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New Realms of Fantasy

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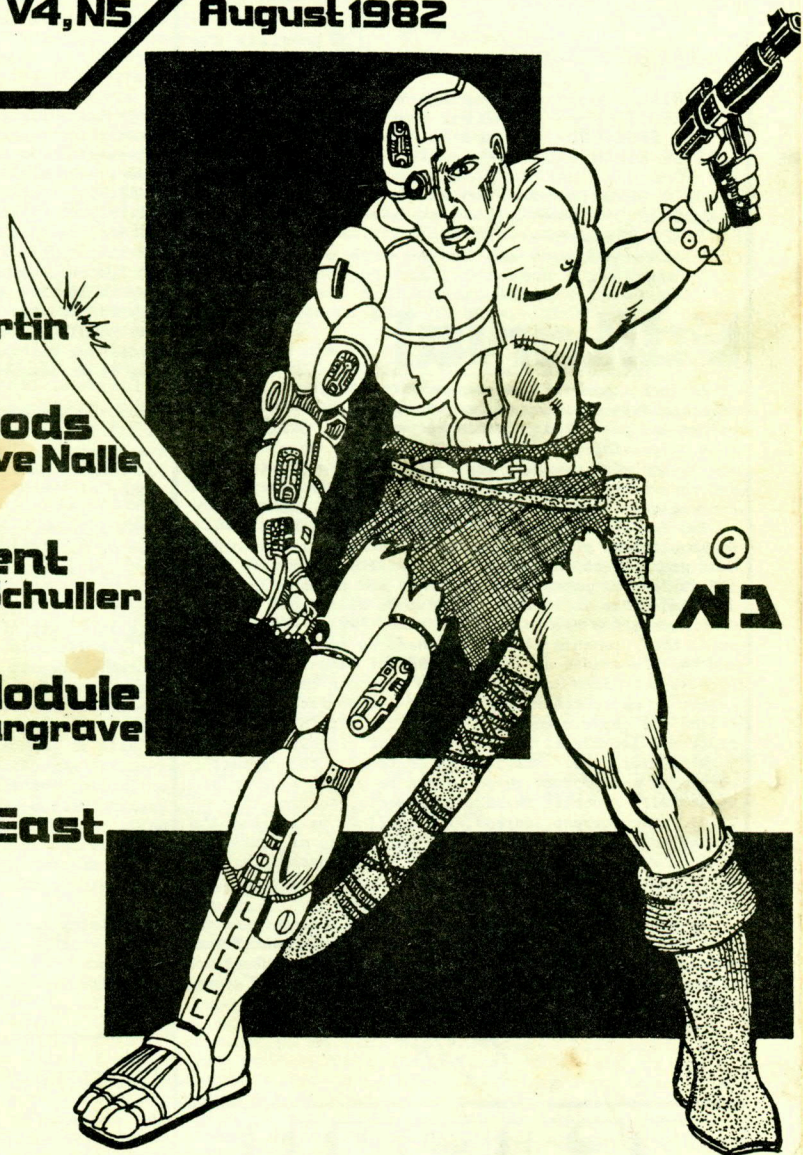
Fiction
Tom Curtin

Roman Gods
Dave Nalle

Retirement
Jon Schuller

Arduin Module
Dave Hargrave

Genccon East



©
N3

Special Review Issue
Champions, Middle Sea, & More

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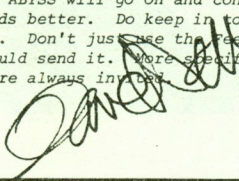
Editorial

Another issue off the presses. Our backlog of review material kept building up, so we lumped a lot of it together and pushed to get this issue out for ORIGINS. It is a surprisingly diverse issue, even so. Some old favorites are with us, like David Hargrave and Lew Bryson, and the infamous Tom Curtin is getting active again with a new fiction series. All in all, it looks promising.

The format change has been pretty much settled now. It should take place with #23, the February issue for next year. With that issue ABYSS will be expanding from the current 20 pages to at least 32 and perhaps 36. The newsstand price will probably go up to \$1.50, but the subscription price should stay the same. We're holding off until then, because we will be changing to bulk-rate mail, and the fee starts at the beginning of January. This is because bulk rate costs about the same for the new 2oz weight as we currently pay to mail 1oz at 1st class. The reason for the current size is to stay within the weight limit for 1st class, as postage is our highest cost.

A special note. Starting in September, the fastest editorial and product response can be gotten by writing us at #211, Fountain Terrace Apartments, Austin, TX 78705. The current address will still be valid, but I'm moving to graduate school at the University of Texas and will be editing from there, though some manuscripts will be passed on to the assistants. This dispersion will delay some aspects of the editorial process.

In spite of changes, ABYSS will go on and continue to grow and serve your needs better. Do keep in touch. Send your comments and ideas. Don't just use the feedback to respond, though you should send it. More specific suggestions and reactions are always invited.



RENEW!!

If there is an X on your label next to the issue number, your subscription is up with this issue. You should renew immediately at the low cost of \$5 for 6 issues, \$10 for 12 issues, or \$15 for 18. The number on the label indicates your last issue. If it is 21 or 22, RENEW!!!

RETIREMENT BENEFITS

ION SCHULLER



No matter how low or high power your campaign, unless it is radically different from other role-playing worlds, characters will tend to increase in power with time. If this carries on long enough, older characters will get to the point where they can dominate newer or less ambitious characters and unbalance the game by their mere existence and influence. It is the relative power, not the actual level, number of magic items, or powers, which makes a difference. The system used for play is also irrelevant. Generally, a character has reached this point of excessive prowess when he can do as he wants to an average player character (not a newly created one: they should be weak), without any fear of reprisal or injury. This is the time to consider creative retirement.

GMs often have to retire characters who have gone beyond the capacity of their campaign. Unfortunately they rarely realize the potential for such a retirement to be a creative part of the campaign. More often, such characters are filed away by griping characters to live only in the legends of past glories. This is not the only way to deal with this situation.

Nothing should go to waste, and powerful player characters are a resource which can be exploited to the great benefit of your campaign. In such characters you have fully developed, powerful, important, and well-known personalities. Lesser characters in the campaign will know of these characters and respect their abilities. In addition, as they already have fully realized personalities this takes a major burden off the GM.

If a GM takes such characters and instead of retiring them, turns them into major or non-player characters in the world there unmeasurable benefits to him and to the campaign, and nothing is wasted. Developing interesting characters to populate the world and serve as sources and generators of scenarios is difficult, and can be a lot better if ex-player characters are used. These XPCs can continue to go up levels and advance in power under the GMs control, and a really smart GM will consult the original player for ideas on the character's motivations and interests. This keeps the player happy and involved, and makes the XPC more realistic. Taking this track makes the background characters in an adventure much more believable and it causes players to respect them and their capabilities a bit more.

Care should always be taken, and it should be made clear to the player that he no longer controls the character in any way, though he may consult on it. Some effort to disassociate the player from his ex-character are probably a good idea. If he is allowed too much influence over such an XPC (who will probably rise rather quickly in power after retirement), it could give him a nasty bit of leverage over other players, so judgement and firm resolve are needed.

This can work very well, and players tend to object to having characters become XPCs less than full retirement, as the character is still around, and the legend which they generated can continue to grow from their initial impetus. To maintain this feeling, be sure not to change the character significantly, lest the player make justified objections.

This practice is particularly effective in long-running campaigns, like the Uttgart/Ysgarth campaign run by Dave Nalle. This campaign has been running since 1975, with two different sets of players for more variety. In addition, time runs 7 game years to the real year, so a good bit of game time has passed, and characters have had time to develop and grow old. This practice allows the preservation of characters such as Gilrod (the first XPC), who is now a major god with 360 bodies, but was once a low-level mage played by John Boyer. A large number of adventures are generated by Thazaydon, a powerful necromancer originally played by Dave Nalle, who likes to manipulate others and accumulate magical power. Many of the High-Priests, Champions, and Mage-Adepts of Ysgarth are retired characters. A variant addition to this concept, which is used in Ysgarth, is the occasional ultra-high-power adventure run for such strategic-level characters only. Such adventures are rare, but enter unusual areas of play, beyond the range of normal play.

Consider this alternative. It can add depth, realism, and a sense of continuity to your campaign, while saving you time and keeping powerful characters from dominating the campaign. It is an ideal solution to a common problem.



FEATURED REVIEW: MIDDLE SEA ERIC OLSON

Middle Sea is a game of empire building in the Mediterranean world, published by Fantasy Games Unlimited. Although any time period may be used, the board is drawn up in political and religious divisions of the 1200s. The game covers economic and diplomatic factors involved in empire building. There is no set number of players needed for play (though it is not suited to solitaire play) and there are no arbitrary starting or victory conditions. The authors, Donelly and Backhaus have created a full rules framework and all the instructions to fit the game to individual needs and interests. This flexibility is one of the strong points of the game.

Middle Sea is easy and fun to play for several reasons. The rules take up only eleven double-spaced pages of large print. They are easy to understand and can be read and comprehended in about 15 minutes. There are no charts or tables needed. Combat is resolved with a single die roll. This lets players with little wargamins experience play and win. There is both land and sea combat, and neither can be avoided if you want to win. Sea combat also includes the interesting aspect of raiding, sending ships to plunder the coast players to steal revenues.

