

ABYSS 23

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**Bryson, Hargrave, Nalle,
Olson, Rolston & Others**

INSIDE

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ART THIS ISSUE

Nick Dharsee(9,25), Tom Curtin (17,18), Mike Cranford(19,21,26). All remaining art is taken from out-of-copyright works, primarily illustrations to travelogues on Central Asia and the Middle East

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CONJURINGS

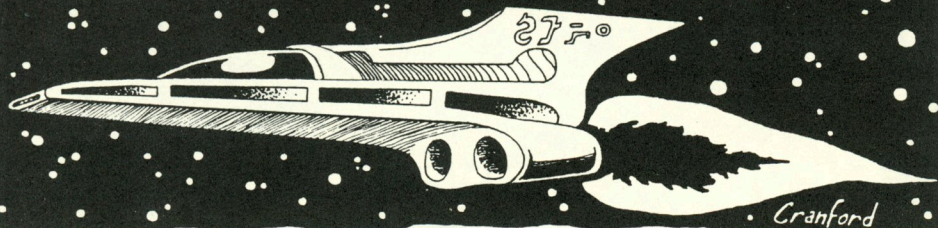
Welcome to our first issue in a somewhat new format. Starting with this issue, Abyss will be a little slicker and a little longer, but still featuring all of the great writers and articles which you are probably used to by now. Unfortunately, for the first time in over 3 years, both the cover and subscription prices have gone up slightly, but these are the perils found in a world of inflation.

We have tried to make this an all-star issue, with some of our best writers of past issues plus some new writers who you should enjoy. We are also trying to improve our look a little, using some art from 19th century sources which are no longer in copyright. We would welcome feedback on these changes, plus any suggestions for other new directions. From now on look for continued improvement, keeping at at least 28 or 32 pages.

On another matter. We still want to win an Origins Award for Best Amateur Magazine. This is especially important now as there is a movement to redefine the category so that we can no longer compete in it, shoving us up with the big-circulation magazines where we have little or no chance of getting enough exposure for our merits to be compared fairly. Thus, I urge you: get hold of an awards nomination form from any of the big magazines and send it in, putting in a vote for Abyss in the best amateur magazine category. While you're at it, those of you who are YRS players should remember that this is the year that Ysgarth will be eligible, plus competition is at best meagre. We urge you to vote, however you vote, as these awards and Origins itself are some of the more wholesome aspects of the gaming industry, maintaining a community of gamers and a convention which is gamer-oriented, contrary to what you may have heard from some other sources who feel that GAMA should either be their tool or be eliminated.

GAMA(Game Manufacturers Association) exists primarily to promote and support Origins and the Origins awards. It is formed of representatives of most of the companies in the industry except TSR. While it is true that it is cursed by factionalism, pettiness and pointless power

continued on page 27



IN THE SPECULUM

BOOKS

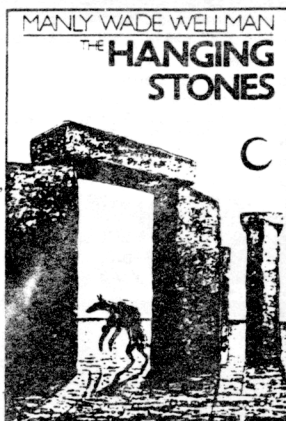
THE HANGING STONES
 MANLY WADE WELLMAN
 Doubleday(HB), \$11.95

This is the newest novel in Wellman's ongoing set of tales about John the Balladeer, singer, philosopher hero and foe of all things dark and evil. It follows the style set in his related works, such as Who Fears the Devil, The Old Gods Waken, After Dark, and The Lost and the Lurking.

The Hanging Stones is the tale of a twisted dream to rebuild a new Stonehenge here in America, and what happens when dark forces converge on the site to be met by the awesome talents of not only John the Balladeer and the newly introduced Esdras Hogue, but Judge Keith Hilary Pursuivant from the excellent "Weird Tales" stories recently reprinted in Lonely Vigils. These characters plus Wellman's traditional assortment of curious half-villains and winning common folk make up the fabric of this story.

Few writers command atmosphere this well, and it is always a pleasure to be introduced to Wellman's characters. You may notice that there is almost no plot to this story. Wellman relies heavily on situation, mood and characters to make his story. The result is a unique form of poetic story-telling where the action is more felt than understood and an imaginative reader will almost hear the silver strains from John's guitar.

Read this book, read all of Wellman's books. Inside these pages waits a new world which is familiar in many ways, but still as alien and fascinating as any fantastic plane. (J. R. Davies)



THE DESTROYERS OF LAN-KERN
 PETER TREMAYNE
 Methuen(HB), £6.95

The Destroyers of Lan-Kern is the second novel of the Lan-Kern series, an epic Fantasy by British author Peter Tremayne. The series concerns the adventures of survivors of an accident which casts a submarine forward(?) in time to a future where civilisation has collapsed and been reborn along lines similar to several ancient and medieval cultures from the British Isles.

This book takes the hero Dryden, into the stronghold of the Cynn in the fabled See-ti, seeking to rescue Kigva, his aloof love. It is a good, fast moving story with well-developed and interesting characters, but although it could be read on its own, it is much better if read along with The Fires of Lan-Kern.

It is easy to fault Tremayne for being awesomely unoriginal. The Cynn speak Anglo-Saxon, place names are strangely familiar, and curious anachronisms crop up on occasion. However, this doesn't really hurt the story as much as it might, as Tremayne's world is different enough that these parallels to our world are primarily

used to disorient the reader and arouse curiosity about the origins of these odd survivals in the mysterious period between the present and this world out of time.

This is not the greatest fantasy novel ever written. It might even be better classified as Science Fiction. However, Tremayne creates a believable if often oddly familiar world, and tells a fine tale. (David Naile)

THE DARK BORDER
 PAUL EDWIN ZIMMER
 The Lost Prince, King Chondo's Ride
 Playboy(PB), \$2.95

Paul Edwin Zimmer(brother of Marion Zimmer Bradley) has finished the first two books in his Dark Border series, The Lost Prince and King Chondo's Ride, both of which are set in the frontier realm of Tarenacia. This is one of the largest kingdoms opposed to the advance of 'The Shadow', which is the embodiment of malignant force, a region of darkness populated by the dead and cursed. This shadow seeks to rule the world and its inhabitants. The shadow is only contained by the

efforts of the bordermen, hardened frontiersmen who live near the shadow, and the Children of Hastur, powerful beings who use the powers of light against the shadow. This might sound a bit too cute and convenient, but the books do hold together and have much more meat to them than can be shown in a short review. The basic premises of this world are believable, or at least acceptable. These books are light-weight fantasy, not in the sense of rolicking humor, but in that action and plot dominate the books.

The *Lost Prince* deals with an ancient plot by the shadow to usurp the throne of Tarenzia by replacing the newly enthroned Prince with his twin who was stolen at birth and raised to follow the shadow and hate the human fodder (Yes, sports fans, captured humans are eaten by the denizens of the shadow, as no food grows within their land). The story begins with the father of the two princes still on the throne and some good background on politics in Tarenzia. Chondos is crowned, replaced by his shadow twin and the shadow prepares to assault Tarenzia from without and destroy it from within through internal friction and disunity.



King Chondos' Ride deals with Chondos' attempts to escape the shadow and depose his brother. A great portion of this book is set within the shadow, examining its environs and denizens. Zimmer also treats the breakup of Tarenzia into feuding areas with the most important under the control of Lord Jagat and his mercenary captain Martos. They are the leaders of bordermen and the shadow hopes that by destroying them it will be able to take all of Tarenzia. The ending of the book seems to be predictable, but there is a pleasant and unexpected twist.

Both books show a keen eye for detail, especially in swordsmanship and cavalry tactics. Zimmer spends an inordinate time on these two topics (I didn't mind, but most readers would get bogged down). He also tends to re-use certain scenes over and over. After seeing the same combination of actions for the 9th time, they become much less effective. The mood of these books is important, and repetition seriously threatens it. The third flaw is that there are too many major characters. Over a dozen characters share most of the action. You are often left wondering just who or what the story is about. Zimmer also has a fondness for changing viewpoint, which can be rather confusing. Still, I enjoyed the books and hope that there will be more to come. The basic ideas behind the books is fascinating, and carried me on past flaws in Zimmer's writing style. The *Dark Border* might even make a good background for a fantasy campaign. This pair are no great literary masterpieces, but they are enjoyable and unpretentious. (Eric Olson)

RETRIEF TO THE RESCUE
 KEITH LAUMER
 Timescape (HB), \$14.95

This is the newest book in Keith Laumer's ongoing humorous series about the adventures of Jaime Retief in the Corps Diplomatique Terrestriene. On the whole it is an enjoyable read, with some good laughs, silly characters, and pleasant plot twists. Like all of Laumer's fiction, especially the Retief series, it is good, light SF which demands little from the reader except the ability to laugh freely.

However, there is one incredibly annoying flaw in this otherwise pleasant novel. Laumer is re-cycling material. The entire beginning section of this novel is taken from a story called "Truce or Consequences" which was published only a few months ago in *Retief: Diplomat at Arms*. Names and other obvious facts are altered, and the story carries on into the novel where it ended in its original form, but this is still pretty shabby. It was also really annoying to me as I had just read the short story and was then disconcerted by seeing it again in a new but divergent form. Somehow this doesn't show well for Laumer, and it certainly hurt what seemed to be one of the better Retief pieces as far as I was concerned. Retief to the Rescue is a good read, but go into it aware that if you are a Retief fan you may suffer some disorientation. If you are new to Retief and Laumer, this might be a fine place to start before moving on to the large selection of related works. (J.R.D.)



