP elsewhere in your career. That would be about right for a typical 6th level character. An average character would have an MI of 35 plus the 61 LSP spent on Beastmaster things, for an adjusted MI of 96. Now you are at the top of your profession, ready to take on the world. Wrong, while walking along minding your own business you are set on by a group of Vaen horsemen. No problem, just change into a Tiger and rip them to shreds. Well, let's see, **Felines** is Skill Level 14, and **Beastform** is a 10th level spell so the adjusted Spell Level is 12. You're 6th, so your MI is lowered by 30, to only 61% chance of success, not so good. The spell also takes 5 Combat Rounds to cast, and those horsemen are about to turn you into a pincushion, so you want to lower your Casting Time to 1 CR. This effectively cuts the MI to one-fifth, or 12% chance of success. Not only does this mean you will most likely fail, but will probably fumble and get turned into some sluglike lifeform, which the Vaen riders will make a very dead sluglike lifeform. So ends your career as a Beastmaster.

This is definitely the wrong way to play a Beastmaster, showing a fatal tendency to play it like a standard mage class. A Beastmaster should use his powers for defense, information, and scouting. He can add greatly to the overall strength of a party if used properly. In the last example, if the Beastmaster had affinity to **Equines**, he could make the horses shy or throw the riders. This might have let him surprise the horsemen, rather than being at a disadvantage against them if he had used birds as scouts. This would have given him the advance notice to use his beastform without a chance of fumbling, increasing the CT to raise the MI percentage. Instead of fighting he could have followed them to their camp in some inobtrusive form and taken them with an army of summoned affinity creatures.

The Beastmaster is the one character best suited to survival in a wilderness. He can summon aid and protection, and is an ideal 'natural' assassin. The Beastmaster can safely collect very virulent poisons from his affinity creatures. His assassinations can look like accidents. No one could have known that the



Baron was going to get jumped by a pack of wolves while he was out hunting. It may be a little early in the season for the wolves to come down from the mountains, but that's as far as suspicions will go. The Beastmaster has a natural power base, always having a place to run. The class is especially suited to 'loner' type characters. It is also good for priests, say of Aranhryd, Nerthus, or Danu. Being a priest also overcomes the problems of Magic Index, replacing it with Piety Index, which is run off of Zeal and has fewer possibilities for fumbles, and can increase more easily than Talent in the course of a game. This lets the average character give more to his other characteristics instead of concentrating on Talent/Zeal.

All in all I suggest that players take another look at the Beastmaster class. My main character is a Fighter/Beastmaster and he has become fairly formidable. I think that the one serious problem with the class (especially at low level) is the long time it takes to become able to do anything worthwhile. Beastmasters are a bit weak at low level, so I suggest that you don't limit yourself to just being a Beastmaster. I suggest Fighter/Beastmaster. This will give you something to do at first level while your compatriots are busy throwing **Lightning Bolts** and viciously clubbing some poor monster to death.

With the permission of the glorious creator of the most wonderful game system in the world, Dave Nalle (Ah, Dave, is this worth a few Deity Points? Please, Dave.), I have made a few additions to the class. These deal with the effect of affinities on on Native Skills. Certain affinities will naturally lessen the costs of other skills by 1 NSP. This might not seem like a lot, but it is very useful in the long run. This applies to skills related to animal and natural aspects of the player's abilities, including woodland and movement skills. **Huntin** skill is lowered by 1 in cost if you have an affinity with a feral carnivore (Canines, Felines, etc.), **Tracking** by one with Canine or Feline affinity, **Trailfinding** for affinity with Canines, Equines, Felines, Marsupials, or Ursines, **Riding Skills** (non-combative) by one for affinity with Equines, **Climbing** for Simian affinity, **Concealment** with any logical affinity, **Swimming** for Piscean affinity, **Silent Movement** for Feline or Saurian affinity. Others are also possible. Remember that just because a character has an affinity with Rodents doesn't mean he can move silently because he knows how a creature 1/80th his size moves silently. Keep it logical.

Gods of Imperial Rome

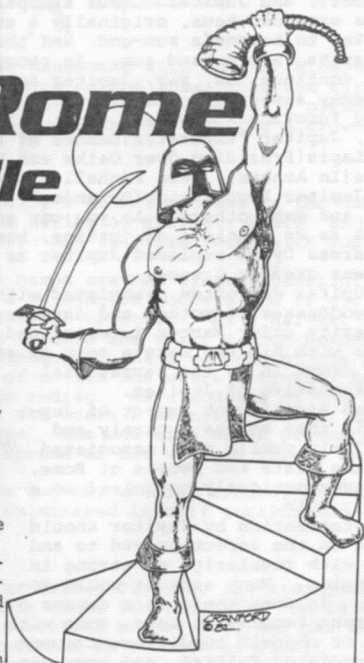
Dave Nalle

In past issues these mythological articles, correcting errors in *Deities and Demigods*, or adding historically accurate information on less known mythologies, have been extremely well received, so we plan to continue them as a regular special feature. This issue we present the first of two parts on Roman Gods and Religion, covering Roman Gods of the imperial period.

