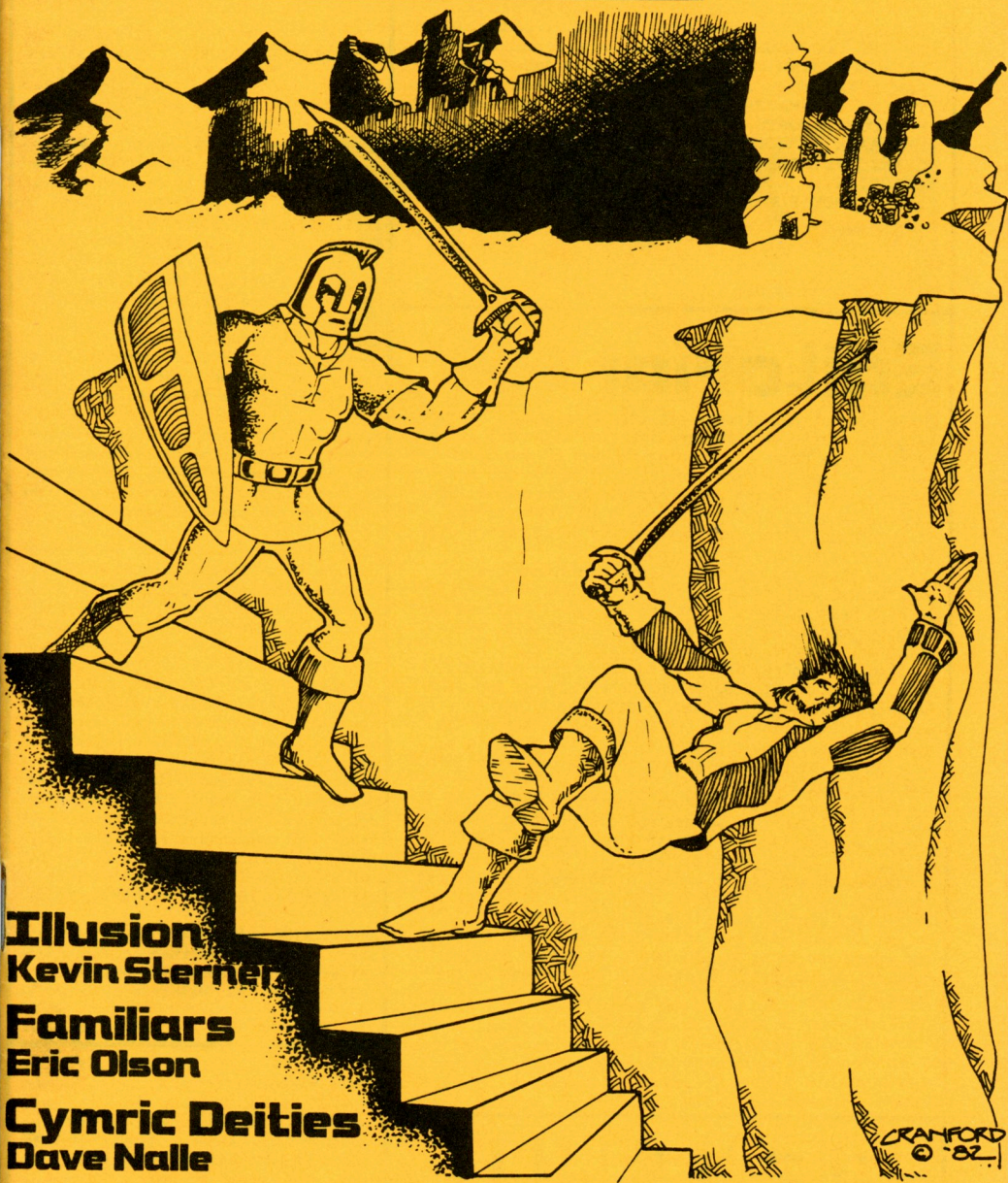


ABYSS 22

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Illusion
Kevin Sterner

Familiars
Eric Olson

Cymric Deities
Dave Nalle

Secret Languages
Jones & Davies

Taking the Waters
Jan Mierik

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Editorial

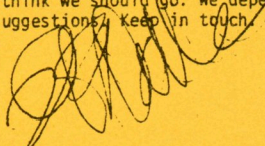
As most of you already realize, this should be our last issue at this size, and starting with next issue we should be regularly running between 28 and 32 or even more pages in each issue. There may or may not be an increase in the cover price with the expansion in format, as we are considering a \$1.50 price, but it should not alter the subscription price, which will continue to be the lowest around.

This issue you may notice some format changes and experiments with new styles of title design. We would love to hear what you think and any ideas that you may have to improve ABYSS in any area, appearance, presentation, content, or anything else.

Also, an apology for getting this issue out a bit late. Things mounted up around here with the two supplements, grad-school, exams, papers, and other unavoidable distractions. We try to get ABYSS out on the most regular schedule possible, but this issue is a week or so late, and we apologize from the depths of our hard little hearts.

Take a look at the product reports in this issue and you will see that we are now distributing DRAGON-LORDS, and outstanding British zine, here in the US. If you like ABYSS you might also like DL, and it certainly has an impressive amount of interesting material in every issue. We think it is the best the UK has to offer, and want to make it available to you.

Let us know what you think about where we're going and where you think we should go. We depend on your comments and suggestions, keep in touch. Send in the feedback form.



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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!!!

IN THE SPECULUM

GAMES:

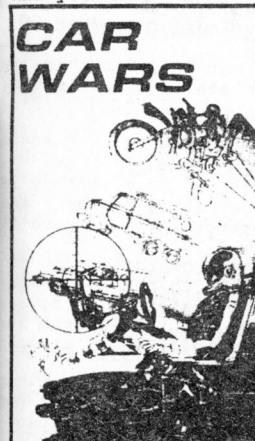
ILLUMINATI

In recent months Steve Jackson Games has been establishing a reputation for publishing first-class small games, and Illuminati bears this out. Illuminati is a multi-player card and strategy game. It comes in a plastic box and has umpteen little pieces of money called 'megabucks', which have to be cut out, a selection of small, plastic-coated cards, with a variety of 'illuminati' and power groups on them, and a small 24 page rule-book. The quality of the materials is generally quite good, but the megabucks are too small and hard to cut out, and the box (which they tout as a great new idea) is not nearly as easy to use as a zip-loc, tends to let MBs slip out out the side, and increases the price about \$2. The price is \$6.50. The whole thing will fit in your pocket.

Up to 6 players can play Illuminati. It is based on the popular series of books of the same name by Robert Anton Wilson and others. Each player controls an illuminati or secret power group, and tries to take control of other more common organizations to further his own bizarre ends and victory conditions. Each illuminati also has its own powers and special abilities. Many interesting ideas are brought in, such as political/social alignments for each group, which aid in takeovers, money incentives and other similar aspects which add depth. The take-over/combat system is simple and direct, and the mechanics of the game are clearly explained and well worked out. It plays quickly and easily with a lot of room for strategy and imagination.

The problems with Illuminati are on a higher, more conceptual level. Obviously it cannot come close to really simulating the fascinatingly concept ideas of the books on which it is based, though it does catch some of the superficial aspects, but this is inevitable in a small game. Where it really falls down is in the lack of variety, and unusual lack of what might be called 'role-development', which is usually fairly strong in such multi-player games. After playing a number of times Illuminati loses its luster, because it tends to be too much the same. There are only a limited number of options for each situation. In a given situation each player will always want to take the same action every time. The Gnomes of Zurich always want to grab the high income powers, but they really have no other unique route to victory. Also, there are only 6 powers, so they will always all be out in a 6 player game, so the same sorts of conflicts will always come up. The game needs more content, more cards. There should be more ways for each illuminati to win and more unusual things they can do. There should also be more and more interesting groups to take over. It would also help if more was done to characterize each illuminati so that the player could visualize the group, its motivations, aims, and nature, so they can get the feel of the role and give it some personality, a process which makes many multi-player games so much fun.

Illuminati has good ideas and is fun to play. The price is a bit high for the amount of play you will want to do. I understand that expansion sets are planned, and you will certainly need the basic game to use them. Expansions might be just the thing to raise Illuminati from a good game to a great game, though they will add into the cumulative price. When playing, consider variants and personal expansions, you can build a lot on the solid framework provided. (Dave Nalle)



CAR WARS

Car Wars is one of the most praised and imitated games of the past year or so, and when I picked it up I expected to be wowed like everyone else. What I did not expect was a game based on some good ideas but marred by poor design judgement which makes what should be a rollicking fun game into a bit of a bore.

Car Wars is a multi-player game depicting arena-like combat between armored and armed vehicles, after the model of "Road Warrior", Damnation Alley, and many other SF movies or novels. It comes in the increasingly annoying plastic box, and includes a selection of attractive (uncut) color counters, depicting vehicles, wrecks and pitfalls, a surprisingly disorganized reference sheet, playing board combination, and a clearly written 24 page rule booklet. The price is \$5.50.