MAGAZINES

THE EXPLORER

1824 Yorktown Rd., Lexington, KY 40504

Appearance:3, Content:4, Value:1, Personal:4, Overall:3

This new zine only came to our attention recently. Copy #6 is on hand and some impressions leap to mind. It is published in an 8x11 format, with 20 pages, edited by Clarence Horine. The text is xeroxed, but the reproduction quality is good. The art is sparse, a blessing, as what there is isn't great.

As far as content, this issue consists for the most part of traditional Monsters & Module material, plus a large number of plugs for products and projects of the editors. There are game and Atari Cartridge reviews, a D&D character class, monsters, magic-items, a dungeon module, a very curious section of gaming questions, all of which seem to form some sort of an elaborate plug for the author and his activities, including an interview which he seems to be conducting with himself, plus a review of a Star Trek PBM.

At \$2.00 a copy or \$10 for 6 issues, this is also the most expensive zine of any sort which I have ever seen. It would be outrageously overpriced even if the contents were excellent, but they most certainly are not.

Without question this is the worst gaming zine I've seen in quite a while. It is obnoxious, self-indulgent, and offers nothing new, and does all of this at two times the reasonable price. Don't buy it. (David Nalle)

NOMINATED FOUR TIMES FOR A WORLD FANTASY AWARD 55

WEIRDBOOK 17



WEIRDBOOK

POB 149, Amherst Branch, Buffalo, NY 14226

Appearance:9, Content:9, Value:3, Personal:8, Overall:7

Weirdbook is probably one of the three best small-press fiction magazines published in the United States. Every year it offers up more than its share of award nominees, and is often represented in 'Year's Best' anthologies.

It is an attractive magazine in a 8.5x11 format, with attractive set type and excellent art. It is published once or twice a year at a price of \$5 a copy(perhaps a bit steep), and subscriptions are \$15 for 4 issues.

#17 is at hand, and has 64 pages of the finest dark fantasy available. Of particular note are new stories by Darrell Schweitzer, Steve Rasnic Tem, Ardath Maynar, and Brian Lumley. Weirdbook is one of the best mid-sized markets for the many weird writers around who have no large-scale market since the death of Fantastic. All of the fiction is outstanding, and there is some good poetry as well, including two poems by Joseph Payne Brennan. All the art is good, but I found the art by Tony Patrick(who I have not seen before) unusually original and striking. In all three areas Weirdbook #17 excells, though I missed some of my favorite writers of

past issues, such as H. Warner Munn, Manly Wade Wellman, and Adrian Cole, though I hope that at least some of them will return at some point.

In short, if you like fantasy, horror and swords and sorcery, Weirdbook should appeal to you. The price may be a bit steep, but then there isn't much competition left and it's a publisher's market. Buy Weirdbook.(David Nalle)

GAMES & AIDS

THE CASTLE OF RAMOTH

DWR Publishing, 217 W. Diamond Ave., Gaithersburg, MD 20877(\$3.00)

The Dream World of Ramoth's Castle of Ramoth is close in the running with The Dungeon of King Lout for the worst product I've ever seen. The Castle of Ramoth and the whole series of World of Ramoth products are supposed to be a "unique ser-

ies of gaming aids for Game Masters, players and campaign designers from novice to expert...Referees who are currently using Runequest, AD&D, C&S, or other systems may wish to enrich their adventures by drawing on (these) maps." The only person being enriched by these 'architectural plans' is Omar Pincost, and on my money! This cover hype is almost equal in length to the interior text. I would also love to know what is unique about these plans. There are precisely four maps in this packet, 3 enlarged player maps, and one smaller GM's map. Add 1.5 pages of explanation, a lengthy cover blurb on the excellence of their products and a flyer on their other offerings, and you have the whole contents of this three dollar package. Five pages of material at this cost is ridiculous. The Abyss even has more than this and at half the cost. As for production cost, it couldn't have been too great, as the Castle of Ramoth has some of the cheapest production standards I've ever seen. The whole product appears to be wrapped in a large Glad bag. The castle design is a pale shadow of FGU's Castle Design booklet, which it suspiciously resembles. Spend the extra couple of bucks and get FGU's attempt at this if you need help designing a castle. What's more, Ragnarok will also be coming out with a castle/fortification design system soon(won't we Lew). A full system, not just one castle. Only the most gullible neophyte has any excuse of buying this; unless, of course, he is a review editor for Abyss—we get special God given dispensation. A final point, don't let that 'usable with AD&D, RQ, and C&S' fool you. There is nothing in this but a castle plan: no denizens, nothing to distinguish it from anything else. I wholeheartedly warn you against this product. I wish someone had warned me. I think I should get special compensation from RE. The trials and tribulations of an Abyss editor never cease. (Eric Olson)

D&D Presents
The Dream World of Ramoth

It is with great pleasure that I announce the publication of a special "Map Series" for the game of Dungeons & Dragons. This series of maps, including the "Map Series" of "The Dream World of Ramoth," is being made available to you in a special "Map Series" format. This series of maps is being made available to you in a special "Map Series" format. This series of maps is being made available to you in a special "Map Series" format.



Map Ser: RA-11(CR) The Castle of Ramoth

SAM SUCCI

RRGI, POB 485, Lincoln, AR 72744

San Succi is an unusual and interesting new product from the publishers of Recon. It is a city plan/scenario and background aid intended for use with modern RPGs, especially Recon. It is 28 newspaper-sized pages with small print and a number of well detailed maps. The maps are done on a scale to be used as playing boards with standard miniatures.

The most interesting aspect of this product is its completeness. Not only are some 10 major areas of a city described in detail, but special rules and notes are included, among them rules for guard dogs, sentries, movement and terrain, and a long section on vehicles, which work with real-world, abstract based guidelines rather than super-specific mechanics, and thus can easily be used with any game. The maps are also clear and well done.

The problems here are small, picky, and annoying. First, while the maps need to be this large, the huge size of the pages makes the text very hard to refer to for a referee. You also need a good-sized table to lay out the map you are using, and could really also use space to lay out the rules. Second, the maps are all only printed on one side, so there about 10 blank pages in the total of 28. What's more, one of the maps is printed on the back of some useful background and text. Not all of the maps are used at once, so they could have been printed on each other's backs, while avoiding printing on the back of some of the rules. There is also a full-page ad for miniatures for use with Recon or similar games, but that is expected.

On the whole, this is an unusually good role-playing aid, well conceived and fully developed, and I would recommend it to players of modern-period RPGs. (D.N.)

SAN SUCCI
 RRG1, POB 485, Lincoln, AR 72744

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IN ARDUIN... DAVID HARGRAVE

David Hargrave is the author of the *Arduin Grimoire* and related products, and the forthcoming *Arduin, Bloody Arduin*. He is one of the earliest shapers of role-playing as it exists today, and his world of Arduin may be one of the most renowned fantasy campaigns in the world.

Many people have asked me, 'Just what makes Arduin so different from other long-running campaigns?' My reply usually has several parts, and even then it is hard to cover everything that needs to be said. It usually goes something like this:

Everyone who has played for any length of time in either of my two campaigns has found that Arduin touched their own lives as well as the lives of their characters. For example:

My friend Tony, who played a 'household' of Samurai, soon discovered that what ever happened to his characters was answered by alarming parallels among his real-life friends in Japan (where he taught English). It seems that he had patterned his main characters after his real Japanese friends. Thus, when a character suffered a bad leg wound in game play, it was followed by a broken leg for that character's real-life analogue (and so forth). Tony became increasingly distraught. After all, some of his lesser characters (not based on real people) had already been slain. What would happen if a main character were to die in Arduin? As time passed and more parallels came up, such as main characters being wounded and impoverished, followed by comparable losses among his Japanese friends, all of this became too much for him. As a result he moved many hundreds of miles away and severely curtailed his role-playing, at least in Arduin.

Another friend and long-time campaigner named Peter had had his real world musical interests intertwined with the fate of his primary character; Jothar of the House of the Rising Sun. Throughout this Elf's adventures from penniless wanderer to King of the Elves in Arduin (over a 37 game-year period), I would literally feel compelled to buy a particular record album, almost always one which featured a song relevant to Jothar's adventures. These were often albums by Uriah Heep, Blackmoore's Rainbow, or a similar group, but all would sing of Jothar's (and the House of the Rising Sun, by name!) exploits just past or soon to come. I had no control over my games with Jothar (and very little over those of any other character for that matter), as Arduin (as it often does) seemed to have a life all its own. Peter and I have marvelled for years as to the reasons for this, and have come to the only solution possible: Somewhere, somewhen, Arduin is real and all I have been doing is chronically what goes on there.

These two instances are representative of what I try to convey to those who ask about Arduin. Almost everyone who campaigns in 'my world' can attest to what I have said. There are other factors which also make Arduin so special.

For example, the rules have been in constant play-test and improvement, with everyone's ideas being tried out at least once. Arduin role-playing has always stressed innovation, experimentation and the trying of all that is new. Yet, it has always, curiously, remained consistent in myriad technical aspects. 'Consistency of quality' is what I'm always told whenever I ask my players to describe what they like about the campaigns.

Over the years many other game systems have been inspired by ideas from our systems and world, such as critical hits, a complete demon hierarchy, monster and artifact cards, ad infinitum. As they say, 'imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.'

Arduin is also different in that it has relied on word of mouth instead of costly advertising to sell, still selling 17,000 copies in its first year, compared to *Runequest's* 4,000 or so, with a large advertising budget. Arduin seems to survive on its own merits.

Arduin is and has always been a 'people's game'. I answer letters directly concerning the rules, and they change and evolve in response to new ideas and suggestions. This adds to the universality and adaptability of Arduin so that it can be used to 'Arduinize' any kind of role-playing campaign.