During the period of Imperial might, which some have called a decline, Rome was a melting pot for a legion of fantastic cults and faiths. These religions took on many forms during this period from around 50bc to 500ad, developing great philosophical and metaphysical sophistication as paganism of many sorts developed towards monotheism.

This era of late paganism is not at all the way it has been presented by many mythological popularizers who have approached it from a Christian perspective. Many of the major pagan religions of the time were as morally refined and respectable as Christianity and Judaism, and there was a serious possibility for some time that one of several other cults might have been taken as the state religion in the 4th and 5th centuries and that Christianity as we know it might not even exist today.

In this article we are going to look at the gods of Rome itself, not those of the outer parts of the empire. In the next section we will look at the gods of Roman Gaul, which present a different and interesting aspect of combinative mythology. It will become very clear that the gods presented here are not really Roman in origin. This was an acquisitive society, which borrowed culture, politics and religion from other nations which it conquered, so gods of every origin were widely popular in Rome itself.



Roman deities and religions can be divided into three basic types, Numina, Popular Gods, and Mystery Cults. These represent the three types of religion dominant in the later Roman Empire. The Numina were the gods of everyday life, the Popular Gods were the major, common gods of the people, and the Mystery Cults were dedicated to a single god or philosophy to the exclusion of others. In some cases there was crossover, with a god represented in two of the areas, or in all three in some few cases. The complexities of Roman faith can be illustrated by looking at these three types.

POPULAR DEITIES

As the Roman Empire expanded many different peoples were assimilated, and in an atmosphere of religious tolerance, many of their gods caught the imaginations of the people of the empire, and they spread successfully. There were two common phenomena with these gods, diversification and combination. After a god became popular he would often merge in many areas and ways with other gods of a similar nature, with a combination of names and worshipers, or just replacing the older god while retaining his temples and attributes. In addition, this resulted in a diversification by area of power and region, so that many gods would assume many different attributes, depending on what the worshiper wanted from the god and what areas of the god's power were in question. This variation also applied in different places, where a god with the same name might have different attributes from town to town. This situation was not limited to the Popular Deities, but it is strongest here.

JUPITER

Jupiter is the number one sky-god, supreme over everyone and everything. He is the single most important god of the people. He is synonymous with Zeus, Dies Piter, and Dyaus Pitar. He is primarily a sky-oriented deity, associated with fatherhood, storm, and lightning. There are two primary divisions in his nature: Jupiter Dolichemus, a squat, muscular, bearded storm/fertility god who bears a thunderbolt; and Jupiter Heliopolitanus, a tall, clean-shaven god, associated with the Emperor, primarily a sun-god representation.

Jupiter was supreme. His two titles were: Jupiter Optimus Maximus (Best and Greatest), and Jupiter Summus Exsuperantissimus (Highest and Supreme). As the empire expanded Zeus, originally a storm god, assumed the powers of the Egyptian Amon-Ra, to become a sun-god, and the Semitic Ba'al Hadad and Ba'al Shamin, lords of heavens, storm, and sun. In those areas where he absorbed a god, that worship would continue, as, say, Jupiter Amon-Ra, or Jupiter Hadad. Jupiter also developed many aspects in his growth towards an almost monotheistic status. Some noteworthy functional Jupiters were: Jupiter Tonans (Thunderer), Jupiter Fulgur (Lightning), Jupiter Fulgurator (Sender of Lightning), Jupiter Feretrius (Striker), Jupiter Lapis (Presiding Over Oaths and Treaties), Jupiter Fidius (Faithful), Zeus Olympius (In Athens), Zeus Panhellenius (for all Greece), Jupiter Conservator (Protector), Jupiter Propugnator (Defender), Jupiter Stator (Supporter), Jupiter Ultor (Avenger), and many others. As you can see most of these aspects are related to his nature as an upholder of justice, honor and right, and a god of the sky. In Persian areas Dyaus replaced Jupiter as the name of the god, and the related name Zeus was used in Greece.

Jupiter was often associated with Minerva and Juno in a triad, or other similar goddesses of mother and daughter. Jupiter achieved his greatest level of popularity under Marcus Aurelius and Septimus Severus who sought to identify themselves with him and make a sort of state religion. Hercules/Heraclēs/Alcides is often drawn in as the terrestrial representative of Jupiter.

One significant aspect of Jupiter is that he was a purely and singularly public god, associated with the state and people of Rome, and never seriously organized as a Mystery Cult.