Theoretically any number of players can play, but like any multiplayer game more than 10 is unwieldy. Each player starts with a variable amount of money and may spend it to build vehicles, including motorcycles and all sorts of cars and vans. Cars can be modified and armed, to make a very personal engine of doom. The vehicle design sys-

tem is excellent, lots of fun, with a large number of possible variations and options for personal taste, so that a good original strategy can be developed. The play of the game varies from scenario to scenario, as does the money available to design a vehicle, but essentially it consists of an all-out firefight between any number of very different vehicles, either in a pre-arranged highway scenario or an arena free-for-all. So far, so good.

Where Car Wars falls down is in the movement, time and combat system. Let me be clear. Car Wars is playable. The mechanics are clear and can be followed fairly easily. However, certain aspects of play are so outrageously over-emphasized that after a couple of games most players seem not to want to bother any longer. Combat has a few problems, such as inadequate treatment of different attack types, with all types of shells and weapons doing the same general sorts of damage, but it is sound as far as general mechanics. The real problems are with movement and time. Any game which takes over an hour to resolve a minute of game time has problems. Movement is done on a square-marked board, with incredibly complex and difficult to control rules for speed and cornering, which just invite error. In an effort to achieve realism every aspect of movement is covered by the rules, but the use of a square-marked board automatically puts these rules into the realm of farce, as squares just aren't practical for curved movement. The use of hexes or any of several other movement systems might have been a bit less realistic, but about a million times more playable. Movement drags the game down and becomes incredibly frustrating. A further, connected problem is in spacing attacks and multiple fire in a system which seems almost arbitrary, and was certainly annoying. Because of the movement problems a game of Car Wars becomes terribly fragmented, as endless periods of blundering about towards unsatisfactory ends breaks up the flow of the game and distracts from interesting potential.

Car Wars has the ideas and overall structure to be a great game, but as the movement rules stand it is a drag to play, with playability assassinated in the name of a warped concept of realism. However, what is presented that is good is very good, and worth purchasing at the price. Look Car Wars over, get an idea how it is played. Some experimentation has shown that a little imagination and effort can convert it to a playable hex-based movement system, and only a bit of editing can cut out enough of the unnecessary rules to make the standard rules awkwardly adequate. (Dave Nalle)

MAGAZINES:

RINGWRAITH'S SHADOW

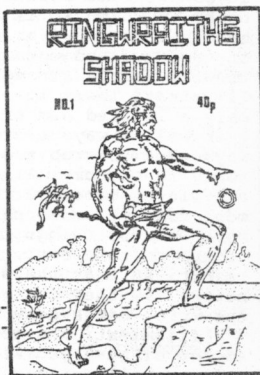
Stuart Goldshaft, 30 Orchard Dr., Edgeware, Middlesex, ENGLAND HA8 7SD
Appearance:6, Content:3, Value:6, Personal:5, Overall:4

This is a smaller, quarterly, British zine. A copy is 40p and the subscription rates are a mystery, especially in the US, so query first. An issue is 20 digest pages.

RWS is relatively well put together, but there is far too much white-space, and the art, while attractive is not of great technical quality. The text is not very dense. In #1, which I have on hand there are about 5 items all told.

There really isn't much here, though what there is is fairly good. It has the usual British monsters & modules emphasis, but the monsters are fairly intelligent and the dungeon is competent. Two pages are wasted listing miniatures manufacturers, and there are some short reviews, but that's about it. There is considerable potential for development and growth, but I have not seen a really recent issue, so I can't say if it has developed into what it could be.

RWS is a magazine which you could take or leave. It is not bad, but there is just not enough to it for me to recommend it for any but the real zine collector.



RED GIANT

11 Darrel Rd., Caversham, Reading, Berks., ENGLAND
Appearance:2, Content:4, Value:7, Personal:6, Overall:5

This is another middle-range British zine. A copy is 50p, and a subscription is 50p/issue. #6 is on hand, and has 34 legal-length pages. Art is terrible, but there is a fair amount of text on each page.

This is a fanzine, but it has much of the flavor of an APA, though more organized, similar to the supposedly defunct Trollcrusher. A good range of material is covered, but M&M runs rampant, filling up about 23 of the 34 pages. What's left are a couple of awfully short articles and a nice, long review of Space Opera.

RG's strong point is that, unlike many zines, it has a wide range of systems covered. #6 has material for D&D and Traveller, but also RuneQuest, Boot Hill, and Space Opera. However, the material for these systems still fits in the M&M classification. The overall problem is one of

mediocrity. Most of the material is fairly good, but none of it is really great, and there are a few stinkers.

Again, a zine worth considering, but still awaiting some growth and development in a number of areas.

BOOKS:

OGRE, OGRE
PIERS ANTHONY

This is the latest book in the seemingly endless Xanth series. It concerns the adventures of Smash the Ogre in familiar and unfamiliar parts of the land of magical puns. He sets out on an amorphous quest, and acquires a selection of female fellow travelers. The expected series of curious situations are encountered, the characters go through change, and it all concludes happily.

Ogre, Ogre is a well and carefully crafted book. It reads quickly, is never boring, and has all of the features needed to make a story good. However, unlike Anthony's earlier works in the Xanth series and some of his other early work, this has the feeling which pervades his more recent writings, an air of conscious crafting without inspiration or innovation. This is the same stuff, variations on the old themes of Xanth, without the brilliant original ideas which characterize A Spell for Chameleon or The Source of Magic. Ogre, Ogre is an exercise in conscious and calculated mediocrity.

There are worse ways to spend an evening than reading Ogre, Ogre, but there are many better and more ambitious books available, and if you haven't read any Anthony I'd urge an earlier work like those mentioned earlier or perhaps Cluster, where he writes ideas as well as words. (\$2.95, Del Rey) (Jon Schuller)

THE BEAST
ROBERT STALLMAN

The Beast is the third in a trilogy by a previously unknown writer, Robert Stallman. If he has more than this trilogy in him he will not stay unknown for long, and should gain a large following. To put it simply, his series is brilliant.

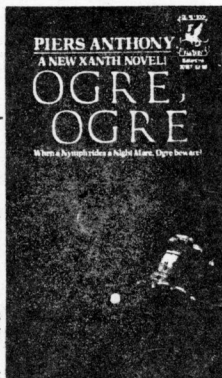
The Beast is the third volume of what was originally intended as a single giant novel to be called The Book of the Beast. It was divided into three parts, this final one, plus The Orphan and The Captive. Pocket's decision to divide up this book was probably a mistake, because the division is to some degree arbitrary, and they are much more enjoyable when taken together in a quick sequence.

The Beast is easily the least good of the three books, and really doesn't stand well on its own, though when taken in context it is a good conclusion, but it really depends on the background of the previous books.

This is the story of a were-creature, a beast who becomes a man and lives among men, maturing and getting to learn humankind through his encounters and experiences. He goes through several phases, in several different forms, each time with family and friends who help to make him a more complete being, balancing a developing artificial humanity with the alien nature of the beast within.

Stallman's greatest achievements are in characterization and the expression of the emotions of the personas which the beast creates as it lives among humans. His background characters are amazingly well drawn, and he goes so far with the beast that its personality is complex almost beyond assimilation. It is a joy to read about these people, because they are real. The beast itself may be the only alien in literature who is more real than the people around him. Stallman isn't as good with plot and continuity, and the ending is a bit unclear, but such things come with practice. In any case, his characters and sub-stories are so wonderful that they raise the books above any such limitations.

This series is phenomenal. It surpasses the limitations of any genre or literary ghetto. It is one of the few SF/Fantasy stories which actually moved me to tears. Buy The Orphan and The Captive first, then read The Beast. Read them in the proper sequence, as it enhances them considerably. Be warned. Set aside a few days to read, because once you start reading you will want to read straight through to the end of The Beast and then be sorry there isn't more. If this is a sign of what is to come, and if experience teaches Stallman better structuring, SF has another star who may rank above such excellent new talents as Gene Wolf, Robert Aspinin, and Paul Cook. (All Three: \$2.50, Pocket Books) (David Nalle)



BACKGROUNDING

SECRET LANGUAGES

Every fantasy adventure system has a different language structure, ranging from a realistic pattern of linguistics based on real-world analogs(YRS), to an artificial, mechanical structure(D&D). While the former system type tends to be more realistic and believable, there are certain elements which can be added to each to make language in your world more fun and give it a role in shaping adventures.

The primary function of language is communication, but there are two forms of communication which it can perform. The first is common exchange of information in a generally accepted local language or specially used common tongue. The second is for priveleged, private communication between members of a limited group, concealed from the general public. This is the difference between common and secret language.

Common language is familiar to all of us. In D&D it is the so-called 'common' tongue, though the 'alignment' languages also fit into this classification. In YRS and the real world this group would include national, racial and tribal languages which are used in trade and common life by populations. Also in this classification are the various trade tongues, special polyglot languages used to join peoples together in trade, such as Ptolemaic Trade Speech in YRS, or the historical language Sabir, used by Renaissance sailors. Most systems have covered common languages fairly well, so we will leave them be for the moment. Secret languages beg for our attention.