Another factor that makes Arduin so vibrant and alive is the frequency of play. This year (1982), as of November, I've had some 44 games. This is the first year since 1976 that I've played less than 70 games! In 1977 I actually had more than 120! All told I've run some 400 games of 6-28 hours each, plus demonstrations.



The commercial aspects of Arduin have had a definite impact on the games themselves, in that the players could see actual character types and critters from Arduin in miniatures or art. I guess you could call this a sense of pride or of identity, which heightens the reality of the game to the players. Being able to go to any store or convention and see Arduin gives me and my players a sense of 'legitimacy' of some sort.

The ability of Arduin to insinuate itself into every facet of my life, these last few years is, to me, amazing in the extreme. With few exceptions, I am just about the only person around making a living from a single game system. I was also probably the first, Mr. Gygax not withstanding. Arduin has supported me just as I have supported her. Thus, I owe Arduin a loyalty beyond that of other GMs to their worlds. I've put in thousands of hours of work to produce full-color and large scale maps, and other aids. All of which give my campaigns texture and life. Much of this material will go into the revised system (Arduin, Bloody Arduin) which will be twice the length of the original game.

So, when I answer those people about Arduin, I try to tell them how it really is, has been, and will be. Yet, I'm not sure that I really succeed. After all, how can I describe what I have lived to those who have only pretended.

MY ARDUIN

'Arduin, bloody Arduin,' the lament I often hear
From those of soft spine, those whose hearts fear

But I will ever travel its rainbow hued glory
And ever chronicle its golden story

For as long as we shall both live.

—David A. Hargrave



THE KSHATRYA CODE

MICHAEL JOHNSON

Michael Johnson should already be familiar to many of you from his article on Vedic Devas. He joins us again with a description of the martial code of ancient India, which you may find applicable to many gaming situations.

The Kshatrya (warrior caste) of ancient India, much like the Samurai of Japan, or the Knights of King Arthur's time, had an elaborate system of honor attached to both their style of life and of battle.

The main text of this code is a book called the Dhanurveda (military knowledge). This is one of the 4 Upavedas, or books of inferior wisdom, as opposed to the Vedas, the books of spiritual wisdom. If you are curious, the other three are Ayurveda (medical knowledge), Ghandharvaveda (music and dance), and Schapatyavieda (architecture).

This Dhanurveda is apparently lost or just plain unavailable in English, Sanskrit, Hindi, or Bengali, as far as I can determine from my sources. All is not lost, as we do have several large quotes in sections of the Mahabharata and the Shrimad Bhagavatam. It is from these sources that I have gleaned my material.

Unfortunately, as these sources are only quotes, the information is neither exhaustive nor complete. Thus, while we do know that armies fought in formations, and even have the names of some (eagle, crane, needle, turtle, crescent, horned fish, heron, three prong, and lotus), alas for wargamers, that is all we know about them, as the Brahmins who copied or recorded the information were pacifists and couldn't care less about such matters. This same problem of focus and omission alters other information as well. We do have some information. Here it is:

1/ All battles end as soon as the bottom edge of the disk of the sun touches the horizon. When this occurs all of the trumpets and drums of both armies should be played simultaneously. As soon as this happens all fighting ceases. Battle will not resume until the next dawn, when the sun clears the horizon, which is again signaled with trumpets.

2/ Members of the hostile armies are free to mix in a friendly fashion (and often even throw each other parties in fact!) during this nightly truce. This may sound silly, but it does help keep emotions in check, as you are much likely to accept the surrender of a drinking mate than from some unknown belligerent fool.

- 3/ Fighting must be one-on-one. No ganging up is allowed, period.
- 4/ All surrenders must be accepted. If the enemy is making a start as surrendering, let him finish. You cannot fake surrender. Armies and individuals may surrender at any point.
- 5/ Once he has surrendered, an individual is held for ransom by his captor. At the sunset truce, he may be set free, traded for another prisoner, released for a fee or signed note of intent to pay ransom. It is considered polite to give back the prisoner's weapons on freeing him, though it is not required, and they can be kept as part of the ransom. It is also legal to demand that he promise not to fight against your side for the rest of that battle.
- 6/ A fleeing man may not be attacked from behind, and if leaving the battlefield must be allowed to escape. After all, he is certainly doing you no harm, and might just panic a few others on his way out.
- 7/ Before all battles it is customary for the generals of the opposing armies to meet and set boundaries for the battle(so it doesn't spill over into a nearby village for instance). Also arranged at this meeting is the placement of medical stations open to both sides.
- 8/ You may not strike a man who is unaware that you are there. Thus, in the case of an ambush, you must allow the enemy to know that they are under attack. Firing arrows from behind cover is alright, as long as a few of the ambushers can be seen by the victims first. They can of course fire as soon as they are spotted, getting a quick attack and disorganizing the enemy. After this it is fine to go back into hiding.
- 9/ Elephant troops fight elephant troops, cavalry fights cavalry, chariots fight chariots, and infantry fights infantry. A lesser type can always attack a greater troop type. Such as infantry against elephants. A greater troop may not attack a lesser, unless attacked first.
- 10/ Brahmins and women may never be killed, except in the case of the rare fighting brahmin or female kshatrya, who is treated normally.
- 11/ No other non-combatants may be attacked including trumpeters, drummers, medics, chariot drivers(suta), elephant drivers(mahout), laborers (shudras), or any other civilians. Drivers are exempt because their hands are full driving while in battle and they leave when rendered ineffective. For example, a suta who loses his Kshatrya will drop him off at an aid station and from then on his chariot is considered an ambulance, and he will continue to work as a medic for both sides.
- 12/ There is no hitting below the belt. This rule is even honored by the dacoits(bandits), and no armor is made for this area.
- 13/ Persons who cannot defend themselves for any reason should not be attacked.
- 14/ A kshatrya cannot break his word.
- 15/ A kshatrya cannot refuse a challenge to a duel, except from a child or person of the opposite sex, but challenges can be scheduled to mutual convenience within reason.
- 16/ A challenge to chess or gambling may not be refused, though only one bet or game is needed to satisfy such a challenge, and the amount of the wager must be agreeable to both parties.
- 17/ A kshatrya's main duty in life, over and above all others, even the whole code, is the protection of the helpless. If he must break the code to save someone who can't save themselves or be saved within the code, no blame will come if he violates it.
- 18/ Surplus income acquired by a kshatrya should not be hoarded, but rather be given in charity to brahmins, widows, orphans, etc.
- 19/ He must always be impartial in administering justice, not letting emotions, bribes, or other considerations sway him.
- 20/ He should only fight in a just cause, guided by his conscience.
- 21/ He should not switch sides once he is committed.
- 22/ He should obey his superiors at all times unless given an order which is specifically in violation of the code or the dharma(religious duty) of the kshatrya. This will occasionally outrank #20. In the kurukshetra civil war generals Draonacharya and Bhishma, while admitting the justice of the pandava cause, still fought for the kurus. They did this on the grounds that while the kuru's leader, Mahraja Duryudhona, had become maharaja illegally, they had already sworn to uphold the crown(#14) and served it, no matter who had it or how it was gained.
- 23/ The code does not hold in cases where your opponent has demonstrated that he cannot(like an animal) or will not(like a barbarian) follow the code, and has



otherwise shown that he has no mercy or dharma. A rakshasa(ogre) forcibly carrying a woman off for dinner is amply demonstrating that he has no dharma and may be attacked from behind.

If the players or GM feel that an offence against the code has been done on purpose, blatantly, or without sufficient reason, the offending kshatrya may be punished. Minor offences bring beatings, imprisonment, or something else appropriate. Major infringements get either death or worse.

Worse than death for a kshatrya is to be stripped of all rank, job, status, and caste, and declared a chandalla(untouchable). A chandalla is automatically divorced from his wife, and disowned by his family. All subordinates and superiors no longer acknowledge him. He remains a kshatrya until his crime is atoned for either by tapasya(penance), time served, or both. A really nasty crime may require chandallahood for life.

Chandalla are the lowest form of human life, and handle such jobs as sewer work, cesspool cleaning, garbage collection, etc. They are unspoken too and ignored by all in the society, and generally treated like dirt. Needless to say, a fate like this forms a good deterrent and encourages obedience to the code for the kshatrya. This results in a structure and logic to war and combat, limiting mayhem and lending a dignifying formality.

NEW FIELDS ERIC OLSON



First off, I'd like to thank my partner in crime—Kevin Sullivan. Kevin and I went well beyond the playtesting stage with Field of Honor at GENCON EAST. Field of Honor was one of the hottest selling items at the con. We sold out of our copies and went into immediate reprint. We ran over half-a-dozen 'official' demos and between the two of us we must have run 75-100 individual sessions. We got a lot of suggestions and comments on the game, from ideas on how to improve it(how do you improve on such perfection?), additions to the rules, and a demand for rules on adapting FoH to various role-playing systems. After a long delay due to a tough semester, I've finally set down to write up the conversion system that we bounced around for most of the summer. We worked this out. Now it's up to you.

The easiest conversion is from AD&D to FoH(or from FoH to AD&D) with the formulas reversed). To find FoH characteristics, simply make the calculations shown to the left.

END = CON x 4/5
 FOR = STR x 2/3
 DEF = (DEX/2)+Level, +mounted combat skill modifier
 ACC = ((DEX+WIS)/4)+Level/2, modified for mounted combat skill
 (Mounted combat modifier: SL0=-8, SL1=-4, SL2=-2, SL3=-1, SL4=0. +1/Level after this

To explain this mess, END(endurance) has nothing to do with AD&D Hit Points. HP advance does not mean you are physically tougher, just harder to hit and more skilled in avoiding blows. Thus, END is based solely on physical characteristics. The same applies to FOR(force). Your AD&D levels do not make you stronger. Level advantages are figured into DEF and ACC. For AD&D exceptional strength add 1 to FOR for each step over 18. Any further increases could let a character blow away mounted Golems.