Intervention by Jupiter should depend on the aspect prayed to and dealt with regularly, or strong in the region. Many aspects could co-exist. In Rome there were dozens of different temples to Zeus, some with Cella or chapels to different aspects or associated deities, and some reserved for single Jupiters. The kind of Jupiter a person should worship depends on the interests and needs of the person. Remember that behind all of the attributes rests an archetypal deity of the raw power of the primitive Sky-Father.



CYBELE

Cybele was the number one popular goddess. She was a mother goddess and a fertility symbol, originating in the east. Her title was Deae Matres. She was associated with animals, inspiration, and madness in particular, and rode in a chariot drawn by three lions. Her worship was among the most extensive and well-developed, arriving in Rome in around 205ad. She also had an associated Mystery Cult. She was usually mated with Attis, her own grandson, a lesser deity of madness and rebirth.

Cybele's priests were called Galli, and the high-priest was the Archigallus. His uniform was to be covered with holy ikons and medallions, and to bear a scourge. A large part of the religion was self-flagellation to purge sins, and all of the priests were required to castrate themselves as Attis did during a religious ecstasy.

Cybele was also a goddess of the new year, and held a lengthy festival in the end of March, the Roman new-year. This features the Megalensia, her answer to the olympics, and a long series of holy days. March 22 was "The Entering of the Tree", in honor of the death of Attis and his father Agdistis a bi-sexual nature deity, Cybeles son, who was also castrated. March 24 was "The Day of Blood", which featured fasting, mutilation, and the castration of new priests. March 25 was the "Festival of Joy", which had sacrifices, spectacles and a festival to celebrate the equinox. March 26 was designated a "Day of Rest". March 27 was the big day, the "Ceremony of Washing", in which the gold and silver statue of the goddess was washed in the sacred River Almo.

The religion lasted into the late 5th century, and spread from London to the farthest parts of Persia. Cybele was sometimes connected with Juno or Minerva, and there were a variety of consort gods, depending on the area. She was without doubt the most popular of the earth-mother goddesses. She is generally presented as riding in her lion-drawn chariot, bearing a sacred tablet, wearing a crown, and with one breast bare.



ATARGATIS

This goddess was of eastern origin, originally a mother goddess of the Nabataean Arabs. She was especially honored in the cities of Khirbet, Hatra, and Kacha. She is also called Allat and Diva Europus. She is often mated with Jupiter Hadad or with Dushara.

She is a nine-aspected goddess, though the names are not clear. Descriptions of these nine aspects are known, however. As a vegetation goddess she is garlanded in the leaves of acanthus, fig, pomegranates, and rosettes. As a harvest goddess she bears stalks of grain. As a woodland goddess she wears a lion-headed torque. As a goddess of plenty she bears a cornucopia. As a goddess of the sea and destiny she bears a rudder. As a goddess of cities she wears a crown. As a goddess of the heavens she is pictured with the zodiac. As a goddess of the sky she bears an eagle. As a goddess of the winds she wears a swirling scarf. She has a strong association with Venus or Aphrodite. She was also often presented with a dolphin, or as a mermaid. Her worship spread as far west as Thrace and Illyria.

Her priests were dervish beggars. The bore swords, whirled around, and wailed. This was done to the tune of pipes, and often culminated in self mutilation. All was part of a religious ecstasy.

DUSHARA

Dushara was a god of death and rebirth, also called Dusares, and associated with Hadad and sometimes Jupiter. He was usually mated to Atargatis. He is often presented as wearing a tragic mask. He is an ancestral burial god, and has no real physical representation, usually being presented as a block of basalt. He was an earth and sky god, associated with meteorites (earth from the sky), and with volcanoes. Meteorites were often used in place of basalt as objects of worship.

GAIA

This was one of the earliest Greek goddesses, who carried on, changing and becoming rather strange. She was very closely linked to Artemis and Demeter, often considered the same. She was universally revered as a fertility and propagation goddess. Some of her local congregations met in mobs of as many as 30,000 celebrants. She is presented as a many-breasted bee-woman. Her virgin priestesses were called Bees, her male priests were eunuchs or drones, called Megabyzi. Her

secular temple-tenders were workers, called Neokoreoi. Her actual temples were often built to look like beehives. One of the centers of her cult was on the island of Thasos in the Aegean Sea near Thessalonika.

ISIS

Isis is the goddess of protective motherhood. She is vengeful and vicious. Her son was slain, and she protects children and mothers. Her faith started at Philae in Egypt and spread to Alexandria, Athens, Tithaca, Sardinia, Africa, Spain, Rome, and Germany. Worship was intense and anti-male, anti-government. She was identified closely with Hera, Juno and Tellus. She was feared and worshipped far and wide. Her popularity was proven when Aemilius Paulus ordered her temples destroyed and all of the workmen in Rome refused. She is more significant, perhaps, for her Mystery Cult, which is described later.