Play is divided into two areas, economics and diplomacy. Economics is the deciding factor in the game. You have to have a strong base to support armies. In a situation where you have to protect a far-flung empire, you will have to make deals to prevent a unified attack by other players. To support diplomacy there are rules on the establishment of spy networks in other countries. This lets you keep track of friends and foes alike and make sure no one is creeping up on your border. We like to think of these as UN Peacekeeping forces. They are important in this game where almost all movement is hidden. Units move only with Nobles or flagships. The Noble or flagship counters are the only counters visible on the board. You have no idea how many troops are actually there, adding an element of mystery.



MIDDLE SEA



rules of play

Middle Sea has weak points. The most prominent is the \$20 price tag, which discouraged me from buying it sooner. This is above the asking price of most Avalon Hill games of the same size. For the money a few storage bags for the counters and an additional rule booklet would have been a great boon and an aid to speeding up play. Both additions probably would not have cost FGU too much more and would really help players. Other problems are minor. The province of Anatolia is not marked on the board, though it is clear once play starts. Also, the colors on the Noble counters differs in some cases from those on the map. These minor errors could easily be fixed in a second edition.

The rules are only to be used as guidelines and are intentionally brief and general to allow for personal adaptations. For newcomers I would suggest the following additions. First, Cavalry for neutral countries, roll 1D6, on a 6 convert the infantry unit to a cavalry unit, roll for each unit. Second, neutral four star countries (if any) should have a minimum of nine armies and cavalry on a roll of 5 or 6. Third, Bulgaria should be allowed only one walled town and economic center. Fourth, Christians attacking Moslem areas (or vice versa). In this case, the defending army should get one extra unit of the same type raised to fight the infidel. This only happens if the noble attacking the region is of a different religion from the defender. Fifth, try one of these starting variations. Allow players to chose countries until the leaders of those countries can control 30 armies; say one eighteen army leader and one twelve. Or allow them to pick provinces up to a tax base of 250 or 300 Marks. These variations will mean more to you once you've read the rules.

Middle Sea is the best game I've seen in some time. It is worth the \$20 price; probably worth even more. It has some of the best features of such games as King maker (AH), Empire of the Middle Ages (SPI), and Civilisation (AH). It can be played as quickly as you like by setting starting conditions or extended for several sessions. It reinforces my belief in the quality of FGU products.

GENCON EAST CONVENTION NOTES

The first big east coast convention this summer was GENCON EAST, an event shrouded in controversy and bad feelings on several side, but held nonetheless. At first GCE was scheduled to be run by the Eastern Gaming Association which did an excellent job in 1980, but they had to drop out for various financial reasons. TSR didn't take this well and sued the EGA for over \$7000. This created a huge amount of bad feeling in the gaming community, especially when TSR decided to run the convention anyway. Many GMs who had supported the EGA and were familiar with TSRs method of running conventions felt that GCE would be a poor convention for the gamers, designed more for profits than for play. They organized an informal boycott of the convention. TSR held the convention anyway.

After a struggle between the need to prepare for ORIGINS with a rehearsal and sympathy with the EGA, we decided to go anyway, though with great trepidation. The convention arm of RE was mobilized and we gathered at Widener College in Chester, PA on June 17th. Helping at our booth were Dave Nalle, David Willis, Eric Olson, Kevin Sullivan, Rick Shaw, and Max Gilbert.

Our booth was in a mediocre location, in the middle aisle, between Chaosium and Dragonbone. Directly behind us was Gamelords. The first thing I noticed was the extreme limitation of the dealer area. In attendance were some 40 dealers, and some major publishers, such as FBI, were not in evidence. Attendance in the dealer area was disappointing, but we managed to break even anyway. A particularly good selling item was Field of Honor, which Eric Olson and Kevin Sullivan decided to play all the time and pushed quite heavily. New items for the convention included Wyrdworld 7, the YRS Record Pack, and the Revised 2nd Edition of the YRS, which sold quite well at \$11.95.

We had no events scheduled, but there was no problem getting room space, so we ran a number of demonstrations and discussions of our games. We ran 3 demonstrations of Field of Honor and two of the Ysgarth Rule System. All of these were very successful and both games were quite well recieved.

Most of the scheduled events at the convention were underattended and poorly run. All through the weekend we were talking to people at our dealer booth, and we kept hearing horror stories about the AD&D events; poor preparation, incompetent GMs, bad scenarios. Attendance in general was very low, a third of what TSR had



The Ravening Horde descends on our booth



Our Favorite Customer
Mort Munchkin



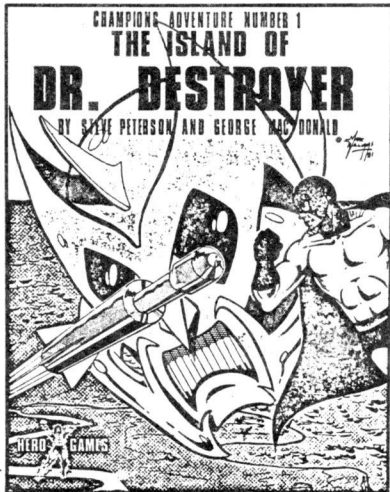
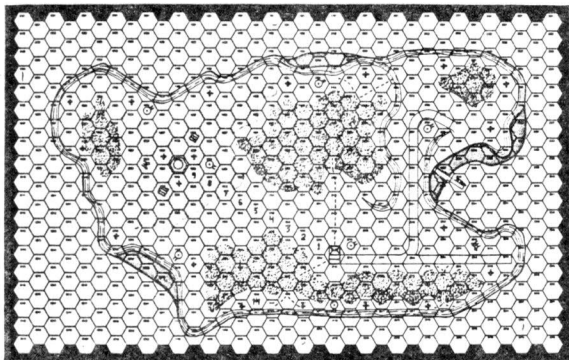
Max Gilbert(L), Kevin Sullivan(C), Rick Shaw(R)
Playing Field of Honor at our booth

Use so, promised before the convention. Many events were cancelled for low registration. There were no worthwhile seminars, as TSR has a policy of discouraging them.

Kevin, Eric, David, and myself all participated in Gamelord's Prince of Thieves Tournament, and were quite favorably impressed. It was well run and designed, and emphasized role-playing and character use. We all made it to the second round, but Kevin and I had to drop out. Eric Olson ended up winning in a really unusual round set in a tavern. Unfortunately attendance was lower than Gamelords deserved for the effort they put in.

On the whole GENCON EAST was a bit of a disappointment. It was worth going, but only because there was nothing else to do that weekend. TSR affirms its resolve to hold GCE again next year, but next year you'll have a choice, as the EGA is planning EASTCON for around the same time of year. Considering how much better GCE was last year than this year I suspect that EASTCON will be the convention to go to on the east coast next year. (Dave Nalle)

IN THE SPECULUM

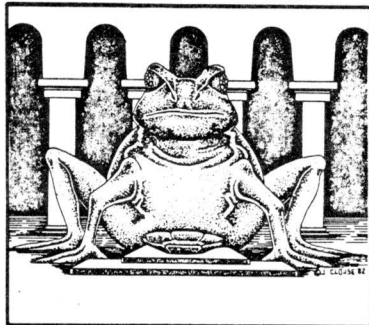
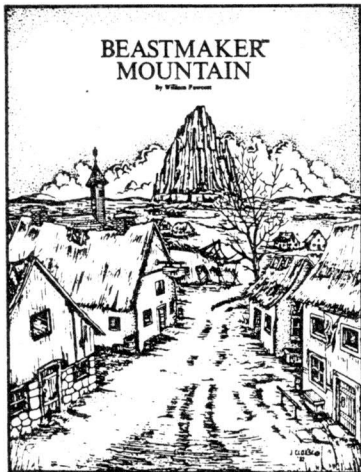


THE ISLAND OF DR. DESTROYER

This is the first Champions adventure and has been out for a while now. It is in an unbound 8x11 format with a total of 20 pages, at \$5.95. It was designed by Steve Peterson and George MacDonald. Type is average density and quite readable. A notable feature of the adventure is the fact that it is unusually well organized and easy to follow in running and set-up. Everything is set out in what I think of as the most logical order, so I found it a breeze to go through. There are an unusually complete set of maps as well.

The adventure is a straightforward hit and run situation for a flexible group of heroes. It is functionally and logically worked out. A particularly good aspect is the section of villains which would certainly bear up well in other situations, and cover a range of types and areas of power. It is a fairly fast run but gives a really good feel for how such an adventure should be set up so that the GM can use it as an example for future scenarios.

The price is \$5.95 from Hero Games, 425 Harbor Building, Suite A, Belmont, CA 94002. Add \$1 for postage and handling. (Jon Schuller)



BEASTMAKER MOUNTAIN

This is the first in a series of "Role Aids" from Mayfair Games, previously known for their timely and compact board and card games. It is a 30 page booklet in 8x11 format, enclosed in an attractive red folder. The price is \$7.50, perhaps a bit high, but the type is dense and not much space is wasted.