On DEF(defense) conversion is a bit more difficult. Here we take into account the idea of level factor of mounted combat skill. For those of you who don't use a skill system(there are many variants, but I use the one from the Ysgarth Rule System), I suggest the following simple premise; to get SL1 takes two solid weeks of training. After that each level takes a geometrically doubled time to learn(SL2=1 month, SL3=2 months, etc.). Very few knights should get really high in SL. This lets a specialized 2nd level knight take the wind out of the sails of a generalized 10th level fighter.

ACC(accuracy) is similar to DEF. We took into account both dexterity and wisdom, plus AD&D level and the mounted combat skill modifier. In addition, I feel that mounted combat skill should be gained in specific weapons equal to AD&D weapon specialization. By this I mean that if I trained for two levels of skill with a lance, I might be OK with a lance, but I might get massacred using a sword. An alternate might require the assignment of each SL to a specific weapon. Another is to give a bonus of 2 on SL with a specific chosen weapon.

This whittles the remaining conversion problems down to armor, horse, weapon breakage, and the effect of magical weapons. To dispense with the easiest first, I suggest that honorable combat is not fought with magic, but man to man. There should be no special advantage for either jouster. If you do use magic add 1 to ACC for each plus to hit, and 1 to FOR for each plus on damage. As for weapon breakage, use the rules in the game with the modifications mentioned later. As to armor, we can only approximate. Make leather 1, scale mail 2, chainmail 3, banded or splint 4, platemail 6. To get beyond level 6 you have to have platemail and pay 200 for the next level, 400 for the level after that, etc.

Finally, we come to the additions for horses. As is well known, the quality of your mount can make or break you in FoH. An AD&D light riding horse is grade 0. A light warhorse is a 1, a medium warhorse is a 2, a heavy war horse is a 3, and a new class, the destrier is a 5. I think the cost of AD&D warhorses should be much greater. I propose these costs: Light war horse(150GP), medium(300GP), heavy(1000GP), and destrier(5000GP), and rather rare. War horses should not be a dime a dozen. They require years of breeding and intense training, all adding up to a lot of money. Most medieval leaders tried to establish their own breeding programs with superior stock if possible.

Now that we have slogged through AD&D, let's give a try at conversion for YRS. We've already covered most of the explanation, so all we really need are the stat determination formulae to the right.

Also given to the right, below the conversion stats for YRS are those for RuneQuest, although I'm not as familiar with it as I am with the previous two systems. The biggest problem here is with the addition of FOR and ACC to the quality of the mount. Due to the large variety of mounts in RQ this will have to be up to the GM. The actual addition should depend on the stability of the mount and the force of its actual charge. I leave armor and costs up to you.

As a final note, I'd like to suggest some rule changes which I believe will enhance the realism of any game of FoH. First, weapon breakage. This is addressed to those who have armed their knights with a lance and it has lived through thirty jousts without breaking. The way the rules are set up weapons, even the fragile lance, don't break often enough. To remedy this I suggest that for every 'B' result there should be a 30% chance of weapon damage doing LD3 to the strength of the weapon. There should be a 15% chance of this on any 'C' result. In addition, I suggest a regular fee of 1 EP per 3 jousts for the maintenance of equipment.

Second, I have some ideas on END recovery. END is not the same as hit points. Basically, when you joust you are setting yourself up to have the stuffing beaten out of you, even have a few bones broken, ending up physically drained and battered. Recovery is needed for this, at a rate of 2 hours of rest per point of END lost up to half of the END total. From there up to 2/3 the time should be 5 hours per point regained, and above that make it 12 hours/point. This should be total rest or sleep.

Third, keep your jousting interesting by preventing knights from specializing in just one weapon. For example, set a requirement for the use of certain weapons in different rounds of a tournament.

Fourth, horses also deserve armor. Horse armor works in the same way as normal armor, but costs 4 EP per point. By the way, armor of any type, while often overlooked, may be the single most effective buy in the game.

Finally, I'd like to thank Bruce Danner and those others who sent suggestions for this article. I've tried to take all of their ideas into account while maintaining game balance.

- YRS
 END = CON x 3/5
 FOR = DC
 DEF = DR + AV + Riding SL
 ACC = AR/2 + Mounted Weapon SL
 Horse costs: 250M, 500M, 1000M, 5000M, 20000M
- RQ
 END = CON x 4/5
 FOR = (SIZ+STR)/2 x 2/3
 DEF = DEX/2 + Riding%/5
 ACC = (DEX+INT)/4 + (Riding%/5 + Weapon Skill%/5)/2

UTGART 4



THE PRIDE OF OGYANE

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JAHANNAM



#8 THE MITHRAEUM AT ZERGENDEH

LANDS OF WIND & FIRE

JON SCHULLER

Most fantasy campaigns of whatever system, are set in a background based on Europe in the middle-ages, partaking of west european cultural, mythological, social, and racial patterns. This is not a bad thing, and should be no surprise when you consider the background of most American role-players. West european cultural concepts are at least somewhat familiar to most of us, and form a common and comfortable setting.

However, this very familiarity can work against good role-playing, as it encourages players to let their characters be drawn into standardized heroic molds from the myths and fiction which grow out of this background. In many cases players can develop more realistic and fully detailed characters when they play in a background which is less familiar, but still complete and self-consistent.

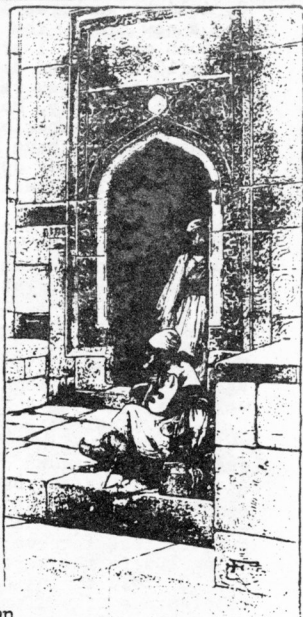
My preferred alternative world-background is based on the terrestrial middle-east, drawing on its rich and varied cultures from the beginnings of recorded history through the Ottoman period. This range includes a range of dynamic and decadent cultures, with many different religions, nations, peoples, and institutions. It is certainly as rich and varied a background as our more familiar standard. These ideas and cultural studies are expressed in my work on the developing world of Jahannam, and can be distilled into some ideas and passed on here.

There are a number of cultural pinacles from which the best and worst of middle-eastern culture can be abstracted. The key times and places in my eyes are: Dynastic Egypt, the Assyro-Babylonian Empire and Mesopotamia, the Phoenician Empire, the Heroic Age of Persia (the time of Rustem and Haroun-ar-Rashid), the Early Mohammedan Caliphate, the period of Turkish expansion, the Sultanate of Baghdad in the 14th and 15th centuries, and perhaps the Caliphate at the time of the European invasions. Not only are these periods heights of activity in middle-eastern society, but they are also particularly well documented and easy to research. What is more, they are all sufficiently close together technologically that with minor adjusting they can co-exist in the same fantasy time-frame.

Sources for history and legend of these periods are many, from the Epic of Gilgamesh to the Zend Avesta to Joinville's Chronicles to Burton's Arabian Nights to the Book of the Dead to the Q'ran. Both native and external sources are available in translation on all aspects of life among the different peoples of these periods. With the material to choose from you can even create cultures fitting the stereotypes and biases of european tourists, or even better, present some barbaric europeans seen from a civilized Arab perspective as in the writings of Ahmat Ibn Fadlan during the 10th century.

The first important thing to note about the middle-east is that it attained a relatively high level of culture and science while europe was still seething with fur-clothed cave-men. However, once a respectable level of practical civilisation was reached advancement was slow and uneven, with some areas actually slipping behind, some advancing, and a stable overall pattern of very gradual advancement. It is this phenomenon which sets cultures of different periods on a rough parity of development.

Westerners tend to lump all middle-easterners into a generalized group and are often not aware of the great tribal diversity in this area which can properly be said to range from central Asia to north-west Africa. There is a great difference between a north African Mameluk and a central Asian Uzbek, both in such superficial matters as appearance and behavior, and in underlying cultural and social nature as well. Between these two geographical extremes there are myriad tribes, races and peoples. Several major groups can be isolated for practical purposes. These are Aryans, Asiatics, Semites, Turks and Hamites, although these are such large groups that sub-groups may be wildly different from each other. In addition there are various amorphous early populations eventually absorbed into these larger groups, for example the tribes of the fertile crescent, and a number of slave populations. A good start can be made by looking at some of the attributes of these large tribes and some of their sub-groups.



Ancient Egyptian culture should be familiar to most gamers. It has always had glamorous associations and received good media coverage. The Egyptians can be put in the Hamitic grouping, though modern Egyptians are of very mixed blood. The civilisation of this region is particularly interesting because of its dual nature, caught as it is between the steady dangers of the desert and the capriciousness of the Nile. Egypt has traditionally been a land of farmers and merchants, centered on major urban areas along the river. These cities, such as Memphis, Abydos and Sakkara, grew up rather early in the development of the Egyptian empire and remained the dominant force in the culture, which became institutionally organized, with a caste system, strong administration, and prominent priesthood.