SARAPIS

Sarapis is an artificial god, created from a merger of the attributes of the Greek Zeus and the Egyptian Osiris, sometimes referred to as Zeus Sarapis, or Osarapis. He was a god of healing and the dead, and was the form under which Osirian worship continued in the Roman period. He was part of a triad with Isis and Anubis, worshipped in the Mystery Cult. He demanded total devotion from his worshippers.

SOL INDIGES

Sol is a pre-classical, pre-imperial Roman god. His worship was limited, but durable, as he was one of the two oldest surviving gods of Rome, pre-dating the official founding. He was a sun god, celebrated on August 9th, at mid-summer. In many regions he was taken over by Jupiter.

APOLLO

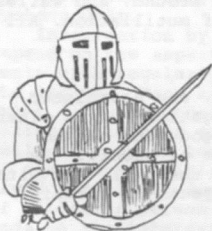
The classical god of the sun and music, Apollo, was still worshiped in the later Empire, but he was a relatively bland shadow of Jupiter, and his functions, ruling the arts, the sun, and medicine, were filled better by certain other gods, including his son Asclepius.

MITHRAS

This god was of Indian/Persian origin, but really caught on with the Roman army. He was a god of light, originally subservient to Ormuzd and opposed to the Daeva and Ahriman. He was a god of the upper air, and developed into the role of a mediator between man and the heavens, negotiating between Ahriman (an earth principle) and Ormuzd (an aetherial principle). His chapels were originally underground, but usually with a skylight. This is related to his birth out of the earth by the power of light. He wrestled a bull, so the bull motif was an important part of his faith. His temples were closed by Gratian in 377, but the faith held on well into the 5th century or even later. Ahriman and Ormuzd remained strong in Persian faith, and as part of Zoroastrianism, but were not worshipped independently in Rome. Ahriman was considered one of many evil principles to be propitiated, and Ormuzd was equated with Jupiter. Mithras was considered, stern, strong, and symbolic of inner enlightenment and the transcendence of the bodily state. His Mystery Cult is described later.

TYCHE

Tyche was a major goddess of Hellenic origin. She was associated closely with the Moirae or Fates, and with Ponoia, a goddess of providence. Sometimes she is presented as three or seven separate goddesses, and is parallel in many ways to Atargatis. She has a rudder as a symbol. She is a goddess of fate and fortune, considered supreme in power over all gods, but less in stature than any. She was altered in many regions and took on nature-related powers, and sometimes she is even presented as male.



FORTUNA

This goddess is enormously popular with the lower levels of society. She is a goddess of fertility and womanhood, associated with Tyche in some areas. She is presented as standing on a wheel, signifying her power over fate and luck. She is different from Tyche in that she presides over childbirth and is considered as bringing blessings to worshippers.

In looking at these typical popular deities, remember that they could take on very different regional forms, and even be combined or replaced. For example, Antiochus I of Commagene was responsible for setting up temples to Zeus Oromasdes (Ormuzd), Apollo Mithrat Helios Hermes, and Artagies Heracles Ares (Artagies is a male version of Atargatis). Sex was variable from area to area. Religion was also very highly developed, and these examples only scratch the surface. In the 1st century b.c. Augustus Caesar restored over 82 temples in Rome, and these were estimated at less than 1/3 of the total in the city. A general priest type, especially with nature gods was the Flamen. They served gods and goddesses of nature and the elements.

MYSTERY CULTS

As we study Roman society we become increasingly aware of the extremely complex nature of its institutions and the amazingly high level of social development. One of the most interesting aspects of Roman life was the Mystery Cult. Essentially an elite religion, with a limited membership, secret meetings, highly developed rituals, and secret 'mysteries'. These Mystery Cults are similar in many ways to College Fraternities or Medieval Monastic Orders, especially the Knights Templar.

Mystery Cults are of different sizes and orientations. Some are devoted to popular gods, adding onto and expanding the common practices. Others worship unusual or marginally popular gods. Many societies are small, sometimes with aims of political control and influence. Some are egalitarian, and others are extremely selective in their membership.

The cults grew up in the late 1st century a.d., and they continued on in one form or another to the end of the Imperial period. Many of them were priestly orders in nature, and most made rigorous demands on their members. In most parts of the Empire a majority of the population did not belong to a cult.

Most of the Mystery Cults took a monotheistic attitude, requiring devotion only to the god or gods of the cult, and looking on all others as inferior. This was more intense with the smaller and more elite cults. Cults were often banned by the government, especially when it was controlled by rival cult members.