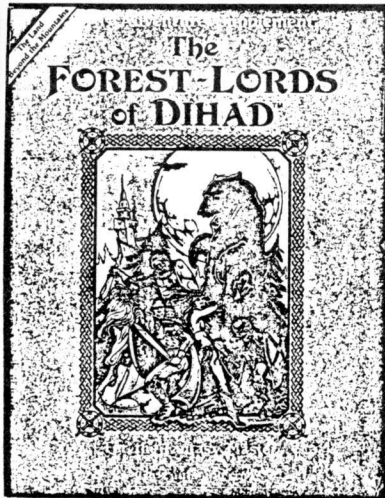
The adventure was designed by Bill Fawcett, who seems to have taken some care in putting in detail and specifics. It is set in a rather traditional D&D-type back-

ground and intended to be used with D&D and T&T. A brief reference to using it with other Rping systems is spurious unless you count D&D variants or Arduin. It is essentially a D&D adventure.

What is nice about this is that it is a comprehensive set-up, intended to be used repeatedly on more than one adventure mission, not necessarily with the same characters. Guidelines for setting up new characters appropriate to the adventure are given, as are 6 basic mission ideas and a large selection of helpful rumors. Information on the major village in the area is given, but most of the description concerns the perils of the Villa of Orlow and Beastmaker Mountain itself. This is a very standard, traditional 'dungeon' type set-up, but well detailed and featuring a few new monsters, and a number of unusual and imaginative room ideas. It follows the lines familiar to D&D players, but does about the best you can within that format. With these limitations it cannot fly as a role-playing experience, but it is as good as such a dungeon can be.

The adventure is generally well organized, but I missed any introductory note or preface for the GM. It is a little hard to plunge right into background and an explanation of the purpose of the scenario and concepts behind the design would be helpful to run it as well as possible. The background material is also sort of poorly organized, and probably would have to be read a couple of times before actually running the adventure. Generally it is well put-together, though.

This is a good adventure for D&D players. It offers a lot more to the traditional AD&Der than most TSR modules, while retaining familiar elements. It is well targeted towards a good market, and perhaps in the sequels Fawcett will consider going into the less familiar but more imaginative realms of social and interactive adventure. Beastmaker Mountain is available from Mayfair Games, POB 5987, Chicago IL 60680. Price is \$7.50 plus \$1 postage. (Dave Nalle)



THE FOREST LORDS OF DIHAD

This is the first of a new series of adventures for The Fantasy Trip produced under license by Gamelords. It is 36 pages, with a hard cover and a nice, color, fold-out map of the region. It sells for \$6.95 and was written by Richard Meyer. A sequel is already in print. It is 8½x11.

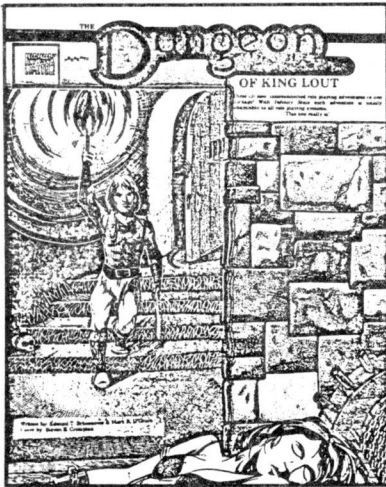
This is a background-oriented adventure, partly because it is first in a series set in the same general background of 'the land beyond the mountains'. It gives a large amount



of regional information, encounters, local characters, additional rules, magic items and creatures. The print is fairly dense with a bit of nice art. The book concludes with three adventure situations, "In Search of Karoth", "The Town of Kindler's Glade", and "The Gargoyles Connection". They are of different types, but brief and a bit static. They take up less than half of the text space. They are background and interaction oriented, rather than straightforward hack and slash or problem solving types.

This is rather excellent role-playing material. It is far higher in quality and more mature in orientation than the standard TFT adventures from Metagaming. There are more opportunities for thought and role-playing and situations and possibilities are not as mechanical as would be expected from the TFT tradition. There is one problem with the material, aside from the absence of any introduction or a table of contents. This type of material will not work well for the average TFT GM. Most TFT GMs are used to running pre-prepared material for small groups where they are really just a player taking the role of the GM and most of the thought is already in the adventure. That won't work with this adventure, because no scenarios are outlined in detail and the burden of developing interactions from the wealth of material provided rests with the GM. This is a great step forward for TFT, but it may not find the audience it deserves as it may be too unusual for TFT GMs.

The Forest Lords of Dihad is a good work and I heartily recommend it to GMS of TFT and other systems. It is available from Gamelords at \$6.95 plus \$1 for postage. Write them at: 18616 Grosbeak Ter., Gaithersburg, MD 20879. (Dave Nalle)



THE DUNGEON OF KING LOU

This is a first release of a new company, Infinity Limited. It is 17 pages total in 8 1/2 x 11 format, at the outrageous price of \$5.95. The type is average size and there is a good bit of white-space.

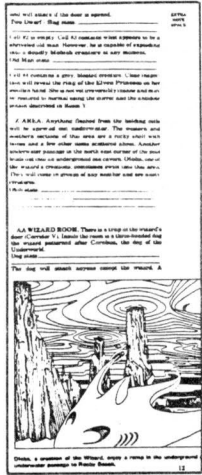
This is a standard-format 'dungeon' type adventure. It has the unique feature of not having any of the detail worked out. This makes it suitable to many RPIg systems, but totally unplayable, as in no cases is enough description given to even figure out what monsters, traps and magic items are. In most cases descriptions are no more than an unfamiliar name. It is designed by Loel H. Schoonover, which I hope is a pseudonym, as it is a serious error to

admit to having committed this offense to the gaming public. Not only are all of the encounters totally unimaginative, the GM is expected to do all of the actual work, work which most people buy such scenarios to avoid doing.

This is touted as three separate adventures, "The Wicked Dungeon of King Lout, "The Monster's Lair", and "The Wizard's Chambers". Of these, only the first is of sufficient length to run, if it were playable, the second doesn't seem to exist, and the third is insignificant and unplayable. There are a number of original monsters mentioned, such as the "Olob" (Do you know what an Olob is? I don't, and apparently the designer doesn't either, as it is not described). Only the most common monsters can be played with this dungeon as their stats may be familiar. Unfortunately most of those mentioned in the text are unusual or subject to varying interpretations. In short, this is a useless fraud at a ridiculous price.

The final blow is an introduction which not only takes up a full page of useless verbiage, but is insultingly condescending and hypes the product with ridiculous claims verging on outright lies. This is such a bad product that I could almost think it was a parody if there were anything even close to this bad for it to be a parody of.

The only reason to buy The Dungeon of King Lout is as an example of the worst FRP game aid ever designed. Write Infinity Limited, 1425 S. 320 E., Orem, UT 84057. Unfortunately they are planning 7 more products in the coming year. (Dave Nalle)



Gods of Roman Gaul

David Nalle

Since Lew Bryson's first article on Finnish Mythology in #16, this informal set of articles on myths and legends has been the most popular series published in our history, averaging a rating of 95 in 4 articles. Thus, we have resolved to go on. This is a sequel to "Gods of Imperial Rome", which was in #19, and examines the faiths of one of the most important parts of the empire.

The Roman Empire absorbed many races and faiths. Many were totally assimilated, but some retained a national identity and had a cultural and social renaissance in the protection and stability afforded by the empire.

The Celts were the largest racial group taken into the empire, a set of tribes scattered from Ireland to Turkey, but mostly concentrated in the Roman province of Gaul (Spain, France, and the British Isles). These many tribes shared certain common religious elements, which were recorded by the ever-meticulous historians of the period.

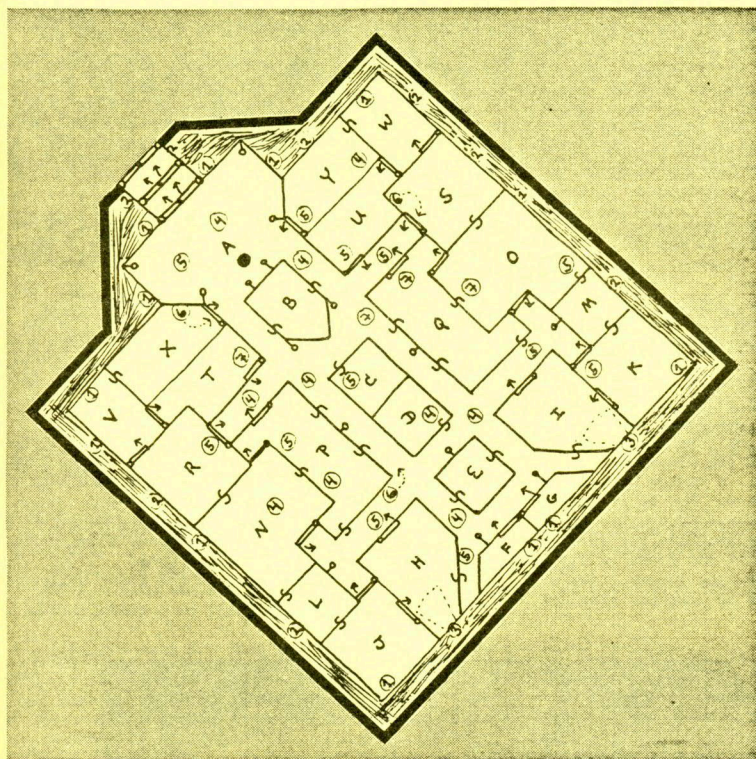
Unlike many other early pagan faiths, Gallic religion paralleled traditional Roman religion in many ways,



THE TOMB OF D'HAERA

AN ARDUIN MINI-MODULE

DAVID A. HARGRAVE



KEY

- Iron barred gate
- bars 1" thick
- Lamp-holder 6' above floor
- Double sided door of 14" thick bronze
- Regular door of 14" thick bronze
- Life-size statue of head of D'Haera family, in white marble
- Secret door or sliding panel. always 5'x3'
- 5ft(scale)

NOTE

Arrows show the direction in which doors open. All interior walls are 1ft thick basalt with a 1" core of bronze. All interior ceilings are 10'. Circled numbers show traps. Rooms are coded by letter for GM

reference and stocking (with discretion). Room E is pre-set, and contains a poison gas of 10D8 potency, which will only dissipate after 10 minutes. If released it will flow out of the room to fill all corridors and open rooms in only two minutes.