Whenever a group of people is living within a larger population, but sharing a common heritage, profession, or interest, they will often want to maintain a private means of communication, especially if their activities may be safer outside of the view of the main population. This leads to a tendency towards either the retention of language within immigrant populations, or the development of private language among an under-class or sub-group of any sort. Secret languages come out of the need for privacy, and are part of the structure of a sub-culture, providing identity and protection from eavesdropping. The common groups in a fantasy world which are most likely to use private languages are Thieves, Cultists, Trade Guilds, Travelling Tinkers, Homosexuals, Sailors, and Entertainers, as well as immigrant populations, which may often fit into the first and second groups as well.

Secret languages can be fitted into several structural types. A basic major division is between those which are true languages, possessing both vocabulary and grammatical structure, and those which are Jargon, having only vocabulary, and using the grammatical structure of the common local language. True languages in a community are usually based on archaic or forgotten language of that region, or on imported languages, the later being more common in cities with immigrant populations. Jargon languages may have imported vocabulary, usually no more than 1000 words, but usually sufficient to disguise the meaning of speech. They may also have preserve archaic language. Both of these types may also feature disguised language such as the transposition of letters, rhyming replacement of words, reversing of words, and other methods of making common words into unrecognizable vocabulary.

There are a number of Secret Languages which now exist or have existed in the real world. The most famous of these are called Shelta and Polari, but many more common languages, such as Black English and Cockney, have secret elements, though they are spoken by very large sub-cultures. A good example of a language preferred by a community within a larger society which retains its alien identity is Romani, spoken by Gypsies in many different nations. In many cases there is crossover between these languages, as their speakers may share a social niche. For some they are a primary spoken language, but more often they are a consciously learned second language specifically intended for private communication.

Shelta is also called 'Tinker Talk', and is a language used among the travelling tradesmen of Britain, and related to languages used by similar handymen around the world. Shelta vocabulary is derived from Gaelic and pre-Gaelic sources, with considerable changes. Grammar is based mainly on English, with a few variations. The total vocabulary is some 3000+ words, but spoken mixed in with local vocabulary it is unintelligible to a non-Shelta speaker. It is spoken mainly by travelling workmen, and related to Berlaqar na Saer, or 'Masn's Speech'. Of the total vocabulary almost a third cannot be identified, and is thought to be of pre-Celtic origin.

Carl Jones & John Davies

Characteristic forms of lexical disguise include word reversal and syllabic mutation of several types. Many speakers are involved in semi-criminal activity.

Polari survives somewhat less well as a language, but words from it are spread around in entertainment and homosexual communities. It is often considered a descendant of a 'Lingua Franca' or trade speech of later Rome, which descended down through Italian to Sabir, a trade language of the renaissance. About 100-200 words of Polari survive. It is suspected that sailors who spoke Sabir passed it on as Polari to the communities which now speak it. Polari exists under numerous names in many nations, and borrows heavily from local languages, maintaining a small amount of unique grammar and vocabulary. A distinctive and natural feature is in-coining, which is the combination of existing words to form new words.

These two are examples of languages brought into the society from old sources or outside groups. Much more common are 'cants', or special dialects derived from the common language, such as Cockney or Black English, which, while essentially similar to the parent tongue, borrow from 'pure' Secret Languages and other sources, and practice some disguising of grammar and vocabulary to create a disguised language. Such forms are a bit more common and widely spoken.

In the real world these languages are used mostly by migrant groups, social outcasts, criminals, and a number of other sub-societies. They share many elements, and there is often a good bit of crossover from true Secret Languages to such cants, as speakers often share a lifestyle. Also worth mentioning briefly are languages like Romani, which are foreign tongues in



the common context. They also contribute to cants and other underworld languages of the area. These real-world languages are quite possible in the fantasy world, but other possibilities also present themselves and could be used.

Any group which wishes privacy might use a Secret Language. Historically they have been used by churches and trade guilds as well as by criminal groups. Catholic priests use Vulgate Latin, which could be considered a secret language, and in ancient Egypt a truly secret language was employed by priests. Fraternal organizations have often used private vocabularies, sometimes borrowed from foreign languages, and this continues to some degree. Medieval guilds also had secret language in which they conducted meetings and private correspondence. These languages were a tool to keep secret doings from rivals, enemies, the government, or other prying ears. While churches and guilds are not by their nature secret, they do like to keep the mysteries of their trade and faith to themselves, and support their exclusivity of membership by giving the members a common means of communication not shared by others.

In running languages in the fantasy world many factors have to be considered, but it must always be remembered that languages have two social roles beyond mere communication. They also bind people who share a language together, and separate linguistic groups. Language can be both an aid and a hindrance to players as they work their way through the world. Certainly, when a thief comes to a new city and cannot speak the local cant, he should have a hard job getting accepted. The same is true in many ways of dialects, though on a simpler level, as they are easier to learn. Each area has its own dialect, and there are also distinction for class and occupation, and a character will be branded as a certain sort by the way he speaks. Of course, characters should be able to tell the same sorts of things from the speech of people they meet in the world.

For using secret languages in the YRS we make several suggestions. Consider there to be three basic groups of secret cants. The first is Polari-like, derived from trade-speech, and spoken by sailors and some urban populations, and divided into a number of sub-groups. The second is descended from pre-Kymri, pre-Gael sources, similar to Shelta, and is spoken by wandering groups of tinkers and others in Ysgarth. The third is derived from Kymraeg, and spoken in variations among the trade guilds. Also spoken is a street-argot, especially among thieves, which shares elements of the Tinker's Talk and Trade-Speech descended cants. Religious languages can be of several sorts. There should be a sort of high-speech, a fancified versior of the local tongue, but some older or foreign faiths may have languages of strange and mystic origins, as will many mage guilds, like the Sorcerers who speak Demonic in private and in meetings. It should be noted that mages have the greatest need for these languages, and should have the most complex and highly developed cants. Remember that anyone can learn a secret language, but only if he can find someone to teach him, or has many, many opportunities to listen to it spoken. As for D&D, we recommend that you dump its illogical language system and replace it with something a bit more realistic, similar to the one in the YRS.



FAMILIARS

ERIC OLSON

Strange though it may seem, our assistant editors are actually capable of an occasional coherent thought. Thus, this article clearing up the status of AD&D familiars. I hope you enjoy Eric's unique mixture of astute commentary and attempts at acerbity.

I know you have seen a hundred and one articles in Abyss lambasting TSR and 'official' AD&D. Well, this one is different. Now I get to do the lambasting (my lambasting is, of course, of much superior quality than previous attempts by such 'notaries' as—ahem—Lew Bryson). This article will deal with the oft neglected, but still valuable familiar, an excellent aid to any mage, but lacking in detail and development.

There are two main problems with familiars: 1/ they are too easy to kill; 2/they are almost totally useless, and any but the lowest-level magic-users might as well leave them at home. For example, by AD&D rules I can roll up a toad for a familiar. This is great. He has all of 3 HP, can see at wide angles, and goes dormant at less than 60°. Once the magic-user has passed 4th level the added HP of the familiar do not compensate for the fact that it would die at the first Magic Missile or area damage spell. At this point it becomes a hindrance because of the danger of sudden HP loss (up to 8 points not counting

normal damage to the already low HP mage). Also, the main idea of the familiar—a being to aid the magician in spell-casting—seems to have vanished.

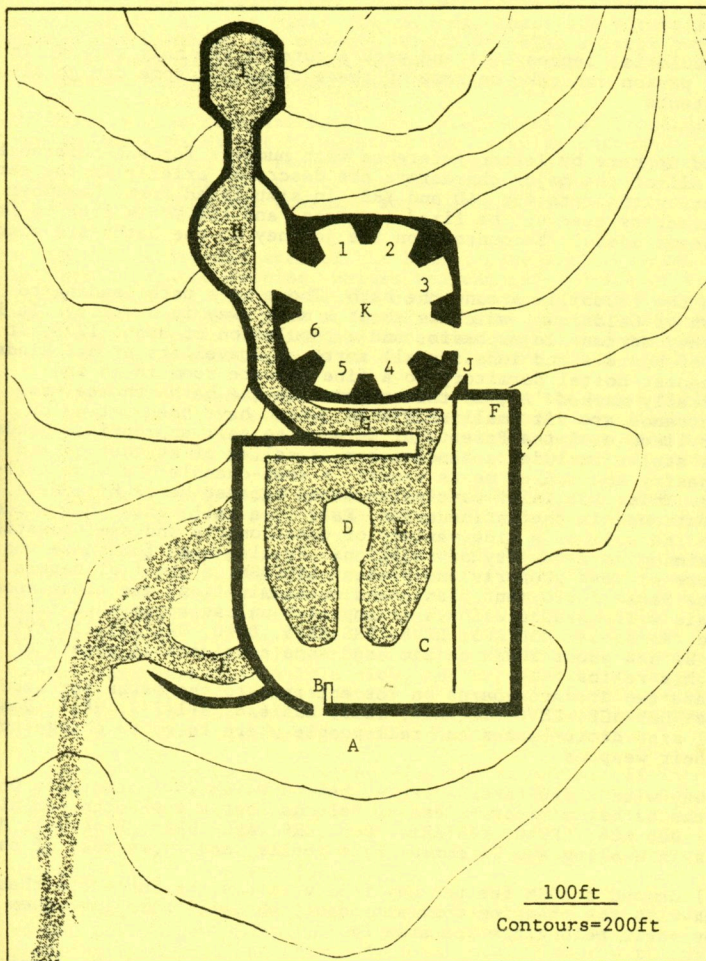
To correct these mistakes (oversights—my apologies to the esteemed Lord Gary), I suggest a complete revamping of familiars for D&D-based fantasy gaming. Luckily for you Abyss readers I just happen to have a system to do this.