THE CULT OF ELEUSIS

Eleusis was the oldest god of Rome, a pre-imperial underworld god, who took on close associations with Pluto/Hades. He was generally part of a triad in worship, with himself as the major god, Ceres/Demeter as the mother-in-law, and Kore/Persephone as the bride goddess. The classical Persephone myth was an important part of the cult. Pigs were commonly sacrificed as part of the ritual, and all initiates were baptized in the sea. There was a corn association brought in by Ceres, but Eleusis was primarily underworld. Kore brought in an additional seasonal element, promising rebirth and growth to the worshippers. There were sacred foods consumed in a communion, and the whole cult was centered on a rebirth notion. The culmination of the ceremonies was the revelation of pre-historical statues of the gods. The cult was extremely selective, rejecting such note worthies as Apollonius of Tyre, though it did admit Marcus Aurelius. As a result membership was rather low.

THE CULT OF DIONYSUS

Dionysus is a fairly well-known deity. He is a god of nature, thought by the Phrygians who originated the cult to sleep in the winter. He presides over drama, drink, music, and magic. He is identified with Sabaztas, Bacchus, and Liber. Membership rose to about 500 of both sexes, which was about average for such a cult. This figure includes only the initiates, not the thousands of prospective members. Scandalous behavior was expected of the members, and orgies were a common part of ceremonies. There were secret treasures, and the sacred symbol was the Phallus. There was dancing and mock sacrifice at ceremonies. The ceremony also featured Lekanomancy, divination by prophecy in religious ecstasy. Telete was associated as the spirit of the mystery, and Ariadne as Dionysus' mate.

THE CULT OF CYBELE

Cybele was a popular god, as already described, but she also had a large cult following. Key to this was a baptism and rebirth by bull's blood, called Taurobolium. Initiates were called "In Aeternum Renatus", or "Reborn Forever". New initiates were fed on milk. A variant on the Taurobolium was the Criobolium where a ram was used. The cult may have lasted into the Christian era as a part of Gnosticism.

THE CULT OF ISIS

This was the most important Mystery Cult. Isis was a savior goddess from Ptolemaic Egypt and is described in the previous section. She was a mood goddess, and the focal point for other Egyptian gods, specifically dog-headed Anubis and the mummy-god Osiris. She is represented in the cult as a cow, and rituals include baptism, fast, ritual death, and holy visions. Priests are called to serve in a dream sent by the goddess. There was an Osiriatic sub-cult with its own priestly



school. The moto of the cult was "I conquer fate and fate obeys me". Priests and initiates were thought to gain great mystical powers.

THE CULT OF HERMES TRISMEGISTOS

This was the worship of a Thoth/Hermes combination, with Greek and Egyptian elements. The goal of the cult was to cleanse the self of impurity and thus attain eternal life through repentance. It was a cult of asceticism, moral purity, ecstasy, and rebirth. Control over the body and the transcendence of the flesh was stressed. The ultimate goal was the achievement of actual god-hood. Followers were radical fanatics. The texts of the cult were written down between the 1st and 3rd centuries as the "Corpus Hermeticum". It was a small cult, but members were ascribed great magical powers.

THE CULT OF ASCLEPIUS

Asclepius was the son of Apollo, and he was a god of healing. His cult was a cult of doctors. Only the pure and holy were allowed in, but they provided healing and hospital services to anyone. Asclepius is represented as bearded and bearing a caduceus. He is mated with Hygieia, goddess of health, and his companion is the dwarf Telesphorus. A variety of cures were employed, such as walking and riding in the nude, cold baths, ointments, poultices, diets, warm baths, purges, and blood letting.

THE CULT OF MITHRAS

The actual cult of Mithras was highly developed, supervising the common worship among the legions. Services were held in an oblong vault called a "cave", with sky murals and the image of Mithras with the bull. The Cult of Cybele was considered a sister cult, and only men were allowed in the Cult of Mithras. They were relatively tolerant of other faiths, even among initiates. The seven grades of initiation were in ascending order: Raven, Bridegroom, Soldier, Lion, Persian, Courier of Sun, and Father. Initiation was by ordeals of heat, cold, branding, fasting, scourging, journeys, challenges, and tests, all symbolic of purification. An eternal flame was maintained in the outer temple for the public and a communion with wine and honey-rolls was held. Taurobolium was practiced in the slaying of a wild bull and baptism in blood. Astrology was also practiced. The central mystery was that earthly life is a time to cleanse the soul and that the dead are judged for their deeds by Mithras before rebirth. There were two demi-gods honored, Cautes, the rising sun, and Cautopates, the setting sun.