INTRODUCTION

This adventure is designed for characters of levels 1-4, and is set up to be used with Arduin Adventure basic rules. However, with minimal tinkering it will work well with many FRP systems.

We recommend that any first level groups number 6-9 characters, and at the other end of the scale, that 4th level groups number 3-5 members. This will keep play balanced.

This adventure is geared to any 'type' or 'class' of character, but a mixed group will fare the best. A good mix at first level might be 3 warriors, one thief, 1 mage, and 1 priest. There may be disadvantages for parties unable to 'cover all the bases'.

There is no time limit per se, but I have found that 2½ to 4 hours is a normal playing time in the tomb.

THE LEGEND

400 years ago the lands that we now know as peaceful and of cultivated beauty were still a wild and dangerous place to live. Powerful trading houses ruled as petty barons and their private armies terrorized anyone not of their faction.

To protect their vast wealth, the richest of these families decided to build a vault in which to keep their treasures. The eldest of the family D'Haera sought out the famous architect/mage Dwalkin Sunbane. They proposed that he build the most impregnable vault possible, defended as only his talents could. For this they would pay him a 20th of their fortune.

The prospect of such wealth was too much even for Dwalkin, so he took on the mammoth task. With all of his arcane and mystik knowledge he conjured elementals of fire, air, and earth to do his bidding, and in three days and three nights, his task was done. Build of black basalt nine feet thick, and with an iron core another foot thick, the one-hundred foot wide and 20ft tall vault had only one entrance. This was closed and guarded by three double bronze doors, each fourteen inches thick. Set into each door were seven locks, only three of which(opened in a secret sequence) were 'safe'. The other four triggered fell traps. Each corridor and room in the complex was also set with a fiendish defense, known only to the architect and the Lord D'Haera.

When Dwalkin broached the family for payment, he was told that he would be paid at a grand banquet in his honor. In the midst of the festivities, the architect realized he had been given a subtle, but irrevocably lethal poison. Cursing himself for a fool, he immediately set about insuring his revenge. In those times no man trusted another, and all prepared for vengeance after treachery. Thus it was that when Dwalkin died, the final binding magic had not been performed which would insure the safety of those entering the vault properly. The architect had not yet inserted the final 'locking key', as it were, but the jubilant D'Haera did not know this as they all trooped in to admire the new repository of their wealth. They all gathered, many generations at once, and boasted how a bit of poison had saved them a twentieth part of their horde.

Their joy turned to terror as they heard the guarding doors shut one by one, and the uncanny laughter of Dwalkin Sunbane echoing from beyond the grave. None left the vault, and too this day it is called 'The Tomb of D'Haera'. To be sure, many have tried to penetrate its many wards and protections to steal the fabulous wealth within the black walls. But, if any have succeeded, no man knows of it. There it still sits on a high, barren hill, among the lands of long-dead lords. Now the building is a constant reminder to all of the folly of treachery and its eventual sure reward.

THE STORY

The characters are approached in an inn by an old and decrepit beggar, who is trying to sell his 'heirlooms' so that he may eat. No one is buying what he is offering, and most make snide, lewd and angry remarks in response. He will approach the adventurers and beg them to 'show mercy on an old and forgotten man.'

Should they do so, feeding him, treating him kindly, he will reveal the following:

At one time he was a successful and daring thief with the name Benjamyn Slyarm, and that he and five comrades accidentally discovered the original set of nine keys to the gates of the long inviolate Tomb of D'Haera. One night, twenty-five years ago they set out to loot the great wealth held within its walls. Three of the five died before they figured out the sequence of keys to be used at the three guardian portals. Daunted, but mad with greed, Benjamyn and the two survivors entered the dark edifice to seek their destiny.

Two hours later, only he staggered out into the light of dawn, sorely wounded and with no memory of what passed within the black walls. Deep inside he kept a lingering fear of even seeing that horrible place again. A broken man, he wandered the world, trying to flee from ever recurring nightmares of blood and doom. Now he is resigned that they will haunt him to his dying day.

If they should choose to torture or threaten him he will, of course, give out the keys, but he will reveal the wrong sequence for their use. If they try to force him to accompany them, he will bite his own tongue off and drown in his blood. That is how much he fears the tomb.

This is the story, the legend. Now it is for the party to become part of the tales which bards will sing forever, or to take one risk too many and pass beyond mortal ken.

THE TRAPS

The Game Master will have the onerous task of checking to see which traps will be triggered as the party of adventurers probes the tomb. However, he should remember that 23 of the family D'Haera died on those traps some four hundred years before, thus rendering them inoperative to this day. Therefore, each time they encounter a trap there should be a 65% chance that its presence will be given away by the obvious skeletal remains of a previous victims. Once the first 23 victims are accounted for future traps will be fully concealed. We suggest that the GM go through the tomb prior to play and locate the remains and figure out what condition they would be in. This will keep the game free of extraneous die-rolling.

Given below are the major trap types, keyed to the map by number(circled numbers set in room walls on map).

TRAP #	DESCRIPTION OF THAT TYPE
1	Hidden, reloading blow gun with 9D8 potency poison and 13 shot potential.
2	Spring loaded spear which automatically impales its victim for 8D8 damage and one random critical hit. There is a 50% chance it will be able to retract each time and reset itself.
3	A reloading heavy crossbow that fires from a hidden slit. It will almost pass completely through whomever it hits first, striking for double normal damage, one random critical hit, and 4D8 potency poison.
4	A trap door five feet square opens in the floor, dropping the victim 30' straight down into molten sulphur(death in 1D3 Melee Rounds, and burn damage for 1D20+20HP per MR).
5	A trap door opens in the floor, dropping the victim 20' down onto 1D10 steel spears. All of them that hit will, of course, impale for double normal damage and one random critical.

TRAP # DESCRIPTION OF THAT TYPE(Continued)

- 6 A 'Malayan Gate' with 1D10+10 bronze points will whip out and hit for dagger damage, plus four extra points for reach point that hits.
- 7 A five foot square block of stone weighing 1200lbs will drop on the victim(s), doing 5D10+50 damage of crushing type, plus 1D5 random critical hits. Of all the traps, this is the only one not intended to reset itself.

These are the seven basic trap types, but the GM should feel free to add lib any others which might seem appropriate, either magikal or mechanical. In fact, I would recommend at least one or two magikal in keeping with the fact that the architect was, among other things, a mage of some note.

THE GUARDIAN OF THE TOMB

There is only one 'monster' here, and it is the ghost of the last head of the family D'Haera. His name is Vahlascho, and he will attempt to kill or frighten off any who try to steal 'his' vast treasure.

For game purposes, consider him capable of 'raising up' any of the dead within the tomb as standard 'Skeletons' to do his bidding(including the bodies of any dead thieves). He could even raise a newly slain body of an adventurer as a walking dead creature(zombie). Thus, he need never show himself until all of his boney minions have been destroyed. He will, however, wail and gibber and make blood-curdling and unearthly sounds in order to frighten off the intruders.

When he is finally confronted, it must be remembered that only those things which are silver or magikal can harm him. He himself has 75HP, an AC of 2+2(+5 for his CF/DEX), and a CF/DEX of 20. He will strike by flowing through a selected victim. This causes said person to suffer 1D10HP of 'cold' damage(no save allowed). It also requires a special save against fear. Failure to make this save will cause random flight in total panic, possibly into traps, for 1D10+10 Melee Rounds.

Other monsters and guardians should be placed sparingly by the GM and only where there is at least some logical justification for their presence.

THE TREASURE

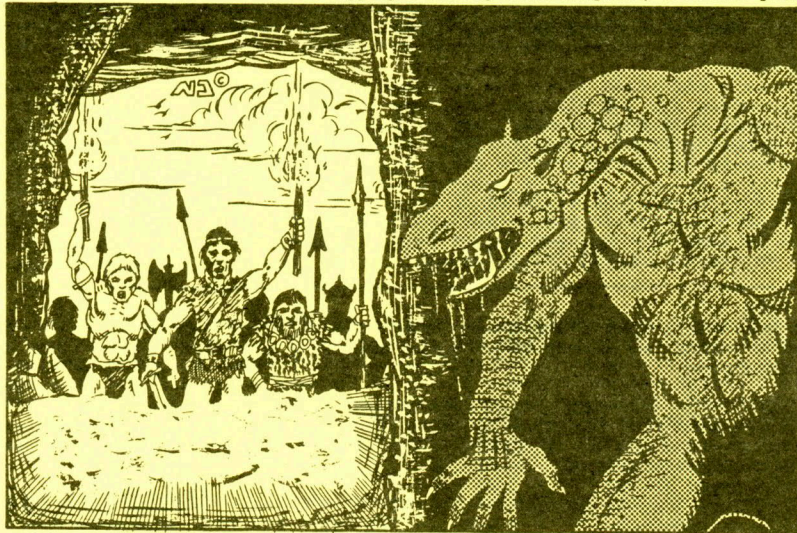
While of great value, the treasure should be left up to the GM as far as specifics. It should fall in a range of 50000-100000 Gold Sovereigns in value. Any less would make a mockery of the family D'Haera. More would be justified, but might be too much for a low-level party. Remember that there will also be valuable personal jewelry on the corpses of the family. The treasure should also be scattered about among the different rooms so that it can't just all be grabbed at one time. In addition there should be some lesser magikal treasure, but very little, primarily on the bodies of the family, perhaps a silver-runed ring of 'True Sight' or an amulet of protection against poison and venom would be appropriate. Certainly no more than one or two items, and none more powerful than these examples.