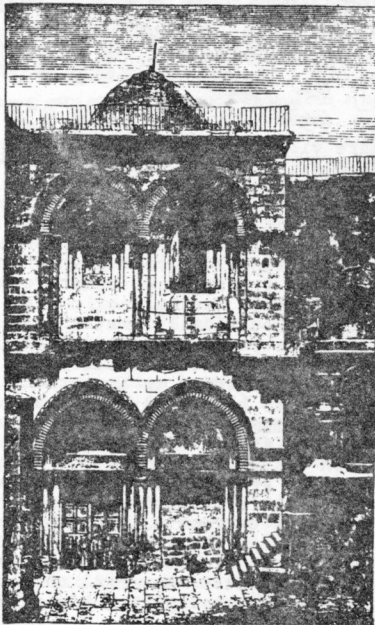
The ancient kingdoms of the fertile crescent are also of note from this early period. The valley of the Tigris and the Euphrates has been dominated by a variety of urbanized empires at different times, all sharing certain cultural elements. Their development was parallel in many ways to that of Egypt, although the various city states vied for dominance rather than being united under a strong administration and central monarchy. But, like Egypt, this region is generally arid (though less so), and dependent on river floods to maintain farmland. Such major empires in this area as Assyria and Mesopotamia should be familiar, and certain cities stand out, especially Babylon, Ur, Ninevah, Akkad, and Sumer. Later this same region will be dominated by both Turkish and Aryan invaders.

An early height for the semitic peoples of the eastern Mediterranean coast is the Phoenician Empire, which in many ways gave birth to the great sea-going cultures of later periods. Using sturdy ships built of Lebanese Cedar this empire emerged from the coastal cities of Sidon and Tyre, trading around the Mediterranean coast for the various commodities which their increasingly infertile land did not produce. Contrary to opinion based on the modern state of this area, it was actually rather fertile in this very early period, although it has declined since then. Most of the later Mediterranean cultures grew out of this empire or were at least bolstered by the Phoenician trading network. Carthage was actually one of several Phoenician colonies, and Mycennae and Crete were also strongly influenced. Unlike the two previous examples, Phoenicia was not an empire in the traditional sense of a consolidated and expanding nation. It was more like an allegiance of states and individuals for common support.

These three cultures are all at their height before 1000bc. Their ascendance is followed by long decline, the rise of Greece, and a series of invasions from the north by a group of tribes known as Aryans, who spread throughout what are now Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, southern Russia, and India. These people came from somewhere in central Europe, and are related to the Hellenic invaders in the northern parts of Greece in this same period. It took the Aryans a while to settle down, but once they did they became formidable, emerging as the first Persian and Mede empires which caused so much trouble for the Greeks when they were trying to expand during the 5th-2nd centuries B.C. The real height of these tribes is reserved for a second and greater climax during the heroic age of Persia in the 8th and 9th centuries under the leadership of Haroun-ar-Rashid. This golden age is chronicled in such works as Firdousi's Book of Kings, and it produced several near legendary figures, including the heroes Rustem and Sinbad. This renaissance lasted into the 15th century when the Turks became the dominant force in the area.

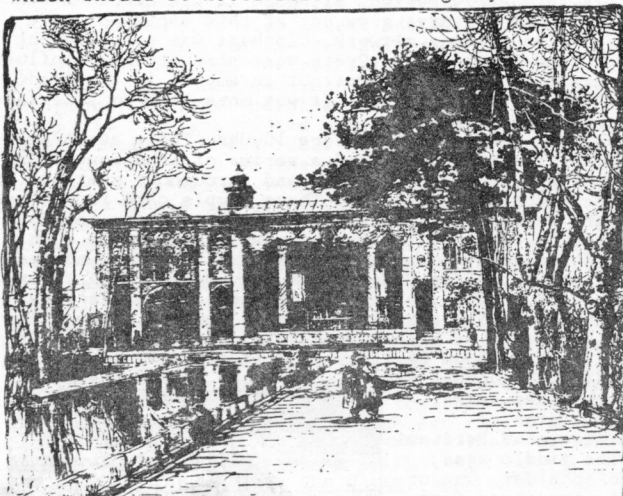
In addition to the Aryan descended Persians who built a great empire in the middle ages, there are two other groups to consider. One of these is the series of Asiatic invasions from the time of Tamerlane to Ghengis Khan and his successors. These warlike, herding nomads made an important impression on all of the areas between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, especially in Central Asia, where they eventually settled. Their effect on the established cultures in these areas was quite different from that which they and earlier barbarians had in Europe. They were an adaptive people, and they took on the religions of the lands which they conquered, and this opened them to the homogenizing effect of Islam, and they were drawn into this larger body, thereby losing some of their beligerence. The result of this was a new infusing of energy and ambition, especially in the Persian and Turkish regions, and a push towards exploration and trade.

The Turks are the last major group in this area, and they arose as the Persian Empire was in decline in the 13th and 14th centuries, expanding out of Asia Minor to eventually control the entire Mediterranean coast from the Straits of Gibraltar to the Dalmatian Coast, essentially everything except Italy and Spain, and they



even held most of Spain and all of southern Italy in the early phases of their expansion, although at their height they had lost these areas. The Turks came out in waves, each one identified by the dominant tribe. They expanded south before going west, pushed along the coast by the formidable Persian Empire which blocked them from Central Asia. They conquered all of Egypt and North Africa as their first major acquisition, moving into Spain and Italy during the 8th and 9th centuries. After this they expanded through the middle-east, and it was not until the 1400s that they made their second major push, conquering the Balkans and Greece. Spain and Italy were both lost by the end of the 15th century, but they continued to hold much of eastern Europe until the end of the 18th century. Turkish empire, under the Ottomans, who eventually became supreme over other tribes, was characterized by cultural diversity, religious unity, and an unusually conservative world-view, which eventually caused them to lag behind European advances. The Turks took the great culture of the peoples they conquered, assimilated it, and never advanced it any farther. This is demonstrated in many areas. For example, in the 16th century the Ottomans had to buy their ships from Venice in order to carry on their conquest of Greece. They were essentially a complacent civilization.

This examination breaks down into two major time-periods for the purpose of a role-playing campaign. There is the ancient period, featuring the Egyptians, Babylonians, and Phoenicians, and the later period, with Turks, Mongols, and Persians. There is some overlap between these two groups, plus interaction with Europe and Asia, but one of these two general time-frames would be most interesting for running a campaign. There are some peculiar specific characteristics of each period which should be noted before starting any kind of a campaign. These show up particularly significantly with such things as religion and science.



The early period is characterized by very diverse and extensive polytheistic religious systems, with highly developed priestly hierarchies. In addition, extensive myth and magical structures accompany this, with a large mystical element. There are magicians, shamans and priests everywhere, and the powers of nature and the heavens can be commanded by those who are learned in the right arts. It is an ambitious period, and magic is another way to gain power in a very complex society. This is particularly true in Egypt and Babylon. The concept of a god-king, like the Egyptian Pharaoh is part of this phenomenon. In this period technology and magic

are virtually interchangeable, and technology was surprisingly advanced. Astrology and Alchemy were well on their way to being exact sciences, and in spite of religious and supernatural trappings, these ancient peoples had a good understanding of the world in which they lived. Particularly noteworthy were their remarkable skills at construction of just about anything. Both the Egyptians and the Babylonians built virtually indestructible monuments and public buildings, and the Phoenicians were master ship-wrights. Art was also highly developed, especially fresco, frieze, and sculpture work. Jewelry and other artefacts were also worked very finely, as part of a high level of skill with the soft metals. It should be remembered finally that this all took place in the bronze age, or at best in the earliest parts of the iron age. Thus, the main metals used were copper, tin, and sometimes lead, plus alloys of these and precious metals. Iron was worked in this period, contrary to some theories, but tempering had not been perfected, so it tended to be very brittle, although some far-superior iron weapons may have existed. Remember that bronze weapons and tools are soft and wear out really quickly.

The first thing to note when moving on to the later period is that technology hasn't really advanced all that much on the average. Persia is well ahead of any earlier group or any contemporary, especially in the areas of practical and navigational astronomy, agriculture, and art. The Mongols have no new technology, with one extremely important exception, the stirrup, which made them a viable cavalry force. The Turks have borrowed technology, and are thus stuck with the cast offs of the Persians and the west. They have preserved the best of past civilizations however, so until the 14th century they are ahead of the west, but they are not advancing. The big differences here are in religion, because in the 7th

century Islam changed the face of middle-eastern culture forever. These cultures are monotheistic, in a form which is remarkably intent and unswerving, save for some sectarianism. In addition, the diverse cultures are united by this religion. Islam also features a large number of moral codes and dictates a particular life-style which alters society. In this period polytheism still exists in many areas, especially among isolated nomads. It also exists in a strong surviving belief in the supernatural and a variety of demons and spirits (djinni), many of which are fitted into mainstream Islam as detailed in the Q'ran. One additional important religious note is the existence and strength of the mystical dualist faith of Zoroastrianism, particularly in Persia. This faith originated in the 2nd or 3rd century BC, and developed into a strong force in the middle-ages. It was based on the concept of two equal deities, a principle of good (Ormuzd) and one of evil (Ahriman). It gained wide popularity, and was supported by most of the noble classes in Persia through the 13th century, and survives to this day.

It is impossible in this little space to give a full picture of the vast diversity of middle-eastern culture. It is a different world from ours. It is a world of great extremes in temperature, mountains and deserts, and of great hardship rewarded by equally great luxury. In many ways the middle-east in these two times is even better suited to adventure than western Europe in the middle-ages, because of the wild and untamed nature of the forces around the society. Not only is nature harsher, but so are the supernatural forces which represent the power of nature. From a brief outline which I have given here, you should be able to go out and learn more, and perhaps have some idea what you are looking for, and what you can achieve for better role-playing in a world of wind and fire.