THE CULT OF THE CABEIRI

This was a widespread and ancient cult of two gods, Axieras/Demeter and Cadmillus/Hermes. They were said to preside over violent nature, flood, storm, volcano, and trade, and were pictured with hammers or lightning. They protected men from the elements. Membership was classless, and all were equal in the cult. The two levels of initiation were Mystae, who were initiated, and Epoptae, an inner-circle who had actually seen the sacred objects and made a full confession. Although an earthquake(irony) destroyed the main temple in Samothrace in 200ad, the cult lasted until the 5th century. In the initiation new members wore crown, carried a lamp, and ate a meal. All initiates wore an iron ring and a purple scarf so they would always be protected in their journeying. The classical god parallels given are semi-questionable.

Other obscure and regional cults existed, and it is reasonable to theorize that there were cults so secret and exclusive that they are forgotten. There are indications and hints to support this hypothesis.

THE NUMINA

It may be said that the Romans had a god for everything. The Numina fill out the ranks. There is a Numina for almost every moment of Roman life, for every home and for every activity. Some of the thousands of Numina are described below. They are worshipped and propitiated in undertaking appropriate actions, but generally they are not highly detailed or fully described, except for their interest.

Some major Numina are: Alemona(fetal), Nona & Decima(gestation), Partula(Parturition), Lucina, Candelifera, Carmentes(Birth), Oriens(Sunrise), Intercidona, Pilumnus, Deverra(Protect from Evil), Cunnina(Cradle), Vagitanus(1st Cry), Rumina(Breast Feeding), Edusa(Eating), Potina(Drinking), Fabulinus(Speech), Statulinus(Standing), Abcona & Adeona(Play), Cinxia(Bride), Unxia(Groom), Vervactor & Rederator(Plowing), Imporitor(Harrowing), Insitor(Sowing), Operator(Top-Dressing), Spiniensis (Thorn Bushes), Sterculius(Fertilizer), Puta(Pruning), Nodutus(Grain), Mellonia(Bees), Saturnus(Sowing), Neptunus(Irrigation), Adolenda(Fire), Commolenda(Chopping), Deferenda(Transport of Goods), Pales(Sheep), Janus(Doors), Vesta(Hearth), Penates (Shop), Terminus(Walls), Quirinus(Meetings), Pax(Peace), Pietas(Patriot), Providentia(Forethought), Liberalitas(Generosity), Libertas(Freedom), Fides(Loyalty), Disciplina(Order), Virtus(Military Prowess), Moneta(Money), Abundantia, Ubertas, Felicitas(Good Harvest), Acquitas(Fair Dealing), Clementia(Imperial Power), Salus(Health), Nemesis(Endings), Sors(Luck), Sator(Sowing), Messia(Reaping), Conditor(Grain storage), Carmentia(Spring). Most Numina are a-sexual.

In addition to Numina there are the various generic spirits of certain places and areas, called 'Genius Loci'. They are mainly: Naiads(Streams), Dryads(Trees), Nereids(Sea), Nymphs(Streams and Pools), and Gods with the name of the river for rivers.

None of these Numina or Spirits was seriously worshipped. They were just there to be called on when needed.

CLASSICAL RELIGION

The gods of classical and republican Rome still existed in the Imperial period, on a level between the Popular Gods and the Numina. Priapus(Fertility), Minerva(Craft), Juno(Family), Artemis(Woodland), Venus(Love/Sex), Vulcan(Craft/Volcano), Mercury(Trade), Mars(War), Silvanus(Borderland), and others were still moderately popular, though they were often treated as Numina, or combined with more popular gods.

CONCLUSION

Religion in Imperial Rome is a complex and extensive subject, and certainly a fascinating addition to many role-playing campaigns. Remember that all religions look at themselves as good and many others as evil or neutral. For example, while the cult of Hermes Trismegistos considered themselves nice little ascetics, many others looked at them as strange and dangerous sorcerers. No society has ever presented such religious variety or so many options for faith. To the Romans religion was a tool and an adventure, and it can be as much fun for you too.

Some good sources on this subject are: The New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology, History of the Later Roman Empire(J. B. Bury), The World of Rome(M. Grant), Religions of the Roman Empire(J. Ferguson), and Occidental Mythology(Joseph Campbell). I have only covered religion in Rome itself, and there is much more to be discovered in the provinces.



Ron Pehr, one of our most regular contributors is back, this issue with his thoughts on Dwarves.

The D&D Dwarf is patterned on the Tolkein Dwarf, but fails to do him justice. They are merely short fighters who can't exceed an arbitrary level, or super-keen eared thieves. Too little attention is paid to a potentially interesting character simply because of its race.

Dwarves are mortal beings who live 3-5 times as long as men. Because of their culture and psychology they are few in number, marrying late in life, and preferring to devote their interests to crafts and amassing wealth. They also reproduce slowly, and ignore things outside of their specific interest areas.