FINAL NOTE

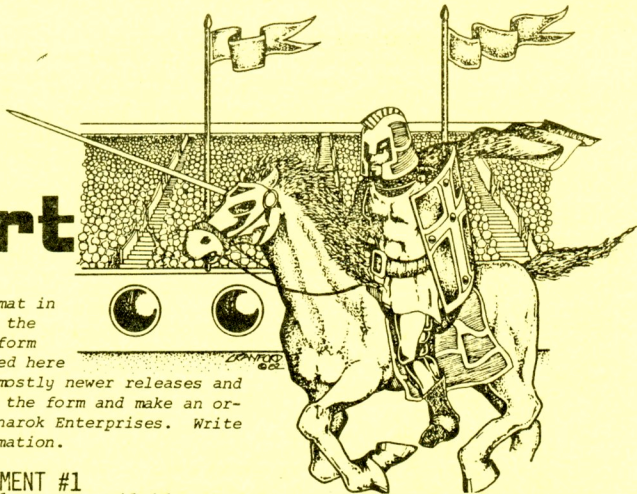
The GM must note that it is impossible to open the outer doors from the inside, and that the doors will all automatically(and hydraulically) close ten minutes after they open(even if they are blocked or spiked). The way out? Why, there is none!

But how then did Benjamyn escape? Well, my friends, HE NEVER DID! And the laughter of Dwalkin Sunbane echoes once again through the darkling halls.

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Project Report



An experimental change in format in this issue's Project Report. At the bottom of this page is an order form with references to items mentioned here or otherwise available from RE, mostly newer releases and special items. Feel free to use the form and make an order. Make checks payable to Ragnarok Enterprises. Write for a catalog with further information.

YSGARTH RULE SYSTEM: SUPPLEMENT #1

This is a special new release, available in July and to be unveiled at ORIGINS. It is a 24 page booklet in the same format as the YRS, with a variety of material related to the system, including 4 new mage classes, 10 new deities, 5 priest types, new native and learned skills, a complete scenario, and a question and answer section on the rules. All told there are almost 100 skills and spells and a large selection of useful information. It is only \$2.50 plus 50¢ for postage.

YSGARTH RULE SYSTEM: REVISED SECOND EDITION

This is the recently released 2nd edition of the YRS, revised and updated, with all of the same material, but some clarifications and corrections. It is the only edition now available as the 1st edition is out of print. It is \$11.95 plus \$1 for postage and handling.

YSGARTH RULE SYSTEM: SPECIAL BOXED EDITION

This is a special limited edition release for ORIGINS. It is a boxed set with the YRS 2nd Edition, a set of character sheets, and the supplement. It is a \$17.40 value, but costs only \$16 plus \$1 for postage.

YRS RECORD SHEET PACK

This is a new product. It is a zip-loc pack with illustrated, large-size YRS character sheets, plus a set of GM reference sheets for keeping track of an adventure. It is only \$2.95 plus 50¢ for postage.

TO CHALLENGE TOMORROW

This is our new SF role-playing game, which is currently being playtested with great success. It will be 80-100 pages in 2 or 3 booklets, designed to simulate near-future and modern period SF role-playing, with an emphasis on designing scenarios based on classic SF stories. A copy can be reserved for \$5.95 plus \$1 for postage. The final price will be higher. It should be out in September.

RAGING MAIN

This is a mid-sized boardgame of trade in the Atlantic during the early 1800s. It is intended for 1-8 players, who take the roles of merchants, pirates, and maritime nations. It has economic, military, political, and cultural aspects, as well as an element of role-playing. It should be out in October. Advance orders are \$3.95 plus \$1 for postage. The final price may well be higher.

UTTIGART #3: THE FAIR AT TEZKOREL

This is the third in the Uttigart adventure series, set in a high-entropy world. It will be available in late August at \$1.50 plus 50¢ for postage. A subscription to the series is only \$5 for 4 issues.

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and so survived with only a few nods to traditional Roman beliefs.

This is a fascinating period for role playing, so the gods of such a large area should not be overlooked. The major Gaulish gods are described here in a general format suitable to any game system. Keep in mind that these are the gods of the Romanized Celts in Gaul, wholly separate from those of the Welsh(Kymric) Celts and the Irish(Gael) Celts, who were not conquered by Rome prior to Christianization. Major gods are given in detail and their are brief notes on lesser deities.



TARANIS THE THUNDERER

This is one of the most famous and renowned deities of the mainland Gauls. He is a god of lightning and the sun, called "The Thunderer". As symbols of his areas of dominance he is often depicted bearing a wheel and a whip, symbols of the sun and lightning respectively. He is a major deity, spread to many areas. Sacrifices are common, of both animals and human victims, who are placed in wood or wicker cages, and burnt alive.

SUCELLOS THE GOOD STRIKER

This is a major, multi-function god often associated with the Roman god Silvanus. He is a god of fecundity, fertility, drink, and death, a peculiar combination. He is a god of celebration of a darker sort and the negative aspects of drink and procreation. He is presented as bearing a hammer(for knocking casks open), a drinking cask, and accompanied by a dog. One might associate him with reckless abandonment(ala Bacchus) and the moon(the dog is a traditional lunar symbol). The hammer is made of wood. He should also be considered as governing madness. His popularity was greatest in central and southern France.

ESUS

This is a god of trees and woodsmen. He is presented as a large man with a bull and three cranes, bearing an axe, and often chopping down a tree. As the Gauls converted from hunting and gathering to agriculture, clearing woodland became an important part of life and the cult of Esus grew accordingly. He was particularly popular in northern and central France. The three birds are a symbol of the triune mother goddess who is found throughout Celtic mythology and will be mentioned later. Sacrifices were made By hanging the victims from trees and disembowling them. Some lesser sacrifices consisted of hanging and non-fatal bleeding to signify the felling of the tree. His associations are common in Gallic beliefs and imagery.

MAPONOS THE HARPER

Maponos was a very popular god who many Romans in Gaul were attracted to as an aspect of Apollo. He was a god of music and the hunt, represented bearing a harp and followed by dogs. He was also associated with archery. He was also a god of youth, but unlike Apollo his associations were more of the earth than the sun and heavens. His cult was strongest in Northern France and Britain, and it survived in later legends as the Welsh deity Mabon, who in turn was absorbed into the Arthurian cycle.

TEUTATES

Teutates is probably the best known Gallic god. His name derives from the early Celtic word *Tuath*, which means tribe, and is also the route for the similar Irish deity Daghdha. As you might have guessed he was a tribal god, the protector of the Gauls, especially those in French Gaul and Southern Britain. He was a war god, but really a protector and guardian of the people above all else, protecting against war and disease, promoting trade and commerce. He had healing powers and was benevolent to his people, though fierce to others. Sacrifices were made by drowning in a cauldron of wine or mead, the cauldron being a common Celtic motif of death.

BELENUS

Belenus originated in the pre-Roman kingdom of Noricum in the eastern Alps, but his power and popularity spread from there in the Roman period, which forced more commerce between the many subject tribes and kingdoms. He started as a god of the thermal springs, but his realm grew as he spread west to include solar, fire, and equine associations. He was thought of as shining and brilliant, too bright to look upon, and achieved quite a height of popularity during the Roman period in the West, long after Noricum and its springs were forgotten.

OGMIOS

Ogmios is a multi-faceted god who is clearly associated with the Irish god Oghma, though here he takes on some new aspects. He is a war god, a champion, but he is the champion grown old and past his prime, redirecting his interests and abilities.

He is represented as an old man bearing a bow and club, but his actual powers have little to do with war, except in areas of diplomacy. He is known for his eloquence and quick wit. He is the inventor of writing and magic, and called the "Lord of Bindings", following the Celtic/Gallic concept of magic being triggered and embodied by writing. He bears two tablets which hold all of the curses in the world to heap upon his enemies. One additional function is to guide souls to the otherworld.

EPONA

Epona is a well-known goddess among antiquarians. She was a parallel to the Welsh Rhiannon, a goddess of horses, death, and rebirth. Her main claim to fame is that she gained great favor outside of Gaul when she was adopted as patron of the Roman cavalry, just as Mithras was adopted by the legions.

NODENS

Nodens was a sky and moon god, with a particular association with tidal motion. He is considered a parallel to the Welsh Nudd and the Irish Lugh. He is often presented as an old man accompanied by wind and wave spirits, the later somewhat similar to Tritons.