SUGGESTED SOURCES:

1001 Tales of the Arabian Nights, Sir Richard Burton
Istanbul and the Civilisation of the Ottoman Empire, Bernard Lewis
Shiraz: Persian City of Saints and Poets, Arthur J. Aberry
Thebes in the Time of Amunhotep III, Elizabeth Riefstahl
Baghdad: Metropolis of the Abbasid Caliphate, Seymore Feiler
The Phoenicians, Donald Harden
Middle Eastern Mythology, S. H. Hooke
Babylon, John Oates
History of the Persian Empire, Olmstead, A. T.
The Ancient Near East, W. W. Hallo & W. K. Simpson
The Koran, N. J. Dawood (trans)
Priests & Kings, Harold Peake & Herbert J. Fleure

A MISSION OF INTemperance LEW BRYSON

This issue Lew Bryson is back with a bit of fiction in place of the unusually lazy Tom Curtin. This is a piece based loosely on events in Ysgarth, although it is much more than a mere 'adventure write-up', as it goes into new levels of character interaction. Characters and their creators: Pwyll (L. Bryson), Girithaur (T. Curtin), Gorgar (B. Gryce).

Pwyll was bored. The hot afternoon passed slowly; two mumble-gummed dotards slowly chewing their beers at the bar, and Rolf the tapman lazily polishing the length of oak were the only things moving in the Obsidian Wombat except for the ever-present flies. Pwyll himself had long since forgone motion as a folly reserved for drunkards, fools, and women. He sat loose-jointed in a dark corner of the taproom, soft leather boots crossed at the end of his long legs, a crumpled felt cap pushed down on the bridge of his nose and a long crimson scabbard resting along his left thigh. Wehn he'd snagged this bouncer job at the Wombat, he had a long talk with the priest down at the temple. It had taken a while, but he'd finally convinced him that no one would ever make the connection between Pwyll the World-Walker, aspiring demi-god to wandering warriors, and Old Pwyll One-Eye, the bouncer at the Wombat. Those fellows were always so worried about images.

Images were fine in their place, but Pwyll dealt in reality. No matter how lean he looked, he only kept in shape at his age by daily workouts. A glass of wine, and he'd best get to it. He bent, straightened, and walked up to the bar to get a glass of wine. Rolf set a ceramic mug of the house red in front of him and turned back to washing bottles. Pwyll had bolted half the cup before the taste hit him. "Gyachk!" he spat out word and wine. "Rolf, what is this swill? The must have pressed the vine 'stead of the grapes!" Rolf looked around with a sadistic grin. "Best get used to it old boy. It's the first bit tapped out of a big lot. Hey, where're you goin'?" Pwyll spat again as he went out the door. "Out for a drink. I'll be back later."

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Girithaur Wraithmaster found the Throne of Ra a pain in the ass. He'd been on the rose-quartz edifice for five hours now, receiving the trembling adulation of the masses. When this had started he'd been honored. He figured he'd hit the big time. He was going to be the Sword of Ra, Soldier of the Sun, the Holy Torpedo. Little did he realize that Ra had pulled a fast one on him. In the twisted intricacy of the Egyptian theocracy the priests were at a point where they told gave the gods orders. Ra had only made him a demi-god because he needed a stand in for menial and tedious chores. Now Ra went phoenix hunting and Girithaur sat on his ass.

Trembling adulation! By Geb, they'll tremble, all right! He stood and raised his mangled right arm which ended at the elbow in a thin 2-foot metallic wand, the Hell Lance. He fired the Lance at an open space on the marble floor and watched as the multitudes scattered from the white-hot beam, clawing over each other to escape the Holy Wrath. "The audience is over!" he thundered, laughing as he fired a quick shot after the stragglers and trotted down from the throne. The priests would be pissed. He stripped off his robes, grabbed his sword and leathers, and walked briskly out as the high priest stormed in.

"Most Wonderful Girithaur, what have you done in your infinite yet occasionally misguided wisdom? And where are your magnificent feet(may they never grow bunions!) taking you, Mighty One?"

"Out for a drink. I'll be back later."

Pwyll hit the corner of Gods Street and Fools Alley at the right time to see the sullen Soldier of the Sun stamping down the temple-lined boulevard. "Who trod on your tail, demonlover?" he called. He caught a fierce glare and a twitch of the Hell Lance.

"Don't. Don't mention my ass again. At all. If you do, I'm going to have to pick you up by your scrawny Welsh ankles and make pink gravel out of the befouled Throne of Ra with your pointy Celtic skull! My butt hurts worse than a blaspheming Norseman in the lowest pit of an Abyssinian hell! That damnable throne. C'mon, let's go down to the Wombat and get a drink. Standing up."

Pwyll grimaced at the memory of his recent disappointment. "No. That bastard Walt bought a lot of wine that tastes like it was pressed from goblin gonads. We should go find some real wine."

"Great. Where do you want to go? Wanna check out that Greek place, La Zeus?"

"No, I'm not partial to being served by Zombies." Pwyll leaned against a convenient wall and thought a bit. "How do you feel about a short trip? My job'll hold for a few days. Can you go without being adored for a while?"

"I think I can manage. What do you have in mind?" Girithaur had perked up considerably.

"Well, there's a guy's got a castle a day's hard ride north of the city that Walt's always blathering about. Said that if he had half this guy's cellar he'd be able to retire in a year. Real primo vino. I thought we could take a quick run up there and see if we could nick a few sips from under his nose. Don't know what the fellows down at the temple would say—"

"The temple can be damned to the Outer Wastes! Let's get horses and go! C'mon!" Girithaur grabbed Pwyll's sleeve and hauled him effortlessly to his feet. The semi-hemi-demi-god grinned and followed the purposeful stride of the off-course Holy Torpedo.

They stopped in at Anzar's Amazing Magical Nick-Nacks and Gegaws for some supplies. Girithaur went up to the counter to negotiate for some flasks of holding and a portable hole, while Pwyll browsed the aisles. He picked up a few interesting looking items, paid for them, and went over to where Girithaur was haggling. "You want 70,000 for a lousy 100ft hole? You've been in the workshop too long, hogspawn! 20,000 perhaps, and at that I'm inflating your profits." The wizened old enchanter waved his arms theatrically, beat his breast, tore his hair, and animated bits of Girithaur's armor, and went down to 55,000. The Hand of Ra replied by stamping his feet, hacking a largish gouge in the counter, and suggesting 30,000. At last they settled on 41,000 for the hole, the flasks and some special ropes. Girithaur pocketed the hole, turned from the counter, and saw Pwyll collecting some silver from an obviously disappointed apprentice.

"What was that action?" he asked Pwyll when they had left the shop. "Nothing really, just a little wager that you'd get the old boy down below 45,000. The apprentice was pretty surprised." Pwyll smiled again and tossed over a purse. "That's your cut, master merchant."

They acquired horses much less dramatically and took the high road north out of Ptolemeias. Pwyll whistled a quick-paced lancer's tune and basked in the afternoon sun. Girithaur kept to his right and slightly ahead. The gently rolling farmland sloped gradually down to the Artanos River, a mile or so ahead. They rounded a bend and started down a long stretch leading to Geinfors Ford. Something glinted by the water in the slanting sunbeams. Pwyll's left eye, an implanted gem, whirled in its socket and focused on the glint, identifying it as a mounted knight.

"Math's bunions. Girithaur, some tin-man is playing social climber at the ford. In full plate, the asshole—Yow!" Flame splashed in front of his horse. Girithaur

lowered the Hell Lance and grinned malevolently. "I told you not to mention that word again. Look, what's this fuss? We'll blow the shit out of him and keep rollin'. No problem." He flicked his horse into a faster walk.

"Hey, no! Waita minute! I've got a better idea. Wouldn't you rather humiliate him? Ruin his rep? Death by demi-god might raise his status. I've got an idea. Lis-ten..." Pwyll outlined his thought, bringing a wicked laugh from Ra's Favorite.

They approached the ford, and as Pwyll had said, a knight in full plate awaited them. Girithaur recognized the shield. "It's a cadet branch of a family noted mostly for their achievements as root farmers. Probably considers himself to be the prime of his line. Too bad." he chortled.

"Who art thou, knights, who wouldst cross this ford against me? For so it must be, that thou must contest at arms before you gain the other bank of yon swift flood." The knight wore a confidently quizzical look on his rather lumpy face.

"What a screamer," muttered Pwyll. He cleared his throat. "Bold sir knight, we are chivalrous types, like unto yourself, but sworn to direst secrecy about our identities by our gods as penance for an unfortunate transgression. Right gladly shall we contest with you in glorious feats of arms, but we have no lances, as a part of our penance. However, seeing that I wear but light chain and my companion only leathers, surely you will allow both of us to contest with mere blades? A doughty knight of your prowess and arms should find us but little challenge." He suppressed a grin as Girithaur snickered.

"The two of you? At once? I shall deem myself fortunate to have fought you indeed! But sirs, permit one question. Will you fight on or off mount?" He squinted as he asked, lumping his face up more.

"Oh, on horse, we are allowed some honor," Pwyll blythely assured him. "Come then, have at you, sir!" They spurred their horses into a quick gallop, riding in parallel. The knight urged his horse into a lumbering gate. They rode towards each other, and when about 40 feet separated them Pwyll called out "NOW!" Girithaur threw a coiled rope to him from where it was anchored to his saddle, and veered to the right. Pwyll caught the rope, twisted it tight around his saddle-horn, and angled off to the left. The rope stretched taut and caught the knight just above his navel, and there was a series of very satisfying sounds, starting with an explosive "UNNNH!" from the knight, and ending as the last echoes of his crash to the earth died away.

"HAHA! What a nit! Thud! Flat on the ground! HOHO!" Girithaur was having a hard time staying on his horse. Pwyll dismounted to bow mockingly over the body.

"Get down, fella, before you fall. We might as well camp here tonight. The fun isn't over yet. How sharp is your control of that firestick?" Pwyll looked speculatively at the Hell Lance.