First, the magic-user should be able to take an animal of his choice as familiar. This should be a healthy, normal, intelligent specimen from any non-magical animal family. This familiar should mass no more than 1/6th the weight of its master, or no more than 20 pounds (whichever is less). Choosing an appropriate familiar should be the first task of a newly apprenticed magic-user. To make things easier use a creature native to the region where the mage lives, so it can survive well in that climate/environment. It should be carefully trained and cared for by the apprentice for about a year (depending on the intelligence of the familiar and the conditions of training). No spell casting should be possible until the familiar is found and trained. This will help add sense and structure to 5 and 7 year apprenticeships. You should also remember the natural advantages of different animal species and choose wisely. A falcon might be great at first, but try to pose as a crippled beggar with a drinking problem (ala Pwyll) with a peregrine falcon on your shoulder. It just doesn't fit the image. Also, all familiars must be common animals, no baby purple worms, dragons, etc. Stick with the real world or it could get way out of hand.

Second, a mental/empathic link should develop (with time) between magic-user and familiar. The mage should be able to roughly feel/sense what the familiar is experiencing. This mental melding should take the place of the paltry and arbitrary HP link in AD&D (sort of combining the concepts of familiars and humonculi). This communication should end over ranges of more than ¼ mile or so. This is a bit closer than the AD&D link, but has disadvantages. If the familiar is killed, the mage should be stunned for 1D4+1 minutes, with a possible extended result of mild coma, depending on the degree of contact at the time. If the mage was actively looking through the eyes of the familiar and it was killed quickly, the worst result should happen. In time the familiar should be like an extension of the mage's body and personality, even mirroring some actions and appearance traits, as dogs often resemble their masters. If a familiar dies it should take the mage a long time to find and adapt to a new one.

Third, familiars should effect spell casting. In myth and legend, the familiar was an essential channelling agent to spells and summonings. To represent this, I suggest that a) spell damage, range and duration should be increased by 25% or more for the presence of a familiar, and b) that casting time should be reduced, or that the familiar should compensate for the lack of certain material components. If you use a spell point/mana system, I suggest that familiars either reduce spell cost by 25%, or act as a repository for some additional, reserve points. If you use a magic fumble roll/magic index, the familiar should add 25% or so. If you prefer

TAKING THE WATERS JAN MIERIK



CHARACTER LEVELS: 1-4
NUMBER OF PLAYERS: 2-5
TIME TO PLAY: 2-4 Hours
SKILL LEVEL: Medium/High

BACKGROUND

This scenario is designed to be run with a mixed party of characters of very different sorts and interests, all going to the same place for different reasons. The players should not know any more about the other characters than is readily apparent, and each character should be set a separate task as described below, and no other players should know of it unless he tells them. The background fits with a standard later-Roman historical region in any part of Gaul, or with the northern parts of the Saexa Empire for YRS using the world of Ysgarth.

INTRODUCTION

All of the members of the party will be making a pilgrimage to the baths at the hot springs at Caldricium in the southern part of Suessiones, part of the old Kingdom of Noricum. The waters at the baths are renowned for their curative properties, and are sacred to the god Belenus. They are one of a number of baths located at springs in the foothills of the Padavine Mountains which divide the Empire from the Kymric kingdoms.

Each traveller in this pilgrim caravan is going for a different reason which they hope to fulfill at the bath. In addition to the party there should be about a dozen other travellers with them of a standard middle-class assortment, plus a caravan leader (a self-appointed organizer), who has brought them together for mutual protection.

Some suggested missions at the bath are: to deliver a sealed message to the Oscan merchant Marx Roqo who will be at the baths for a week; to stop delivery of the message, bring it back, or at least intercept the response and bring it back; to poison the headwaters with a vial of fungus (spreads downstream, bonds to bank-stones, spreads a nasty water-borne contact poison, turns water black and causes respiratory failure) by a competing bath in a nearby area; to purchase papers on the deployment of the Saexa 7th legion for the Guildlord of Ptolemeias from a man named Kais Nebo who works at the baths (they are given 15000SM, the set price); to stop this purchase on behalf of the Saexa government; to get a disease of the GM's

choice(scrofula, tuberculosis, leprosy...) and seek a cure in the holy waters. In a pinch, more than one person can take on some of these tasks, or some can go along as guards or assistants.

THE BATHS

The baths are summed up here by letter reference with numbers for sub-reference on the map on page 1. All of the major characters are described briefly in the sections where they appear, with stats for D&D and YRS, in simplified form. Remember that many of these characters need not be fixed in place, and the GM is free to improvise and adapt as seems useful. Encounters on the journey to the baths are also a good possibility.

A: This is the area in the foothills around the bath. There is a path leading to the baths from the town of Caldricum, which is about a mile away in a valley. It is a small town with a heavy mercantile emphasis, and a population of about 1200. It features a wide array of hostels and inns for all sorts of travellers at all kinds of prices, from the meanest hostel dormitory to a fine private room in an inn.

At the spot specifically marked 'A', is the entrance to the baths themselves. Out in front of the entrance are six smallish stalls, which have been set up by small merchants, under license of the Priests of Belenus to sell appropriate goods and paraphernalia. The stalls include: a candlemaker; a seller of statuettes and devotional images; a pastry and cooked meats vendor; a soap-chandler; a wine seller; and a relic seller. This last is of particular note, because he is Kais Nebo, one of the contacts mentioned in the introduction. Kais is a tall, thin, hawk-faced Oscan, specializing in the sale of a wide variety of questionable and semi-questionable holy relics pertaining to a variety of religions. He also has, for those who identify themselves more or less properly and present 15000SM, a sheaf of papers which purport to be the Saexe deployment plans, and on examination, are close enough, if not correct. Kais will make no efforts to approach unless approached first, except to sell a relic. Kais has: D&D AC5, LEV8; YRS AR15, DC10, DR12/13/15, AV1; HP43, Shortsword(D8). He has about 200SM on him, and some considerable powers of illusion for use with his relics.

Also of note here are two Trozard guards on the entrance to the baths for security purposes. They are: D&D AC3, LEV6; YRSAR17, DC13, DR5/6/8, AV1/2/3; HP67, Double Axe(D12). They will stop disturbances and tell people where to go to change, pay their fee, or leave their weapons.

B: This is the entry way with a fee-taker's table, behind which is seated Julz Or-liss, the manager of the baths, a minor Priest of Belenus, but a top-notch administrator. Treat him as: D&D AC6, LEV10; YRS AR14, DC8, DR9, AV0; HP55, Fist(D4). He has significant powers in Healing and Detection type spells, and knows most of the people in the baths.

On entering he will demand a 10SM fee per day from visitors. He instructs them to check their weapons with the changing-room attendant, who will also give them towels and a shelf for their belongings(see area F).

C: This is the main floor of the bath. There are benches spread around the sides, set back against the wall, and it is floored with smooth tile, all the way to the edge of the water. In this area around the perimeter of the main bath chamber are a large number of bathers, especially on the edge of the water. They include a few people who look like merchants, a couple of old ladies, and some rather tired-looking soldiers. All in all, there are about a dozen and a half people in this outer area, in and out of the water.

D: This is a special private bathing area reserved for upper-class customers and favored customers. It is accessible for an additional 5SM fee, but there are no guards, although if one of the customers complains the guards will remove any interlopers. Marx Roqo is here with a secretary(not in water) and two guards. There are also 3 other merchants in a group nearby. Marx Roqo's stats are: D&DAC7, LEV12; YRS AR18, DC10, DR10, AV0; HP60, Fist(D4). His guards are humans, with stats: D&D AC5, LEV8; YRS AR20, DC15, DR14, AV0, HP55, Fist(D4). Marx will accept and read the message and have his secretary write a response. He will also tip the deliverer 500SM. Marx is tall and rather overweight. His guards look rather mean and formidable. They also tend to be fairly jumpy, and because of their DC, even if they are unarmed, their fists do an adjusted damage of 1D12, and strike 3 and 2 times per round. For D&D use the adjusted damage as well.