TARVOS TRIGARANOS

This is the sacred bull-god, a symbol of rulership among the Gauls, usually presented accompanied by 3 cranes. He may be the same bull associated with Esus. He was also called Donnotaurus.



CERNUNNOS

This god was widely known by the epithet "The Horned One", and was a stag-god, depicted with antlers on his head and bearing a serpent. He was the lord of wild animals and nature, and often accompanied by a stag. He is a clear parallel to the Welsh Gwyn and Scandinavian Njord, both of whom had similar aspects. His faith has survived to this day in some forms of witchcraft, such as the cult of Wicca. As a concept and deity Cernunnos was wide spread, though under different local names. He also had some major lunar connections. He could be considered the Gaulish Pan, but he is wilder and more dangerous.

DIS PATER

This unnamed god was considered to be the father of mankind, and the lord of the other world. He was looked on as part of a cult of ancestor worship among Celts in what is now southern Germany. He was often mated with the Triune Mother. His nature was gener-

ally benevolent.

THE TRIUNE MOTHER

Triple goddesses are popular among all Celtic tribes, including those of the Gaulish period. In many cases these three goddesses represented the three elements Earth, Air, and Water, and were mated with a male god, like Taranis or Belenus, who represented Fire, the fourth element. Elemental worship was a major part of Gallic religion, especially in this mother format, representing the three elements which nurture mankind, while fire was assigned to the protector god, driving off foes as a bonfire will keep animals at bay. One set of well-known triple-goddesses is from Western France, and consists of Divona (Water), Onuava (Earth), and Sirona (Sky, Stars). There were great regional variations. In the Rhineland the goddesses were Alagabiae, Berhusiahenae, and Hamavehae. In many cases Cybele was adopted as a single mother goddess, or in the case of Autun there was a local mother goddess, Berecynthia. These are paralleled in Ireland and Wales by such groups as the Morrighu or Y Mamau.

OTHER DEITIES

There were many other deities among the Gauls, filling other major roles in the society. Some well-known ones are: Grannos (Curative Springs), Borvos (Hot Springs), Cunomaglos (Hunter), Moccus (Divine Swineherd), Artio (Bear Goddess, or Artarios, Bear God), Ialonos (Meadows), Alisanos (Rock), Contrebis (Towns and Commerce), Condatis (Rivers), Dunatis (Fortresses), and others. The Gauls revered all of nature, and they were a sophisticated and advanced people, though their glory has often been overlooked in the shadow of Rome.

PRIESTS OF GAUL

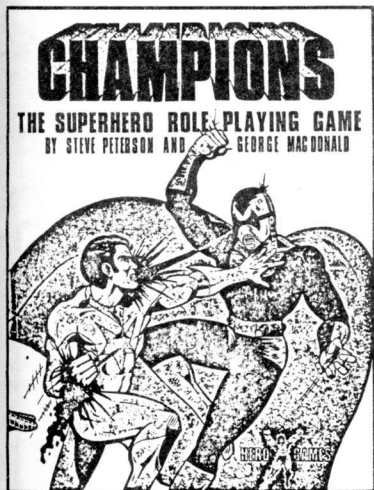
Gallic priesthood can be divided into three classes, Druids, Vatis, and Bards, parallel to the Druidh, Filidh, and Baird divisions in Ireland. The Druid was the true priest. The Vatis was an under-priest specializing primarily in divination and services to the congregation, but not higher sacrifices. The Bard was essentially a preserver of lore and knowledge, associated with the priesthood, but of a lay nature. All were greatly revered, as they preserved the laws, history, and traditions of the people. Most regional administration was in the hands of the Druids, as was law and worship. The powers of such classes should be primarily

functional, or associated with the nature of the god which they serve. Certain gods will be dominant in different regions, so the Druids of that area will revere that god above the others. Appropriate parallel classes are given in most game systems.

CONCLUDING NOTE

Roman historians tended to distort things to their point of view, so it has been hard for modern ones to separate out the essential truth about these gods who were often reported under the names of similar Roman gods, or even worshiped under those names to maintain harmony. As a result some gods are rather sketchy. You can do a bit to flesh out their nature by looking at the myths of the unconquered Celts and examining parallel gods to find logical depths to add to the deities. Good sources on religion in Gaul during the Roman period are: Celtic Mythology, by Proinsias MacCana, and The Religions of the Roman Empire, by John Ferguson. For historical background try Roman Britain, by Malcolm Todd, and The World of Rome, by Michael Grant.

FEATURED REVIEW:



TYPewriter TAKEOVER
LEW BRYSON

We of the Ysgarth capaign take a certain amount of pride in the names of our characters. They are born of great thought and ring like a bell for us, a bell of glory, honor, pride, and power. There's a lot in a well-chosen name: Delren, Valash, Mannaluch, Olvar, Azulanta, The Zip Kid—WHAT?! Who the hel is The Zip Kid? What's that name doing here? I'm the assistant editor, and I demand to know just what—

SHUT UP!! I'm the Zip Kid, and I just took over. You were going to write another of those boring "We're so wonderful 'cause we do it this way" articles, I just know it! More of the same drivel about knights and castles and dragons—BORING. I can't stand it! So I'm taking over. Wheeee! I'm

Iris North, The Zip Kid, and this is about my game, my world: CHAMPIONS.

CHAMPIONS is by Steve Peterson and George MacDonald, from Hero Games. It sells at \$11.95, and the basic book is 56 pages of double column type with fair artwork. It's a second generation superhero role-playing game. The good guys (and girl!) mix it with the baddies. Pretty simple, huh? The game's built around three things: characteristics, powers, and skills, and the combat system. They're mechanics, sort of dull, so I'll dispatch 'em.

There are eight primary characteristics and six derived characteristics. Each of the primaries starts at a base of 10 (normal). A character gets a base of 100 Power Points to work with. These can be spent to raise both primary and derived characteristics directly, which costs varying amounts. This gives the player almost complete control over how the character will turn out.

There's a catch. A couple of 'em. 100 points seems like a lot, but only using 100 is pretty dull. So there are disadvantages that're worth more points. Take me, I've got a personal code against killing, a secret identity (don't tell anyone my name, OK?), and I'm kind of unlucky. All that's worth 40 points, so I can get more goodies! Another catch is that things are set up so it is hard to get anything cheap. They're too fair. The powers follow the same pattern. You can cut some corners, but sometimes they cut back. I mean, I'm happy when I manage to cut 5 points! Gee!

The combat system's a gas. Like they say in the book, "Comic book combat is extravagant, exaggerated, impossible, and an incredible amount of fun." Any how! People fly all over the place, fall over, get up, and there's always energy blasts zappin' past your ears! The system is based on comparison of derived combat abilities and a 3D6 roll, with a bi-level damage system covering both stunning and killing effects. It is fun and there are intelligent possibilities for modificat-

CHARACTERISTICS		POWERS		SKILLS	
Strength	10	Flight	10	Acrobatics	10
Speed	10	Energy Blast	10	Hand-to-Hand	10
Stamina	10	Force Field	10	Weapon Proficiency	10
Intelligence	10	Super-Speed	10	Stealth	10
Power	10	Super-Strength	10	Swimming	10
Endurance	10	Super-Vision	10	Tracking	10
Agility	10	Teleportation	10	Unarmed Combat	10
Charisma	10	Weather Control	10	Weapon Master	10
Constitution	10	Weather Resistance	10	Wizardry	10
Strength	10	Weather Immunity	10	Wizardry	10
Speed	10	Weather Control	10	Wizardry	10
Stamina	10	Weather Resistance	10	Wizardry	10
Intelligence	10	Weather Immunity	10	Wizardry	10
Power	10	Weather Control	10	Wizardry	10
Endurance	10	Weather Resistance	10	Wizardry	10
Agility	10	Weather Immunity	10	Wizardry	10
Charisma	10	Weather Control	10	Wizardry	10
Constitution	10	Weather Resistance	10	Wizardry	10

ion and innovation. There are some problems, mainly with the weapons section, which is incomplete and confusing, and with the powers which are unclear and under-defined. You can always improvise, right?

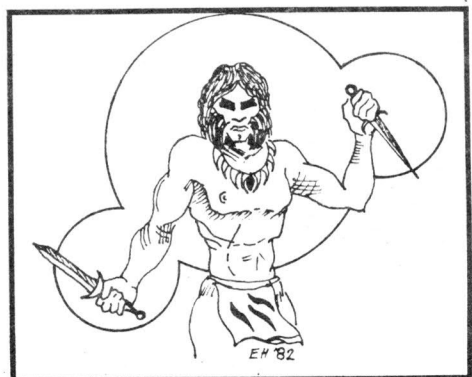
The main point of the game is me! The character! The rules put a constant emphasis on role-playing and character conception. It's thought provoking. You get to think up why the character has his/her/its powers as well as what they are and how they're used. Sount tough? It's not, really. Just read some comic books. You'll get all kinds of corny ideas. You can always say "Uh, radiation did it!" Some of us are a bit classier. Then you and the GM go over things like motivation (why do you do this dangerous stuff (me, I think it's fun!), everyday life (I'm a singer with a club band, my friend Magnon's a magnetic engineer), and figuring out how to get into scenarios (I hang out with the right people!). This puts a burden on the GM, one which may be beyond the capabilities of the garden variety hack and slasher.