A Dwarf adventurer is a rare creature, doubtless what most Dwarves would see as unbalanced. Why seek abroad when true fortune and beauty are abundant in the earth and in good work well done.

Because Dwarves are of an earthy nature they don't study mercurial, unearthly disciplines, such as magic. Even the oddest Dwarf probably won't be a spellcaster, unless you use earth-based or craft-related magic. Dwarves tend to be Lawful in alignment, and rarely Evil, though they may be Greedy. They are slow to anger, but persistent when aroused. Their Lawful nature lets them channel their anger. They make brave and disciplined soldiers, and are as proud of their martial skill as of their craft skill.

The Dwarf Adventurer is likely to be a consummate warrior, driven by a perverse curiosity to see new parts of the world, acquire gold, and fight well when he must fight.

There is no reason a Dwarf should be held back in level, and he should advance like any fighter. He has advantages, particularly under ground, but there are natural disadvantages as a balance.

COMBAT: Treat Dwarves as human fighter in all ways, including plusses and strikes per round. They need the same EP to advance and get it at the same rate.

WEAPONS: Certain weapons should be characteristic of the race. These are the war hammer, the spear, the war pick, mace, and battle-axe. Treat them as level 0 with any other weapon, with the exception of enchanted shortwords or other small enchanted weapons. Their only missile weapons are siege weapons.

ARMOR: Dwarves prefer chainmail, but would wear lesser protection if appropriate. they will only wear custom-made plate to fit their size, and this should be 2-3 times the price of normal plate. They will carry shields if able.

MAGIC ARTIFACTS: They don't often learn magic, and it should effect them as given in AD&D or D&D. They may use artifacts which require no special knowledge. They can be hit by any weapons.

MOVEMENT: They move slowly because of their short legs. Make it 6" in chain, 8" in lighter armor and 4" in heavier armor.

SPECIAL ADVANTAGES: 1) Note slanting walls and shifting passages on 1-4 of a D6. 2) Open Locks and Remove Traps as a Level 1 Thief. 3) Identify types of gems, value, and possible enchantment, or identify enchanted weapon or armor, with a 50% +5%/level chance.

SPECIAL DISADVANTAGES: Dwarves have a hard time riding and can't fight mounted. In addition they fatigue at triple rate while riging. They can't swim. In my campaign I also give them night vision rather than 'Infravision'. If you let them have Infravision any heat attack spell should blind them for the number of dice of the attack in turns.

ROLLING CHARACTERISTICS: To do this you must let players pick race before rolling. The modifications are to roll STR on 2D6+D8, CON on 2D6+D8, and CHA on 2D6+D3. add D3 when dealing with other Dwarves.

THE DWARF AS THIEF

Self-respecting Dwarves, even adventurers, don't become Thieves. However, players might be able to make a Dwarf Thief with the following rules: 1) Give them Fighter HD, 2) Put them on the Fighter, not Thief EP table, 3) They must learn the simpler racial weapons, Mace or Hammer, 4) They may only wear leather armor, 5) No pocket picking, because they dislike close physical combat and are too short to do it well to humans, 6) He loses his magic item detection skills, 7) He uses the Thief combat matrix.

THE DWARF AS CLERIC

This is an even less likely but possible profession, because a Dwarf priest is unlikely to go adventuring. Use normal Cleric rules for the ones who do, with these modifications: 1) Use fither hit-die, but use Thief combat matrix, 2) Allow only Club or Hammer, 3) Use all special advantages and disadvantages given here.

BERSERKERGANG: The Octopus

Jon Schuller

Berserkergang was well recieved last issue, so we are continuing on with commentary on FRPing trends and happenings.

There's a new game on the market today. Let's call it "Adventures in Coporate Expansionism", or "Dupes and Dollars". It has been around for years, but it has only recently become part of the gaming industry.

Until a few years ago, gaming companies could be called small businesses. This is all changing because of the sudden boom in gaming, and not necessarily for the better.

It seems a hidden axiom of business that, in defiance of all logic, companies which produce inferior products, with little sense of duty to the consumer will always do well, whole better and more responsible companies are relegated to obscurity. To bear this out, look at TSR's phenomenal success. Starting with a shabby product they made a small fortune, and even though they followed it up with a torrent of printed trash, they were still able to scoop in money at an obscene rate. I can't begrudge TSR their success or cry out against change in the hobby, but I can speak as a gamer, and I will.

From the point of view of the gaming consumer and of a couple of other types of consumers, TSR and several other companies are seriously injuring gaming. Most of you probably don't play historical wargames, and many of you probably don't take an active interest in SF/Fantasy magazines, but you are all fantasy gamers, and so developments in these areas are at least somewhat relevant to you.