E: This is the main bath water. It does, in fact have limited curative abilities. It will heal 1D8 points of damage per 3 hours of immersion, or have a variable 20% chance of curing a given disease in that same period. The floor of the bath is tiles, and there is a drainage grate with a gate on the SE corner. The waters are hot, but not scalding at this point, and have a high mineral content, sometimes resulting in a grayish filmy skin condition after prolonged immersion. The depth at the center of the water is 12ft.

F: This is the changing room. There are three attendants, similar to the Trozards mentioned in 'A', but older and retired. There are niches around the walls for the deposit of clothing and weapons. There are also a large number of linnen towels available, more similar to modern sheet than towels. No one is allowed to have weapons anywhere within the bath building except here.

G: This is an additional bath room, guarded by two Trozards(A), one on each of the two approach paths. It is reserved for 'regular customers', and anyone can get in for an additional 15M fee which the Trozards will inform them of for a bribe of at least 5M. The fee is paid to the fee-taker at the entrance. The water in this area is still bubbling and steaming somewhat and has double the curative properties listed in E.

H: This is a special area of the baths, generally reserved for priests of Belenus and other related deities, unless you can get a bribe of at least 200SM to the right person. It has triple the curative properties listed for section E. There may be 1D8-2 priests here at any given time. As mentioned before, priests of Belenus specialize in healing and detection magic, and perhaps some hydromancy. Use Julz Orlliss in section B as an example. There are a total of 50 priests in the area.

I: This is the headwaters of the bath, where the water bubbles out of the ground, scalding hot. At this point it will cure almost any disease in a couple of hours, but each hour of immersion does 2D20 overall damage from scalding steam and water. This would be the ideal place to release the fungus to contaminate the bath.

J: This is a restricted entrance, with two Trozard guards as in section A, but only bribable at a level over 100SM. They will admit priests and known 'regulars'.

K: This is a temple area associated with the baths. There will always be 2D8-3 Priests of Belenus who also serve for the other deities here at any time. They are as described before. Anyone is admitted, but not to area H, and a careful watch is kept on them. Each of the niches has a specific function. 1-This niche holds an altar to Belenus. 2-This niche holds an altar to associated lesser deities associated with Belenus. 3-This niche holds seats for priests, devotional materials, and other useful paraphernalia. 4-This niche has an altar to a variety of popular local nature deities in the classification of 'Numina'. 5-This section has an altar to Borvas. 6-This section has an altar to Grannos. These last two are secondary deities of hot and curative springs, subordinate to Belenus.

L: This is the area where water from the bath runs off into a reasonable sized stream which runs down to a river and eventually the sea. Generally, persons who have contagious diseases, such as leprosy, are instructed to wash here before using the interior waters. There is a pool which gathers in the spill-off area for this purpose, although the water is rather muddy. It has the effect of dampening the contagious effects of most diseases.

ADDITIONAL NOTE: The healing powers of the baths can be augmented by the offering of various valuable substances, either on the altar of Belenus, or more usually by dropping them into the water. This is usually done with statuettes, images of the person to be healed, or directly with money. The priesthood frowns heavily on the removal of the valuables which coat the bottom of the baths. The effect of such a donation should be a 1% increase in effectiveness for each 500SM worth of donation contributed.



DRAGONLORDS IS HERE

DRAGONLORDS is the most ambitious and original gaming magazine from the British Isles, now available exclusively from RE on a limited basis, at least for the time being.

DRAGONLORDS features top British writers on a number of game systems with all of the expected types of material, including articles, monsters, adventures, and a large portion of wry and unusual humor.

While we aren't offering subscriptions to DL yet, you can order a sample copy for \$1.50. We will be selling subscriptions soon, but until our flow of issues is regularized, take a look at a sample copy. We'll keep you informed on subscription arrangements. Remember, you can't get DL anywhere else, so order one right now.

RECORDS

A new set of Record Sheets for the YRS will be available soon. They are available on advance order for \$2.95 per set. They contain the new, revised Mark 26 character sheets, and revised GM record sheets Mark 11.

NOTE

Several releases have been delayed a bit from production scheduling problems and playtesting delays. TCT is being re-playtested. Middle Passage is just winding up playtesting, and the adventure series are always in a state of flux. Bear with us. We will continue to come through as close to our schedule as possible given conditions. Stay tuned and we will keep you informed. Don't get upset if something is a little late. There is probably a good reason.

YSGARTH

"YRS is one of the FRP bargains of this or any year." —THE SPACEGAMER

The revised second edition of the still unequalled YRS is available for only \$11.95, plus \$1 for postage.

The six-book set includes full rules, with an excellent skill system featuring over 600 skills and spells, and magic and combat systems that have been widely praised in reviews in many magazines. The rules also include a complete starting scenario.

The YRS is role-playing and background oriented, and stresses the play and development of realistic and believable characters.

SUPPLEMENT

#1: The Wine of the Moon: This supplement is centered on new skills in many areas, character types, and features a complete scenario. \$2.50

#2: Creatures Fair and Fell: This provides a large number of new creatures and characters, plus some interesting modifications to the combat systems and a scenario. \$2.50

#3: Expanded Worlds: This gives detail on a number of new areas of Ysgarth, adding the continents of Jahannam and Arojika, plus a large selection of new races and skills, and a short scenario. (Winter '83) \$2.50

As a result of a massive overflow of text, what was originally intended to be supplement #2 has been split into two full-length supplements with more material added.

QUESTIONS ON #22

Rate all items given on a 1-100 scale, with 1 totally awful and 100 as excellent

Article
 In the Speculum
 Backgrounding
 Familiars
 Taking the Waters
 Cymric Deities
 Illusion
 Lord Darcy's World

Artist
 Mike Cranford (FC,16)
 Nequi Dharsee (7,11,12)
 Sven Koehler (8)
 R. Schwerdtfeger (14)

Cover
 Titles/Graphics

What other gaming magazines which you would classify as amateur, semi-professional, or something of that sort do you read? _____

RESULTS ON #21

Article	Rating	Change
Berserkerfang	97	+5
In the Speculum	84	-1
Challenge of Champions	85	-3
Scottish Creatures	71	+4
Trollpack Review	76	+1
The Vedic Devas	87	-10
Games In View	86	+11
Shapechangers	69	--
Gaming Duration	70	--
Mike Cranford	97	==
John Mortimer	47	-7
Nequi Dharsee	84	-2
Paul Vinton	54	-13
Max Gilbert	40	--
Eric Heinsoo	91	+32
Cover	98	+11
Titles/Graphics	93	+2
Overall	80	==
Conventions: ORIGINS	42%	
EASTCON	29%	
TEXCON	22%	
DALCON	14%	

RACONAROK ENTERPRISES ORDER FORM

# Item	Price	Post	Total
Dragonlords Sample Copy	1.50	.50	
YRS Record Sheets	2.95	.50	
YRS Revised Second Edition	11.95	1.00	
YRS Supplement #1	2.50	.50	
YRS Supplement #2	2.50	.50	
YRS Supplement #3	2.50	.50	
Advs/6 Issues	5.00		
TOTAL ENCLOSED:			

to limit rather than expand the role of magic in your campaign, reduce the previously mentioned attributes by the same amounts mentioned for all mages who do not use familiars. This can help by weakening those all powerful mages. It should be remembered that witches such as Kim Novak in "Bell, Book and Candle" couldn't even cast a spell without a familiar present.

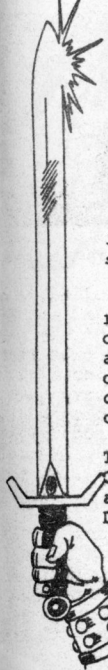
Fourth, familiars should gain HP (the ability to defend themselves) as their master gains levels. This comes from their mental link with the magic user. A normal familiar should start with 1/4 Hit Die (4 points if in perfect health) and gain 1 full die for every 3 levels that his master gains. This should also be paralleled by an advance in intelligence of the familiar. Some of the familiars of the most powerful mages in literature were more intelligent than some of the mage's opponents. In some stories the familiars became powerful magickers in their own right, or at least acted independently (See Adrian Cole's Elflocq stories).

This brings up our next subject, special powers for familiars. One ability of all familiars is that they should be able (once/day) to expand their size in a way similar to the Growth Animal spell, though only when they need to fight to save their master's life. Also, when a mage reaches 10th level, the familiar should become able to change its form to that of any similar animal in its class. For example, a snake familiar could become an amphisbaena or even a poisonous coral snake. This makes the familiar a formidable personal guard. Familiars have also been known to linger at the place of death to defend their master's remains. This is a nice basis for a tomb encounter. In a similar vein a familiar may set out for revenge if the mage dies. After that, the familiar is free to wander, though he may pine away, depending on how close he was to his master. As you can see, the familiar can become anything but a forgotten aspect of fantasy role playing.

Now, you may think I've gone too far, but familiars aren't as bad as they may seem. First, they give the mage a weakness; a lever through which to influence him. Capturing the familiar puts the mage in your pocket (in some stories his soul is even stored in the familiar). Also, an attacker can go for the familiar instead of the mage, possibly incapacitating and capturing the mage by slaying the familiar.