Girithaur dismounted. "Pretty close. Why? Do you think we should autograph this masterpiece?" He kicked the unconscious body and laughed. "Sign our names on his codpiece and load him on his horse!"

"No, he's perturbed me too much for that. 'Wilt thou contest thyself with me in the celebrated contest of contesting arms, ere thou shalt undertake to ford yon swift and noble current?' Why do Lloegrans have to talk so much?" he fumed in exasperation.

"Yea, verily. You speak it pretty well yourself. Did you used to play that racket?"

"A while back, yeah. I grew out of it." Pwyll glared at the body. Then he brightened. "Well, of course, he seems to enjoy this armor game. I think we should

keep him in it. Here, take that tickler of your and spotweld his joints." The Hell Lance spat and flared, and some curious birds were treated to the sight of two giggling demi-gods welding a knight into his armor.

The knight came too as they made their dinner and howled all sorts of horrible threats and accusations until Girithaur began to lay bood on his breastplate. "Now just a minute, you unchivalrous wretch, what are you doing?"

"I'm building tonight's watchfire. Do you want me to light it, or are you going to shut that foul trap of yours? Girithaur opened the knight's visor and peered in quite blandly, obviously ambivalent. The knight lapsed into silence.

As Girithaur was dropping off to sleep, Pwyll spotted a figure on horseback fording the river. As the man splashed up the bank, Pwyll was there to meet him. The visitor was in worn but colorful clothing, a nice clash of reds, greens, and violets, and he rode a patient horse laden with bags and small coffers. Pwyll stepped out from the



small copse where he had bivouaced and hailed the man. "Good e'en to you, sir. How is the fording?"

The man started, then spotted Pwyll. "What's that, what's that? Great Odin, boy, you put a scare into me! Scare, that is. What do you wanna go 'round jumpin' outta woods like that for, boy? Scares people outta their wits, it does, wits, I say!" The man drew a large white cloth from his pocket and made a great show of blotting his brow. "Say, boy, you camped here? I'd be much obliged to you to have a seat at your fire."

"Yes, we're camped back at that fire," Pwyll pointed, smiling broadly. "You're welcome to join us, Master...?"

"Gorgar, Gorgar, that's me, Gorgar! Gee and OR, Gee and AR, that's the stuff. You can spell can'tcha, boy? So many folks can't these days, y'know...Yep, Gorgar, Gorgar the Enchanter, that's me, boy! I'm an enchanter! That's a magician, son, y'know, casts spells, spells, that is. Here, son, watch this now, watch that rock there..." he mumbled and made some passes. A rock at Pwyll's feet sprouted legs and began running around. "Pretty good, huh, boy? J'ever see anythin' like it? That's magic, son, magic! Say, boy, what's wrong?" The mage peered down at Pwyll, who had collapsed on the ground, making sure his ribs weren't laughed off.

Girithaur appeared in a woolen singlet. "You sneaky Welsh bastard, drunk on watch isn't bad enough, but you wouldn't give me any. What's so blasphemously hilarious?"

The helpless Pwyll uncurled long enough to point at the enchanter and cough out, "He, he, he—haha, he calls me boy, ha ha ha! Me! Ho, haha, me, that is! Girithaur looked down pityingly at the greying fighter.

"What's wrong with 'im?" Gorgar asked.

Girithaur showed his teeth in a dark grin. "Leeks. They curdle the mind and rot the senses. Stay away from them, fella, it's a fact." He stumped back to the fire.

After that it was so quiet that they decided to forego keeping a watch. Gorgar gave them all laughing fits by animating parts of the knight's armor. They finally burnt "Drink at Walt's Wombat" on his breastplate and pointed him in the direction of Ptolemeias, to the loud, violent, and totally ineffectual protests of the knight.

They explained their mission of intemperance to Gorgar, omitting their identities. When apprised of their proclivities, he declared that he would be proud and delighted to join them, but submitted that they were approaching the problem all wrong. "Why you boys ought to open a bar! A saloon, that is. Sure, why, you could run it the way you wanted, serve what and who you wanted, where, I say, where you wanted, why, sure!" With this surprising profundity in their dreams, they slipped off to sleep.

Pwyll dreamed of dragons in caves, soaring castle turrets, and a massive volcano. As the volcano erupted, he lost his grip on the fabric of sleep, and, slowly, he opened his eyes. He saw a shabbily dressed Ork bearing a cheaply-made short sword groping around in his bags. "Hey, you sonuvabitch! Get the Hell away from there!" The Ork snapped upright and whirled around, pigeyes wide with fear and surprise. Pwyll rolled, sprang up, and kicked a slowly stirring Girithaur. "Get up, useless!" The Ork turned and ran, clutching a loaf of old bread. Pwyll dropped to

one knee, raised his hand and loosed a small fireball at the Ork, missing by inches. "Damn! Wing him, Gir!"

Girithaur rolled to his side, yawned, and levelled the Hell Lance at the fleeing Ork. The morning air was split by a white-hot tongue of ravening flame, which blew off most of the Ork's right chest. He spun around and dropped heavily to the ground.

"Nice work, pal! 'Wing him,' I say, and you blow him in half! I'd hate to be your whore!" Pwyll ran to the body. The Ork was hanging onto life. He slapped the hideous face and got his attention. "How many of you are there? Tell me!"

"Never...won't..."

"Tell me, dammit!" Pwyll raged in the Ork's face, and caught a gob of spit on the cheek. He reached down, grabbed the Ork's left ear, and ripped it off. The creature shrieked, wide-eyed. Pwyll slapped him again. "How many? Tell me! Or it's the other ear!"

"No, won't—EEEEYAAAAHHHHHHYAAAAHHH!" and the other ear went flying into a bush. Pwyll began to strip off the Ork's loincloth. "Gir! Bring me a burning branch!"

"Three!" the Ork screamed. "Three of us, three—" Pwyll, taken by mercy, slit his throat. "Girithaur! Forget the branch,



*Pwyll and the son-
of-a-bitch Ork:
Having once again,
Gina Does Not Pay*

come here."

Ra's right hand walked over. "How many? Three? You want 'em, or should I get 'em? He slid his sword from its sheath and swung it slowly through the air.

"No, no. Better idea. Be quiet a second, we'll try to hear the little buggers." He held up his hand, and the two listened. Pwyll reached out, listening for sound or mental activity. He caught a confused thought. "Girithaur, they're over there. I'm going to start yelling. When I signal, you heave that carcass in their direction. OK?" On his nod, Pwyll began bellowing.

"Ears! I'VE GOT TO HAVE EARS!!" He motioned to Girithaur, who smoothly heaved the body over the trees about 50 yards. "MORE EARS!! ARRARRAAARR! GOT TO HAVE MORE EARS!!" He fell silent suddenly, and they heard crashing brush where the Orks had been.

The Sun's Sword on Earth cracked a big smile. "Style, Welshman, style. I like it." They walked laughing back to the still sleeping Gorgar.

THE MYTH OF THE SAVING THROW

KEN ROLSTON

Ken Rolston should be familiar to many of you from his numerous and detailed articles in other magazines, particularly Different Worlds. He is one of the most prolific of the rising names in gaming, and brings enlightenment to us on the matter of saving throws...

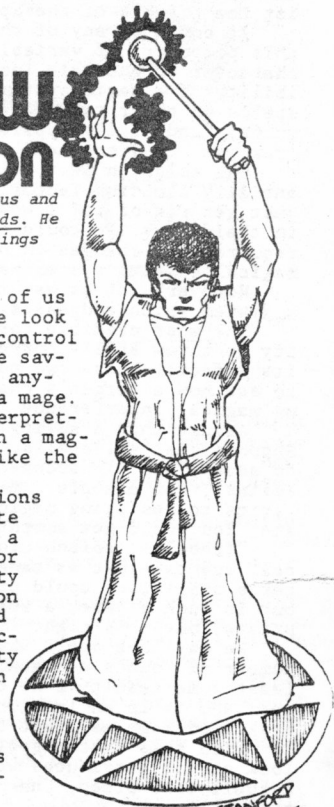
The saving throw has been around so long that most of us seem to take it for granted, like gravity and taxes. We look at it as the only thing which keeps mages from taking control of the universe. The classic argument in support of the saving throw is that it maintains game balance by letting anyone compete effectively against the awesome powers of a mage. The problem here is that it is often thoughtlessly interpreted as the sole factor which lets a fighter compete with a magic user. Indeed, in the original D&D rules it seemed like the only limiting factor on magical power.

Actually, there are several specific design provisions in D&D and some popular variants which limit power quite well. First there is the limit in the number of spells a magic user can cast in one day—particularly serious for lower level characters. Second, there is the possibility of spoiling a spell by breaking the mage's concentration through injuring him, causing him to lose the spell and its benefits. Finally there is the frailty of the magic-user himself, who usually has less than half the ability to take hits of a fighter. At low level a mage can even be wiped out with a single swat.

Many gamers have also added common variants to do even more to limit magic. One method is to limit spell use through a spell-point system, by which the mage has to 'power' his spells from a depleting reservoir of magical energy. Another system is the 'fumble' system, in which there is a chance that a spell will either do nothing at all, work only partially, or have a wildly different effect from what is intended. There is a specific variety of this called 'spell targeting', by which when he misses his specified target, the mage hits a friend or other target instead. Another limitation is to set a certain amount of time for preparing the spell, which may vary from the relatively short times given in the standard D&D rules, to more extensive alternate systems. There is another limitation which is rarely employed—the spell or device which protects against magic. This might be a popular item and subject for research in a society where magix is serious threat to any adventurer. The concept of talismans against magic is pervasive in real world ideas of magic. Such items might be as simple as protections against the effects of a single specific spell, yet if it were a common combat spell, like D&D's Sleep, Magic Missile, or Fireball, it could provide a real means of evening up the stakes between a mage and a foot-slogging mercenary.