It's flexible too. You can use any place, any time, any part of the multiverse. We work out of 1982 Minneapolis-St. Paul, in a world where Russia collapsed and Balkanized, but it could just as easily be 1920s New Orleans, or 1770s Berlin, or even Renaissance Italy. With the right group of players, CHAMPIONS can go anywhere! The 3 Musketeers as superheroes? Sure! TRAVELLER with superheroes! It's fun! I think It's—HEY!

Buzz off, you little twerp. This is Lew's counter-coup. I think it's fun too, but this is my article. Believe me, though, playing a 20th-century 19 year old girl who can shrink to 3" and fly has given me a new outlook on role-playing. CHAMPIONS can give you new horizons as well, if you prepare a little. Like the shrimp said, read some comics. Good ones to start with are Marvel's X-MEN, FANTASTIC FOUR, MOON KNIGHT and others. These show a wide range of powers and X-MEN has particularly good teamwork. If the editors can be thought of as players comic books are good examples of role-playing. The characters have consistent personalities. I was lucky enough to have a GM who insisted on consistency and the campaign has benefitted.

With intelligence, innovation, and an open mind, CHAMPIONS can provide a great 'other side' to FRPing. As with all systems, GM/player input is essential. Fortunately, unlike some systems, the basic framework of CHAMPIONS is reasonably sound and will support your efforts. I think it's a good game—OK, OK, Iris thinks it's a good game too! 'Nuff said!

CHALLENGE OF CHAMPIONS TOM CURTIN



Tom Curtin has been absent from these pages as a writer since #10. Now he is back in force with his first fiction since the early installments of Lew Bryson's series which just ended. This is the first of several parts chronicling the events started in Marc Lecos' story in #15, but told from a more intimate point of view. It is a tale of strategic-level play in Ysgarth. Tom Curtin plays Mithrandir and Girthaur, Lew Bryson plays Manneluch, Rick Shaw plays Tottenjager, Nick Hopkins plays Val Thalion, Tom Cheney plays Thane Ormsson and Lokar, and Dave Nalle GMed the events. Further installments are forthcoming.

Two conspicuous individuals found shelter from the brutal sun under the shadow of towering battlements. They looked over a notice posted on the gate. The mage turned to his friend, "While you were elf-hunting in the Abyss with your demon buddies, this is what's come to the flame."

A wistful grin crossed Girthaur's face as he read the proclamation. He looked it over a second time and chuckled. They were at the Saexe Gate of Ptolemeias, but similar notices were posted all along the Street of the Gods and at the other major gates. Girthaur put on his best sarcastic voice and read to the gathering crowd.

Thane Ormsson, Champion of Odin, Slayer of the champions of Shu and Geb, and of the Ring-Lord of Uttgart himself, hereby issues this challenge.

That any champions of the Flame gods who dare meet him at an agreeable time in the Arena of Lokrasta, in Ptolemeias.

He will face one foe a week until the faith of Odin and the Pool is acknowledged superior to all others.

This contest will be judged by the Thearchs of the City. No intervention of any kind by non-combatants will be countenanced.

In addition, the faith of the defeated will be banned from the city for five years, and his temple will be at the victor's disposition.

Seconds are required. Lokar, High-Priest of Ymr, will second for Thane Ormsson.

Apply at the temple of Odin.

Girithaur's leather-clad friend applauded the recital. Mithrandir, Cardinal-Archbishop of Gilrod's Church always appreciated humor at the Pool's expense. "Well done, Holy Torpedo! But I fear he means you!"

"Really, how flattering! Now I have something to do in my spare time." They were interrupted by an uproar outside the gate. A mob crowded onto the Saexe Road. Girithaur and Mithrandir pushed to the front. A procession was winding its way down the Street of the Gods. At its head was Lokar, High-Priest of Ymr. Two eunuch priests with cat-o'-nine tails followed him. A detail of temple guards trailed behind prodding a dirty, disheveled man who struggled under the weight of massive chains. The crowd hurled insults and debris at the hapless miscreant.

Lokar halted the procession at the gate. The mob surged forward. Now that the target was immobile he was bombarded by a devastating flow of rotten eggs and cabbages. Lokar spoke out above the din: "PEACE!" The throng obeyed reluctantly. He walked over to the prostrate figure and took an oratory stance.

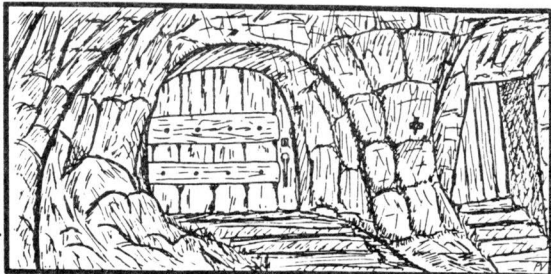
"Val Thalion, by command of Thane Ormsson, Champion of Odin, and with the consent of the Council of Thearchs, I hereby banish you from the City of Ptolemeias for a period of five years. Furthermore, these two holy men will accompany you in your first year of exile to complete your conversion and required pilgrimage. If you return to this city in that period or renounce the true faith of Odin you will suffer the Threefold Death." He motioned the guards back and gave a few last notes to the two priests. With the swift application of a pointed boot-toe he started Val Thalion on his way.

Girithaur pivoted, pushed through the throng, ripped down the proclamation and hurtled back, throwing townsfolk to the road. He burst out before the somber priest. The guards leapt forward to bar his approach. Lokar waved them off and quipped "It's alright, back off. He may be stupid but he hasn't gone mad yet. What can I do for you, O mighty Fool of the Flame?"

Girithaur brandished the proclamation. "You can tell that overgrown sardine to be ready for a real fight next week."

"Really, you presume to challenge the power of the pool?"

Girithaur's eyes rolled heavenward. "Listen, you contemptible little houseboy, run on home and tell your tin-plated playmate that he's invited to a housewarming next week when I move into Odin's temple. He crumpled up the parchment and threw it to one of the guards. "You should go home, Lokar, it's past your bedtime. Don't forget your soldiers. Have a nice day." Girithaur sneered his contempt and pushed away through the crowd. He met the grim-visaged wizard.



"Now you've cone it," Mithrandir groaned, "Your in for it now."

"Wrong, buddy old pal. We're in for it now. I've unanimously elected you my second!"

"Gilrod's gorgeous locks! Me?!" Mithrandir searched his beleaguered mind for an excuse. After all, he was too young to die. "Girithaur, be reasonable, why not... ah...ahhh...Tottenjager!! Yes, yes, he'd be perfect." He was overcome with glee.

"Tottenjager? That simpering, slimy, shit-covered shambles? That moth-eaten, mildewed paper-hanger? That moldy, mollycoddling, muck-infested pantywaist?"

Mithrandir winced at every indisputable adjective as Girithaur carried on relishing the exercise of his vocabulary. Mithrandir interrupted as he started to wind down. "I take it that means no?"

"Indeed my friend, verily, undoubtedly, no, negatory, no way. Your it."

"Well, what about Mannaluch," the wizard pleaded, "He's got enough turns in that ring of his!"

"Come on, Manny's the Pope, why should he foul his dainty digits moping up the Pools? Anyway, he's out of shape and you know how he gets if he breaks one of those luscious nails. I'd consider it a personal favor if you did it."

Mithrandir cursed deep in his hood, "Alright, you sun-worshipping seive-brain, have it your way, but I get 5% of your share of the temple take."

"You've a heart of gold pal. Let's catch up with Val Thalion and get a scouting report." They hurried out the gate to overtake the hobbling ex-champion who the two priests were whipping rhythmically down the road.

Girithaur ran around in front of them. "Hey, good looking, who's your plastic surgeon? He did a real bang-up job." Val Thalion fixed him with a baleful black eye.

"Laugh now, but next week you'll feel the sting of Brihtsbrand."

Girithaur clapped him on his lash-scored back, "So true, but Val, why did you lose to that bucket of bolts?"

"I couldn't see him half the time. He glows blindingly. Moved damn fast too, couldn't be natural. There was also this aura of heat, really wore me down. Not to mention that armor from head to toe. As for the blade, you can find out yourself."

"Thanks buddy, I'll remember this. Write if you get work." Girithaur motioned for one of the flagellant priests to come closer. He pulled two Gold Dragons from

his purse and dangled them before the Odinite's bulging eyes. "There's an old adage which you gentlement should adhere to, 'spare the rod, spoil the champion'" He pressed the coins in the eunuch's sweaty palm. "Make sure Val Thalion gets the message." The priest conferred with his partner and the whips came back out to rise and fall with renewed vigor.

Mithrandir shook his head in disgust as the pitiful scene moved on. "You're a cruel man."

"Stuff it, you warped wizard, you're just pissed i thought of it first."

"That's beside the point."

Girithaur scanned the horizon. "Mith, I think it's time we visit the Holy City."

Mithrandir was perplexed, "The Holy City? Why? It hasn't recovered from our last visit yet. You put half the courtesan corps out of business. What's up your sleeve?"

"This time it's strictly business. I want to chat with Pope Manny. I may need help from Gilrod on this one. Beam us over Mith, and I'll explain it all. Who knows? If we've got time we might get to hold a close order drill with your hobbit shock troops."

Mithrandir's face lit up with anticipation. He hadn't abused a hobbit in at least a weak! "What are we waiting for?" With the aid of Mithrandir's arcane powers the two melted into the damp Kymric air.