These ideas all come from various literary sources, relying more on fictional sources than mythological ones, and passing over the idea of familiars as minor demons resulting from a pact with the devil, a whole different breed, just as interesting (See Dave Nalle's article in Different Worlds #14). I would suggest three sources for additional reading—Michael Moorcock's Elric series (eastern sorcerers) Clark Ashton Smith's short stories, especially about Malygris ("The Last Incantation", "The Death of Malygris"), and Adrian Cole's Elflocq stories (Hard to find, mostly in magazines, usually Weirdbook or Fantasy Tales). Remember, the words of TSR are not gospel, do what you think makes sense. As TSR has often said, these rules are guidelines—be creative.

In another issue I hope to extend this restructuring of magical beings to the much over-used Golem and other non-intelligent constructs (Hi Lew). I'd also like to extend my thanks to Lew Bryson (assistant editor of Abyss) for being the perfect punching bag.



CYMRIC DEITIES

DAVID NALLE

It seems that gods are always popular, so we continue our series on mythology with a short treatment of Cymric deities, those of the ancient Britains in England and Wales.

Celtic religions can be divided into three large groups, Gallic, Cymric, and Gaelic. Two issues ago we covered the Gallic deities in "The Gods of Roman Gaul. This article carries on with the gods of the Britons in the areas which are now England and Wales. It is hard to define the properties of many of these deities, because Cymric myths only survive in diluted, christianized forms, and we have to make many extrapolations, but what we can give is a sketch of major deities and the relationships between them.

Cymric gods can be divided up into three regional/familial groups. These are the Children of Nudd (More traditionally Children of Llyr), the Children of Don, and the Children/Family of Pwyll. Of these three important families, the first two are actually branches of the same family, as Don and Nudd are both sons of the ancestral deity Beli Mawr. The Children of Nudd were worshiped in central Britain prior to the Saxon invasion, and the faith was later pushed into Wales. The Children of Don are the true Welsh deities, localized in Northern Wales and Caledonia. The Pwyll Family was worshiped in South Wales and in Cornwall. In addition, there are a number of other gods, loosely associated with these, and found in many areas. These four groups are described here

THE CHILDREN OF NUDD

Beli Mawr had three sons, Nudd, Don, and Math (much younger), most generally interpreted to have been born in that order, with half a generation separating them. Nudd and his whelps dominated the Cymric tribes of central Britain before the conquest and christianization under the Saxons. Because of their resistance to Saxon religion, many of the names survive in mutated form as Arthur's Knights. Nudd and Don hate each other, and there is an intense rivalry between the two families. In addition, several gods are given here who are related by association, not blood.

BELI MAWR (MATHONWY)

Beli Mawr is not an active deity. He is an ancestral and tribal deity, symbolic of power and kingship. Several royal lines trace their ancestry to him. He is the father of Nudd and Don. His worship was widespread, but not very intense.

NUDD LLAW EREINT (LUDD, MYRDDIN, NODENS, EMRYS)

Nudd is a powerful and often underrated deity. He is the father of this line, although Llyr assumes dominance in the myths, and the family is generally called The Children of Llyr. He is depicted as having a silver hand, and commanding the sun, wind and seas, as well as his special servants the storm spirits. His silver hand directs his shining radiant power. He is generally depicted as a beautiful youth, in spite of his age. He has two sons and a daughter.

CREUDILAD

This is Nudd's daughter, a goddess of beauty and wisdom. She is sometimes altered to be Llyr's daughter, as is preserved in the myth of King Lear. She is the wife of Gwyn and Gwyrthur (note that sibling marriage is almost standard here).

GWYN AP NUDD

Gwyn has been covered previously in *Abyss*. To sum him up, he is a deity of the afterlife, war, and all sorts of violent death. He leads the Wild Hunt, and chases armies at battle to collect war-dead who go to feast with him in his halls in the land of Gwibir Vynydd on Mt. Vandwy. He is a seasonal god, and battles with Gwyrthur each fall to possess Creudilad, who he has in the winter. He is called 'Escort of the Grave' and 'The Hunter of Men.' He is a grim deity.

LLYR AP NUDD

Llyr is less detailed than Gwyn in the myths. He is a basic, fairly standard sea-god. He is noted for his justice and honor. He is wedded to Penardur, the daughter of Don, thus linking the two families. He is especially noteworthy for his sons, though he is the nominal head of the family.

THE CHILDREN OF LLYR

Llyr has three children, his sons Bendigeidfran (Bran) and Manawydan, and his daughter Bronwyn. Of these Bronwen, who is a basic nature deity, can be ignored. Bran is a powerful god, representing darkness, rage, and strength, usually depicted as a giant. His wife is Modron, a major earth goddess, and they have two sons, Mabon and Caradawc. Mabon is of some note, as a deity of music, youth, healing, and hunting. The youngest son of Llyr is Manawydan, a god of commerce, wisdom, and good counsel, who married Rhiannon after the passing of Pwyll.

RELATED DEITIES

The main peripheral deity here is Gwyrthur Ap Greidawl, who is a deity of the summer mountains, and exists mostly to fight Gwyn each spring and fall for the hand of Creudilad and control of the mountains.

THE CHILDREN OF DON

Don is Nudd's brother, Beli Mawr's second son. He and his many children are described here, giving the generation parallel to Llyr and Gwyn in detail, and the lesser descendants as well. This family dominated North Wales and Caledonia.

DON

For being leader of this family, Don is a remarkably dull god, not surprising, as he spent all his time having very assertive children. He is a basic chieftain.

MATH

Math is the brother of Don and Nudd, but younger than either, although closer in age to Don, and generally associated with his line. He is a powerful deity of magic, and holds his court in Caer Dathyl. He is also looked on as a wise judge.



He figures prominently in a number of myths, and has great powers of illusion and shape alteration. He was intrusted with training some of his nephews, who were rather unruly.

THE SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF DON

Don had 8 children, 6 sons and 2 daughters. Several of these are major popular deities, although some are of less significance. The order of birth is not firmly established, though Gwydion tends to be dominant.

His two daughters are Arianrod and Penardun. Arianrod is one of the more popular nature/fertility goddesses, mated with Gwydion. Penardun is not important, except as the mate of Llyr.

Gwydion is the most important of his sons. He is a god of priests, specializing in magic and illusion, a leader of the gods. He is the protege of Math. Gwydion has two sons, Llew and Dylan, both of whom are important. Dylan is a god of darkness and the wild sea. Llew is his opposite, representing light and the sun. He is a deity of crafts and skills, a poet, magician, leathersmith, and healer. He is called Llew Llaw Gyffes. They are mirror twins.

There are a number of other sons as well, most notably Govannon, the god of smiths and surgeons, who never fails in a casting, Amaethon, a very popular god of agriculture and the soil, depicted as a plowman, Nynniaw and Peibaw, a pair of cursed fools who were turned into oxen, and finally Gilvaethwy, of little import.

THE FAMILY OF PWYLL

These deities are honored in South Wales and Cornwall, and are loosely associated, centered around the family of Pwyll pen Annwfn and several of his friends and associates. The antecedents of the family are unknown, and while there is some contact with the other pantheons, it is safe to say that there is no blood relationship until very late, after the death of Pwyll, when Rhiannon remarries.

PWYLL PEN ANNWFN

Pwyll is a fairly traditional leader-type deity. He represents wisdom and the afterlife more than anything else, and personifies prudence and good judgement. He is wedded to Rhiannon, and has one son, Pryderi. He has a strong friendship with Arawn, for whom he served as regent in the realm of Annwfn, with which both deities are associated.

RHIANNON

Rhiannon is a fairly significant nature goddess, presiding over birds and horses. Her symbol is either a white horse or three birds, or both, and she has three white birds whose song can bring the dead to life or the living to death. She is wedded to Pwyll, and later to Manawydan, and the mother of Pryderi.

ARAWN

Arawn is a deity of the otherworld, usually depicted as a grey man on a grey horse. He is a friend of Pwyll, and the otherworld he rules is called Annwfn. He rules in competition with Havgan, with whom he battles each spring and fall, similar to Gwyn and Gwrthur. Arawn is the winter king, and Havgan is essentially insignificant, except as a foe of Arawn. Arawn also represents all of the crafts and pastimes of winter, including music, poetry, and the arts. He has powers of illusion and deception.

OTHER DEITIES

Pryderis is Pwyll's son. He is a straightforward, dutiful son, but only a minor deity. He is wedded to Kicva, a hearth goddess of unclear origin, and only a small significance. Teyrnnon is also of this group. He is a deity of violent warfare and stern combat, but is not very important.