When I was a good bit younger I read all the fantasy fiction I could find, and my favorite magazine was Ted White's Fantastic. Then, in 1972 or so I discovered wargaming with Simulation Publications, Inc.'s historical games, and their magazine Strategy & Tactics. When TSR's Dungeons & Dragons came along it brought out the new idea of role-playing in a fantasy context and let me combine my two great interests. I soon realised that TSR's product, while original, did not compare in any way with the quality featured by SPI, and though I waited for them to improve, they only got slicker, not better. As new companies sprung up I found good new products and expanded into new areas and concepts of FRP'ing. Through this period I kept a strong dislike for TSR and their way of doing business.

Now the worst has happened, my favorite magazine and my favorite game company have been bought by the company which taught me to look at gaming products cynically. The dreams of my adolescence are being gruesomely destroyed. TSR is expanding its base. This is the process by which a company becomes a corporation. In the past few months they have bought SPI, Amazing/Fantastic, a miniatures manufac-



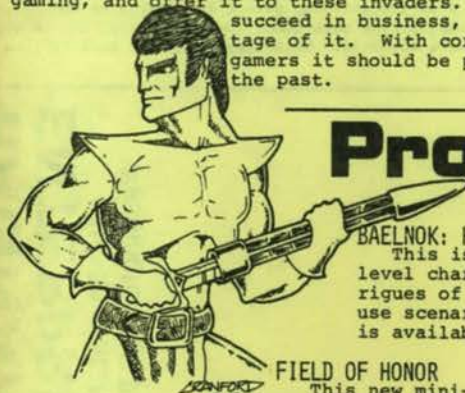
turer, and a needlework company (don't ask me why). This is bad, especially the demise of SPI, which TSR seems to have gutted. This flexing of monetary muscle is fine for TSR, but if these new acquisitions follow TSR's style we've lost one great magazine (3 counting SPI's S&T and Moves) and the only major company devoted to historical gaming, to replace them with more mediocrity.

What is even worse than this is the recent entry of non-gaming companies into gaming. Seeing millions to be made, toy companies and publishers are trying to cash in on FRP'ing. This trend is only just starting, and it can only be assumed that they will do 1000 times as much damage as TSR would even if it took over every gaming company.

What can you do? Nothing, unless you can influence heartless corporate adventurers. Your only hope is to make your feelings known. It is no longer enough to boycott inferior products once they are out. We have to act in advance to stop people who don't know our needs from wasting their time and ours with ill-concieved and produced games and aids, like Gryphon or Adventures in Fantasy. Write to TSR, write to Col-eco, write the industry. Tell them what you want, tell them what you need. It won't work, but maybe there are fairies and maybe a miracle will happen. The more taxing alternative is to take action. Take your skills and knowledge of fantasy gaming, and offer it to these invaders. If they have the judgement they need to succeed in business, they'll recognize potential and take advantage of it. With corporate backing and the knowledge of active gamers it should be possible to surpass even the great games of the past.



Project Report



BAELNOK: HOLY CITY OF ARBERTH

This is Ysgarth Adventure #3. It introduces low level characters to the religious and political intrigues of a major city. It is a lengthy and multi-use scenario with extensive maps and background. It is available now at \$1.50 plus 25¢ for P&H.

FIELD OF HONOR

This new mini-game is available now. It simulates jousting between knights, with options for different weapons and for experience and advancement. It can be played by several players as a boardgame, or fitted into most role-playing combat systems. It is \$2.95 plus 50¢ for P&H.

STARCROSS

This is another new mini-game. It is a boardgame of conflict and expansion in space, featuring a unique map system, plus many scenarios for 2 to 6 players, complete rules and over 500 counters. It is only \$2.95 plus 50¢ for postage.

YRS SUPPLEMENT #1

A YRS supplement is in the works. It will include at least 5 new character classes, including Runists, Darkmages, and Lightmages, plus religious detail, background, and playing ideas. It will be about 32 pages, in the same format as the rules. It will include a complete scenario. The price is \$2.50 plus 50¢ for postage on advance order discount. The final price may be higher.

STILL AVAILABLE

The YRS is still available at \$9.95 plus \$1 for postage, but the price will be going up soon. It is still the best Role-Playing system around. Also available are our wide selection of game aids suited to YRS or D&D, plus Duel Magical, our first mini-game (\$1.95+50¢P&H). Write for our full, free catalog.

WORKS IN PROGRESS

Still in the works are several major products, especially our as yet unnamed science fiction game, which is developing slowly waiting for someone out there to give us an inspiring title. Also coming are the schedules selection of scenarios and aids. A special feature planned this summer will be Lew Bryson's mini-system on Seige Warfare and Fortification Design.

Ideas and suggestions for games are always welcome, as are your comments on ideas already suggested and even your own proposal or game design. We hope you will work with us to make better games.