Lokar ran up the smooth marble steps inside the cavernous temple of Odin. He entered a glittering chamber festooned with the gilded trophies of Thane Ormsson's past triumphs. The burly champion was looking over the spoils from Hastur's temple, dividing them into piles, when he noticed the priest. "Did you see our friend off safely?"

"Yes, despite the enthusiasm of the populace," he casually brushed some cousins from his resplendant robes. "I've got another challenger for you."

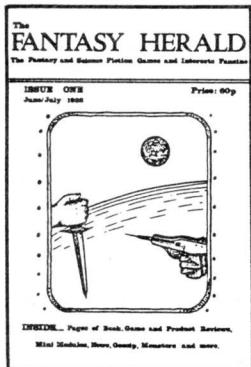
"Thane looked up from his loot, "Is it he?"

"No, but the next best thing. That assassin, Girithaur, the upstart champion of Ra. He accosted me at the Saexe Gate and demanded the challenge. You seem disappointed."

"My bait keeps drawing the wrong prey. The big fishies won't bite." The champion loomed out of his chair and slid Brihtsbrand from its jeweled scabbard. Thane gazed out across the rooftops and domes of Ptolemeias. His weary eyes rested on a dark tower overlooking the Necropolis. He drew a deep breath. "After I defeat this assassin, he'll have to fight. His young god is vain and won't stand such a slight to his ego." Thane slipped the scintillant blade home. "I won't rest 'til he's at rest. His destruction will be the Pool's final victory."

FANZINES FEATURED

This is a continuation of a series started in "In the Speculum" in #18. ITS had to go over to more immediate things, but these fanzines still need review, so we have a new irregular feature. This is part two of three parts, with additional installments possible if fanzines are sent to us. We encourage trade with other fanzines which may be out there. Ratings are on a 1-9 scale and are for the most recent issue we have.



FANTASY HERALD

Sun Reach, 44 Candleriggs, Glasgow, SCOTLAND

Appearance:3, Content:7, Value:8, Personal:8, Overall:7

This is a new effort from Scotland, and its first issue is rather impressive, well above the level of most US publications, and obviously aiming for a high level of quality.

A copy is 60p and 6 issues are £3.60. Rates may be higher outside the UK. Issue #1 is 36 pages of reduced text on 8x6 pages. Particularly attractive about this issue was that it did not suffer from 'Monsters & Modules' syndrome and actually had some rather intelligent and pulled together articles. Of particular note were some excellent book reviews and product reviews. There is a nice, if innocuous column of news, a role-playing adventure, some monsters, and a space adventure. There is a clear and deliberate effort to keep material from being too system specific and make it suitable to more than one Rping system. The editorial position seems to be particularly mature, on a level which is as high as DRAGONLORDS or ABYSS.

FANTASY HERALD is edited carefully and kept in good order. The layout is neat, but there is virtually no art. I would heartily recommend it for its high level of thought and effort and the mature perspective which it has on gaming overseas. Remember to query first to find out US prices.



DECK OF MANY THINGS

MDG, POB 656, Wyandotte, MI 48192

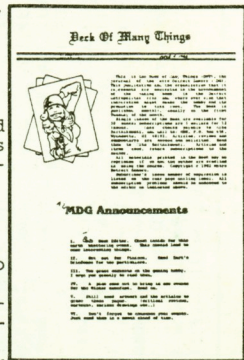
Appearance:6, Content:3, Value:8, Personal:4, Overall:5

This is one of the oldest fanzines in the US, perhaps the world, at least in the field of gaming. Given that, it is surprising that it is not either much better or much worse. DMT was nominated for the "Best Amateur Gaming Magazine" category at ORIGINS this year, but if it should win I'll be sorely disappointed. DMG is quite diverse, but unfortunately this doesn't seem to help it at all, and it may in fact be the bane of the zine, as there is no sense of coherence, purpose or organization.

I have in front of me #71, which I understand from hints in the issue, to be a double issue. A standard copy is 30¢ and a subscription is \$3 for 12 monthly issues. This is quite a good price, although an issue has only 12 8½x5½ pages, xeroxed with reduced type. Reproduction is fairly poor, and layout is not at all well done, but the art is rather nice. Unfortunately the low quality of graphics and printing detract from the nice artwork.

DMT has a new editor this issue, David M. Stein, so it may start to get better. It is supported by the Metro Detroit Gamers, one of the most active gaming groups in the nation, so there should be a wealth of talent and energy to improve it. Some items in this issue include a lot of inside news and comments, a convention report, spells, and obituaries. There isn't really much to grab hold of here, so I don't want to cut at DMT too much. Right now it seems to be dominated by one or two people of very limited interests and imagination, but its writers, editors and readership seem to be mature and intelligent, so perhaps it will get better. This perception may be a function of the fact that this is a true fanzine, published by a gaming club, primarily for members of the club. This nature is very clear in the content and orientation of the zine.

There are interesting elements to DMT, so I'd recommend ordering a copy to at least look at, but a subscription might not be worthwhile.



NECRONOMICON

Anthony Kapolka, 1902 Greenhill Rd., Lansdowne, PA 19050

Appearance:4, Content:7, Value:5, Personal:8, Overall:7

This is one of several brand new American fanzines, and so far it is the best I've seen, though it is by no means perfect. The first thing I noticed about it was an almost conscious imitation of the format and style of ABYSS, a pattern which was flattering, and perhaps intelligent, as it lends a structure not usually found in early efforts.

I have at hand #2. It is a 20 page issue on 8½x5½ reduced type pages. A single copy is \$1.50 and a subscription is \$5 for 4 issues. The editor is Anthony Kapolka. This issue has several interesting articles, reviews and scenarios. It is heavily, nay, exclusively, AD&D oriented, a fact which may be a burden in the long run or may go away as the editors mature.

The artwork is fairly good and the layout is passable, but the reproduction quality is rather low, which detracts from the art and is a serious problem with reduced type, which tends to get really indistinct. We had this problem in ABYSS #10.

And I would recommend it with few reserves, especially for AD&D players who want something like ABYSS but more AD&D oriented. I can clearly see the potential for a first rate fanzine here.



I think there is a lot of potential here, and I would recommend it with few reserves, especially for AD&D players who want something like ABYSS but more AD&D oriented. I can clearly see the potential for a first rate fanzine here.

THE NECROMANCER

Beckett Rossett, 294 W. 11th St. New York, NY 10014

Appearance:2, Content:5, Value:4, Personal:5, Overall:4

This is another new American zine, and it supports the belief that we are still catching up to the UK in many ways. It is a good effort, but the kind I would expect where fanzines are just catching on. I'm afraid I don't have much hope for its future, unless its unusually energetic editor can save it.

NECROMANCER #1 is 16 8½x5½ pages of normal sized text. It features several super-short articles by name writers, among them Ted Shelton and Mason Jones, but they are too short to be a drawing point for the magazine. Most of the material is pretty much standard fare; magic items, reviews, an article on random name generation (shudder).

Few fanzines survive the perils of the first few issues. If this one wants to do so it will need to grow up fast and solve some serious problems, such as the fact that there really isn't much in it. Beckett Rossett has the will, but I'm afraid that he hasn't got the experience to go with it yet. Do what you can to support NECROMANCER. I can't praise it highly, but it might become something interesting.



???

QUESTIONS ON THIS ISSUE

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

ARTICLE

Retirement Benefits
Middle Sea Review
GENCON EAST Report
In the Speculum
Gods of Roman Gaul
The Tomb of D'Haera
Project Reports
Typewriter Takeover
Challenge of Champions
Fanzines Featured

RATING

ARTIST

Eric Heinsoo(3, 16)
Dave Naille/Photos(5)
Kevin Fortin(8)
Paul Vinton(9, 17, 18)
Negut Dharsee(FC, 11, 14)
Mike Cranford(12)

RATING

Cover
Titles/Graphics

Answer 'Yes' or 'No!':

Would you like an article or column on computer gaming?
Would you like an article of column on play-by mail games?
Would you like ABYSS to feature a comic strip?
Would you like ABYSS to have a news/gossip column?

(These questions are for consideration in setting up ABYSS in the new size)

HEADBACK

RESULTS #19

ARTICLE

Keeping a Camp, Alive
Epilogue
Breakfast in R'Iyeh
Call of Khalk'ru
Beastmastery
Gods of Imperial Rome
Dwarves
The Octopus

RATING CHANGE

69 --
72 -16
80 --
93 --
85 +12
97 +1
69 --
77 -20

Titles

96 +4
92 +1

Mike Cranford

98 +1

Tom Curtin

52 -17

Valerie Olson

78 -16

David Randrup

71 +4

Negut Dharsee

92 -3

Gavin Aho

90 --

Overall

81 -2

Worst Product:

Deities & Demigods (TSR): 21%
AD&D Monster Cards (TSR): 14%
Ballastor's Barracks (CH): 12%
Swords & Spells (TSR): 10%

Most Nominations (By Company)

TSR (5 Items): 50%
Judges Guild (6 Items): 26%
Chaosium (3 Items): 16%

On the whole, not too surprising in this section. Other companies mentioned included Infinity Limited, Metagaming, Steve Jackson Games, and Fantasy Games Unlimited.

Ratings were a bit down this issue, but still over average. Keep in touch.

RAGNAROK

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