GENERAL NOTES

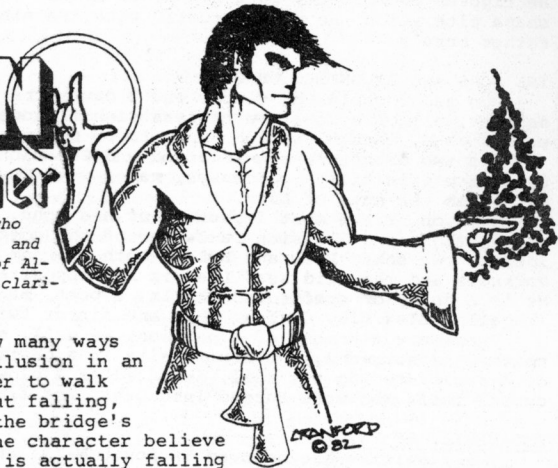
This is about as brief a summary of Cymric religion as you can get. These are all the major deities. They are strongly paralleled in Gaelic and Gallic mythology. The lack of a great deal of concrete information is the result of the filtering process caused by the literary nature of the sources. What is given here is the essence of the gods, without a large amount of available general information. Many fit into standard forms, and major exceptions to these patterns are noted. Priests are similar to those in the Gallic cults, with Druids, Bards, and in some cases a few Fileadh and Vates. Kings often fill an important ritual/religious function.

Your best bet for understanding these deities better is to read up on them so you can filter through the material for yourself. The easiest and most available books are The Song of Rhiannon, The Children of Llyr, and The Island of the Mighty fictionalizations of the Mabinogion by Evangeline Walton. The Mabinogion is the main source of Cymric myths, and there are two excellent translations, with somewhat different content, one by Patrick Ford and one by Gwyn and Thomas Jones. Also useful are mythological surveys, such as Celtic Folklore, Welsh and Manx, by John Rhys, which is excellent on local and minor myths, and Charles Squire's classic Celtic Myth and Legend, which is a bit outdated, but sound if you're willing to wade through it. A decent, simple general work is Celtic Mythology by Proinsias McCana.

ILLUSION

Kevin Sterner

Kevin Sterner is a newcomer to *Abyss* who helped out at the RE booth at ORIGINS '82, and has appeared frequently in recent issues of *Alarums & Excursions*. Here are his ideas on clarifying illusions in FRP games.



It never ceases to amaze me how many ways different GMs will play the same illusion in an FRPG. One GM might allow a character to walk across an illusionary bridge without falling, provided he does not 'disbelieve' the bridge's existence. Another GM might have the character believe he is crossing the bridge while he is actually falling to his death. This confusion is partly because no FRPGs adequately define just what an illusion is, and mainly because few GMs are sure of what their own concept of an illusion is. What I will try to do here is classify the different types of illusion, in ascending order of complexity.

Type I: MISTAKE—This type of illusion is rather self-explanatory. A mistake entails poor perception and/or misjudgement of what is seen. An illusion of this sort is almost always character generated, except in those cases where it results from mental tampering from outside forces. With such tampering, for instance, a guard could be made to mistake an arrest warrant for a napkin, refuse, or another worthless object. These illusions are powerful in that they are virtually indetectable because of their subtlety and common nature.

Type II: NON-MAGICAL—This type includes most deliberate misrepresentations not brought about by magic. In essence, the various forms of prestidigitation. It is possible to further divide them into 4 groups.

IIA: Sleight of Hand requires high manual dexterity and lots of practice. All illusionists should have this skill fairly well developed, as most of his tricks will fit in this category and it supports his more serious powers. Sleight of hand involves misdirection, so the intelligence and perception of the victim are important factors in determining success. This includes card tricks, palming objects, etc.

IIb: ESP Tricks includes all abilities to mimic extrasensory perception without actually using or even having the power. This includes false 'mind reading', 'forseeing' of some minor pre-determined event, and similar apparent psychic phenomena. Note that when augmented by real ESP this can become enormously convincing, and in the case where an illusionist has only limited ESP he can parlay it upward.

IIc: Mechanical illusions are self-explanatory. They are created by tricks, such as sliding panels, mirrors, and other 'optical' illusions.

IId: Conspiratorial types involve the assistance of a 'straight man', who sets up a trick, similar to those of type b, but more complex. Faith healing is an ideal example of the use of such 'plants' in an audience.

Type III: HALLUCINATION—A hallucination is a sensory experience which exists only in the mind of affected individuals. People not under the influence of the illusion will have no clue to the illusion except by observing the victim. This can be caused non-magically by drugs or hypnosis.

Type IV: AUDIO-VISUAL APPARITION—A type IV illusion had audio and visual, but no tactile or manipulative aspects. A person will see and perhaps hear the illusion, but matter will easily pass through it. These can be produced non-magically through the use of holograms. Note that light and sound produced in this type of illusion is real enough. Even if the observer knows it is an illusion he will continue to see and hear it as if it were actually there.

TYPE V: FAITH ILLUSION—This final type is rather far-fetched, but all too common in fantasy campaigns. I call it the 'faith illusion', because it requires the belief of the observer to be effective. This type will allow a character to walk across an illusory bridge, but will disappear if any of the characters doubt its existence. This is rather a lot to expect from an illusion, and it sort of defeats its own purpose. If you construct an illusory bridge to trap a party and they all believe it, it is just as likely to help them as hinder them.

Remember, the strength and effectiveness of a particular illusion is up to you, the GM. For example, you don't have to make a 'phantasmal force' a Type IV illusion just because others say you should. What you must do is be sure of just what the nature and properties of your illusions are. It is also a good idea to use different types of illusions in different situations, rather than make every one the same. This way no player will know what to expect and this, good readers, is exactly what illusions are for.

LORD DARCYS WORLD

Adventure in the Angevin Empire

Jon Schuller

INTRODUCTION

Imagine Europe today, not as we know it, but as it would be if history had run a different course, where the Angevin line rules the mightiest empire history has known, chivalry lives on, magic is real and a part of everyday life, and adventure and intrigue are a way of life. This is the world of Lord Darcy, one of the most original and fascinating alternative worlds ever created. There are a number of Lord Darcy stories written by Randall Garrett, one of the great uncelebrated SF/Fantasy writers of the 50s, 60s and 70s. These are collected in three books, Murder and Magic, Too Many Magicians, and Lord Darcy Investigates.

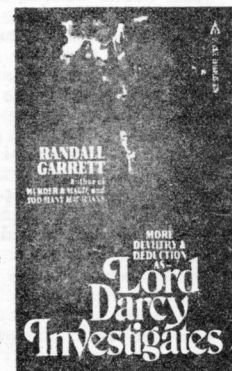
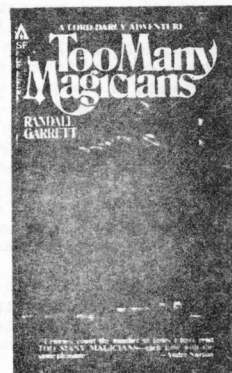
Few GMs have seen the imaginative prospects for adventure in worlds which are far beyond the traditional context of the more common FRP games. While the traditional fantasy setting, derived from mythology and the works of writers like Moorcock and Leiber, is interesting, most rule systems are able, perhaps with a few changes, to be applied to much more interesting and unusual types of worlds with different times and societies, such as Garrett's Angevin Empire, which parallels the 1960s to the present time, but with magic developed instead of technology. The background of this world is distilled here with some notes on playing in it and some of the necessary adjustments.

HISTORY OF THE ANGEVIN EMPIRE

In 1199 King Richard I of England did not die on crusade in the Holy Land, though a crossbow bolt taken in the shoulder at the Siege of Chaluz sent him back to England to recuperate and reassert his authority over his holdings in England and France. He lived on for 20 years, weakened by his wound but growing in wisdom. He and his heirs expanded the empire to include all of France, Eastern and Northern Germany, Italy, Ireland, and Scotland. Territorial acquisition ended in 1420 by the Treaty of Kobnhavn in which the Scandinavian Union gave up its claims in Northern Germany. Later additions to the Empire include almost all of North and South America, discovered in 1569. These became the Duchies of Mechicoe, New England, and New France.

The Angevin Empire including all of these holdings is ruled by King John IV. His heirs include his brother Richard, Duke of Normandy, and two sons, the Prince of Britain and the Duke of Lancaster. John IV is the son of Charles III. There is a fully developed aristocracy on many levels. In general, urban areas are run by Marquises, Rural areas are ruled by Counts or Barons, and nations within the empire are ruled by Dukes. In addition there are some associated and allied Principalities, such as Bavaria. The pope established the Emperor of England and France as Holy Roman Emperor in the late 15th century, and made hereditary in the Angevin line. Parliament has grown in power over the years and there has been some degree of democratization, especially under Richard the Great in the late 15th century. Some of the results of the reform of the 15th century included granting Parliament the right to select the king from among the eligible members of the line, and the legitimization of the Psychic Science of magic under the regulation of the Church.

As a result of this process of history, the Angevin Empire is far different in the second half of the 20th century from any parallel society on this earth. It is a victorian society with a strongly developed social structure, and technology of a level parallel to the 19th century, but with magic developed to an advanced level to fill the void left by technology, and having a profound effect on life and society.



There are other nations as well, each with a number of interesting aspects. The other great European power is the Kingdom of Poland, which has been expanding for four centuries and is now flexing its muscles under the ambitious Casimir IX, son of Sigismund III, who brought all of western Russia from Minsk to Kiev into Polish control. Casimir's heir is his son Sigismund, who has already entered into a strong role, and Poland controls most of Eastern Europe, from Bavaria as far as the Ukraine, including most of the southern Baltic, and the northern Balkan area, primarily Hungary. Poland is noted for its territorial ambition and the Sreka, a very effective espionage and security organization. Poland was involved in a number of wars in the 20th century, especially the unsuccessful Baltic conflict of 1939 where the Angevin Empire and Scandinavian Union destroyed most of the Polish fleet as it attempted to break out into the Atlantic, and the rather more successful conquest of Byelorussia in 1914.

Other states of note include: the Kingdom of Sicily in Southern Italy, Sicily, and Sardinia; Roumeleia, a survival of the Byzantine Empire, including the Southern Balkans, Greece, and Western Asia Minor around Constantinople, which never fell to the Turks, all ruled by Emperor Kyril; an independent and loosely united Spanish Kingdom; the Scandinavian Union, descended from the Kalmarian Union of the 14th century; Vladislow, one of several independent central and eastern Russian states, ruled by Prince Jehan; Persia, a large, agricultural empire noted for its coffee; and a weak but growing Osmanli/Turkish nation in Asia minor, the middle-east and associated areas. There are, of course, many other nations as well, in areas not important to the stories, or in buffer states, like Germany, where the most notable is Bavaria, under Prince Reinhardt VI. These many nations fill all sorts of roles, but a large number of them, especially in Germany and Russia are allied to the Angevin Empire against the expansion of Poland.

THE SCIENCE OF MAGIC

The greatest difference between Darcy's world and ours is the prominence of functional magic of several sorts, classified and made technical, so that it is a true science. There are several major divisions of magic and a number of areas in which magic operates. All legitimate magic is regulated by the Church, which issues licenses to practice magic to qualified applicants after examination by a board supervised by an authorized Bishop or Archbishop. Magic is a study in the schools, and operates on strict administrative lines. There are two degrees possible through formal training, the Master of Sorcery (MS) and the Doctor of Thaumaturgy (ThD). The MS is a standard degree for practicing Sorcerers, and only the most accomplished earn the ThD. There is also a non-academic training process through a program of apprenticeship leading to a status of Journeyman on passing qualifying exams. Journeymen may practice magic under supervision, but the MS is necessary to move on to full status in the guild. A Sorcerer's Guild exists in all areas of the Empire, and these are all associated nation-wide. In addition, those who have achieved the MS or ThD are able to belong to the Royal Thaumaturgical Society, receive its journal, and attend the triennial convention in London. Sir Lyon Gandolphus Grey is the Grand Master of the Most Ancient and Honorable Guild of Sorcerers, the overgroup which includes the RTS and coordinated the activities of the local Sorcerer's Guilds, who are represented in the RTS by Masters in their Guilds.

There are two major divisions in magic, the first between magic and healing, and the second between white and black magic. Magic is practiced by lay Sorcerers as described earlier, and can be classified into several types and areas of Talent. Not all are born with the magical Talent, and each person has a different area in which his Talent is strongest. The division between white and black magic is a division of intent, not content. The magic is essentially the same, but is black magic when used destructively or with malicious intent. However, there are some forms of magic, such as demonoscopy, which lend themselves to black magic. Healing is clearly divided from magic in that almost all healers are members of the Church, or some other religious order (Healing Rabbis, or Islamic Hakime Healers). Lay healers are licensed by the Church, but are supposed to perform only first aid or to assist a clerical healer. Many healers are members of monastic orders devoted to healing. There are lay, non-magical healers called Chirurgeons as well, roughly comparable to our doctors.

Some specific laws of magic include the laws of Contagion, Similarity, and Relevance. Contagion relates to objects which have been in contact and have developed a mutual affinity, variable for time of contact, intimacy, and how long they have been separated. It allows a number of effects, including discovering if a specific gun fired a particular bullet, or who something belongs to. Similarity or 'Simulacrum Induction' is the practice of influencing something with a model or image of it, such as inflicting pain on a doll of a person you want to hurt. Relevance works like contagion, but for parts of a separated whole, and can be used to restore broken things and find missing pieces. There are other laws as well, and some noteworthy special effects and spells, such as an Eye Test which brings out the last image seen by a dead man's eyes, the Geas Theory, which is used to prevent further crimes of known criminals, and the Tarnhelm Effect, which makes

a person invisible by keeping others from looking at him.

People of Celtic extraction are often Talented. Religious services and sacraments can disrupt magic. Most priests are Talented. Some people are born with the Evil Eye. Spirits and Demons exist because of belief in them, and can be influenced through magic. There are many more minor aspects to magic in this world. One overall fact which should be noted is that not everyone is equally gifted with Talent or magical power, and that trained Talent is far greater than raw, untrained Talent, even if the later is of greater potential. Also, different areas of skill are important. Some are good hypnotists, others masters of Pyrokinesis, or some even witch-smellers, as well as myriad other possibilities. Each sorcerer has an area of expertise in addition to basic skills.

WORTHIES OF THE EMPIRE

Garrett's tales focus on the character of Lord Darcy, Chief Criminal Investigator to Richard, Duke of Normandy. Darcy is one of several major characters who run through the books and are typical of the roles possible in this sort of fantasy world. The stories concern his investigation of magical crimes and intrigues.

Darcy is of the lesser nobility, the Lord of Arcy, a former diplomat and spy of mysterious background. He is of average height and build, with dark coloring and aquiline features, a fine dresser, and master of protocol and procedure. He is not magically talented, but has the keenest deductive mind of his age. Some even conjecture that he has an unknown magical Talent for discovering the hidden. He is also an expert on the history and practice of magic, because his work as an investigator is so much involved with it. He is widely renowned and sought after, so his work often takes him outside of Normandy. He speaks a number of unlikely languages with surprising skill. He is an expert marksman and duellist.

Sean O'Lochlainn is Darcy's assistant, Chief Forensic Sorcerer to Duke Richard of Normandy. He is a heavy, ruddy-faced Irishman who carries a Caorthainn staff to use in his magics. He is a Master of the Art, and specializes in investigation.

These are the nucleus of most of the books, but there are other recurring and important characters: Duke Richard and King John feature notably, and both embody all of the sterling qualities of the Plantagenets; many of the national leaders have already been mentioned; Chief Henri Vert is the Master at Arms (Chief of Police) at Cherbourg, capital of Normandy, a frequent foil to Darcy; Lord John Quetzal is the heir to the Duke of Mechicoe, and a Journeyman Sorcerer, specializing in witch-smelling in his still partially pagan nation; Sir James Zwinge is the Chief Forensic Sorcerer of London, the secret head of Imperial Counterespionage and the Naval Intelligence Corps, and a Master Sorcerer (code name is Zed); Commander Lord Ashley is the official leader of the NIC, Lord Bontrionpme is the Lord Admiral; Jaque Toile is the Master at Arms of Gisors; Olga Polovski is known as the most beautiful woman in Europe, and is also agent #055 of Serka, beautiful, dangerous, and smart; Lord Sefton is Foreign Secretary; Sir Lyon Gandolphus Grey has already been mentioned as Master of the Sorcerer's Guild, a powerful, emaciated mage with silver hair and a long beard; the Sidi al-Nasir is the owner of a gambling club in London called the Manzana de Oro, an impressive Moor, who is also the coordinator of Serka operations in the Empire. There are many more characters and people in the Empire, but they fit fairly standard types, and can be drawn to from these examples.

Also of note are several organizations. Serka, of course, has agents everywhere causing trouble. It is a standard, nasty spy group. The Society of Albion is a secret group of pagans who practice semi-trained Black Magic, and worship nature, claiming descent from the Druids. They were founded in the 1820s, and believe the king should be sacrificed in times of trouble. The inner circle is mostly Celtic and the group is organized in isolated cells. There are still pagans in the mountains of Mechicoe, mostly worshipers of Huitsilopochtli. They are dangerous and violent. There are many trade guilds and Knightly Orders. The Royal Thaumaturgical Laboratories at Edwards College, Oxford, do covert research, as do the Ipswich Laboratories in Suffolk, under the direction of Master Sir Greer Davidson. The Materialist movement is growing, and denies the existence of magic. Gypsies also feature in the stories.

PLAYING IN THE EMPIRE

Of course, the best first step towards developing a campaign in a world like this is to read the Darcy stories, which are available from Ace Books. The next task is to assimilate the different context with which you are dealing and flesh out a full world of characters and background, adjusting to the idea of a world as modern in magic as we are in technology, but still in the mechanical age, with trains, gaslights, and only the most basic electricity. Next you have to prepare your players and their characters. A bit of explanation should do this, but a characteristic for Talent is necessary if you don't have one. The hardest part will be convincing them to play in a non-traditional context. If you can do this you will be able to move on into one of many types of worlds which can be found in imaginative literature but have yet to make it into role-playing, in spite of their outstanding potential for adventure. Darcy's world combines the best elements of the adventures of James Bond, Horratio Hornblower, and Sherlock Homes, while maintaining a fascinating element of fantasy and magic.

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