So, on quick reflection, it is clear that the saving throw is not the only way to make the warrior competitive with the mage. It is not a supporting part of game structure. It is odd that it persists in many new game designs and variants lovingly designed with a dedication to credible and logical systems. It is even part of Ysgarth, which includes almost all of the other limiting factors mentioned.

What is wrong with saving rolls and why shouldn't they be used? The major flaw is a lack of a rational reason for their use. Does the saving throw represent a



concise and playable abstraction of those limiting factors we have discussed, permitting a single roll to cover a broad range of possible problems for the mage?

Just what does the saving throw represent? Does it reflect inaccurate targeting? Why then are there different effects of two characters equally within the area of the spell's effects? In the case of a fireball, for example, were there variations in local temperatures and densities? Why are the effects all, half, or nothing? Certainly a wider range should be possible. Why do all spells seem to be more or less the same in the results of saves? They vary so much in nature that effects should also vary widely—in fact, we might expect a broader range of ways a spell could go wrong than ways it could go right. The protection of a god could be a factor, but they don't seem to be related to piety or holy favor in any clear way. Could the spell have been badly thrown? It is plain luck? If so, why does it apply only to spells and only certain spells? Finally, might it be some feature of the character himself, some feature of his nature or abilities that lets him resist the effects of the spell?

It could be any of these, a combination, or something else altogether. With this potpourri of variables it is difficult to pick out just what aspects of a character enhance his luck against magic. It would be a great benefit to the credibility of a magic system if it could intelligently account for the effects of spells on their targets; ideally, however, it should be as simple as possible—quickly and easily applied and resolved, so as not to sacrifice playability for 'realism' or atmosphere.

One solution is to eliminate the saving throw altogether. As it is not an essentially limiting factor on magic, and causes interpretational problems, why not just get rid of it? I would encourage this for those who are not irrevocably set in their ways. It could certainly be worth experimenting with. Such a change may require some changes in playing style, but the benefits of a more self-consistent magical effects system may outbalance the insecurity of abandoning this tradition.

However, let us assume there is a reason to keep the saving throw and work on a system which addresses a few of these problems.

The most credible forms of saving throw explanations involve the mage's ability to throw spells correctly or the natural ability of the character to resist its effects. These two possibilities should be handled separately, as it is hard to see how a target's characteristics could change the mage's competence. Physical or magical interference is handled by existing rules not related to saving throws.

Assume that a saving throw based on a player's characteristics is desirable. Suppose that all spells, once successfully thrown, take effect immediately, with no save. Then, in succeeding rounds, any spell that has a duration may be saved against. For example, if Constitution and Intelligence are the relevant characteristics to resisting magic than a roll under their sum on 1D100 might be appropriate. You would get another save every few rounds to escape the effects.

Fireballs, poison clouds, blinding flashes, and so forth, seem to me to be real events—just as tangible as being struck by a bus. I don't see how a character's statistics could prevent these events. I suppose dodging is a possibility, but in such a case, a spell targeting system or dodging rule might be more appropriate, but this might imply the possibility of dodging normal missile attacks.

We may have spell saves that yield a broad range of results, depending on the number of rounds a character fails to resist a spell, yet the mage is assured at least some result if he throws the spell properly. We must not forget the magic user who is in an insecure position with so much dependent on chance. The fate of a skilled mage may rest too often on the luck of the dice.

With this system spells with a psychological effect can be resisted. From a look at his attributes we can picture the heroic character momentarily delayed by a spell like Sleep, Charm, Hold Person, or Fear, but slowly able to shake off the effects.

Making such a sharp distinction between one-round 'event' spells and multi-round, 'psychological' spells is only one way of looking at magic. Even if all spells are thought of as psychological effects, and therefore some kind of illusion, it is clear that the surprise and shock of the attack deserves to function for at least one round before the character is entitled to a save. For example, let's say Ugruk, with 15 hit points left, is hit with a 20 point phantasmal fireball. He didn't die, but he doesn't know that—he didn't have the time to consider it. Now that he's unconscious with shock, he will continue to believe he's dead until someone rouses him and proves otherwise. However, if he had more hit points and could stay conscious, he might discover that he hasn't been hurt, just scared. In each successive round the might get another percentage roll to disbelieve.

Here are the specific positive features of such a system:

- 1/ The save may be rationally related to any of a number of specific characteristics. This can make the system as simple or complex as you choose, depending on what you think is relevant. I personally recommend one generally applied rule with adjustment for circumstances and other factors.
- 2/ A magic user can count on at least one round of results on his target, regardless of the target's abilities.
- 3/ Such a system emphasizes the factor of shock and surprise that must attend magical attack. Only rarely could you anticipate the exact spell that was about to be thrown, and even then you'd have almost no time to react.

4/ High level characters in open-ended systems would no longer get nearly automatic saves against magic. Since a character's stats don't grow very much, if at all, at least in most systems, a saving throw will rarely exceed 50%. On the other hand, even a nondescript low-leveller will still have a 15-20% chance of lucking out.

5/ Such a system requires a comprehensive philosophy of the nature of magic. Is magic real or psychological, or a mixture of both? D&D is particularly haphazard in this area.

6/ A wider range of potential effects is generated than with the 'all or nothing' system of saves. You never know when a victim will shake off the effects of a spell. I would like a system that could consider partial saves on a sliding scale—for example, there might be varying degrees of effectiveness of a given Hold Person: a victim might be stunned, slowed, confused, or nearly paralyzed, as a function of how well he made his save roll—such a system would necessarily be a bit of work.

Of course, there are some questions which need to be answered before such a system can be implemented:

1/ Since area damage spells always work, they may be unduly deadly. It might be advisable to lower total possible damage from such spells by 50%, which would achieve the same basic function as the save, but distributed more equally. There is already adequate provision for varying amounts of damage per individual use of the spell.

2/ To use this system, one would have to categorize all spells as to whether they are physical effect, psychological effect, or a bit of both. I can see where some divisions might engender some controversy—something many of us don't have time for.

3/ Are all attack spells reducible to physical or psychological effects? For example, what if a mage polymorphs you into a slug. There is usually some notion of physical change here, but I can imagine a character slowly working his will against a spell and breaking it, returning to his original form. The question is: does the character fight the spell with his former characteristics or with those of a slug? Here you might want to add some concept of a soul that is independent of the mind, that a player might retain his essence, even though in another form.

4/ Ought saves be limited to attack spells? For example, perhaps a character should be permitted a save against an opponent's invisibility.

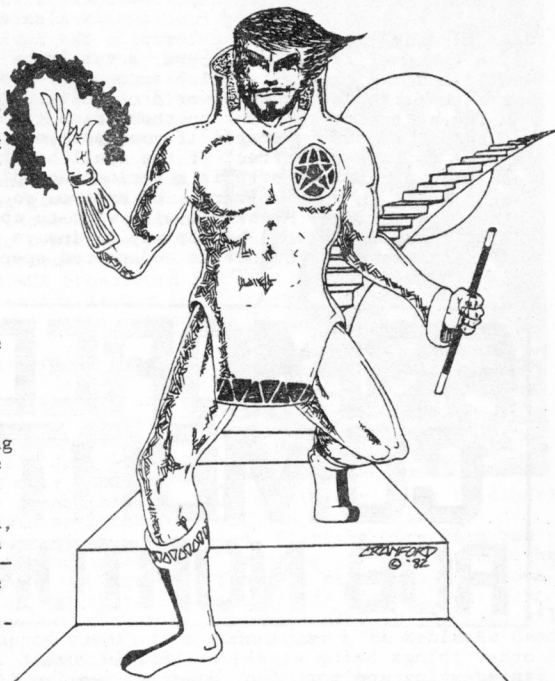
5/ What should the specific parameters of the save be? $IQ + Constitution$ as a percentage? Just IQ? Perhaps levels should figure in? I believe that this should be left to the GM. Ideally he should be able to adapt the save to the individual spell and situation. For example, a Berserker might be particularly resistant to psychological effects, for which the GM could adapt the save. A system along these lines already exists in Tunnels and Trolls.

We have not defined a complete system of saving throws. There must be some notion of the mage's competence, a range of effects, and adjustments for the specific situation and type of spell.

One magic system which employs many of these ideas is DragonQuest, the game from SPI. It provides a playable and fairly well-rationalized set of rules for magic. I recommend it to the interested reader. However, I am not suggesting that everyone abandon their favorite game for DragonQuest, although it is an excellent system. Many of us have too much of an investment of time and effort in our campaigns to change systems, and few players welcome wholesale rule changes.

Ysgarth also covers many of these points, but in a rather more complicated and detailed way. Again, it is worth looking at, but problems of conversion might be even greater here.

What I suggest is that we all examine the saving throw rules we use currently. How can we make them more intelligently related to the effects that they are supposed to produce? What objective are they intended to achieve? How well do they attain that objective? Are they really necessary for game balance, or are they simply a sacrosanct tradition?



Is there some way to adapt the current saving throw system we are using so that the rationale for its function is clearer? Are there sufficient limits on the mage already? Can we just get rid of the saving throw? Would a reasonable alternative system, like the one above, actually be an asset in creating a pattern of spells and magic effects which encourages and reinforces our 'sense of wonder'—our entry into the fantasy world of perilous wizards and durable heroes?

The next time you pick up those dice to make a saving throw for your axe-wielding barbarian, ask yourself if you deserve the chance to luck out? Does that mage deserve to lose the effect of the spell he studied so hard to learn, becoming so weak that a mosquito bite is a serious wound? Is there any rhyme or reason to the use of magic in your universe, or are you so inured to illogic that it doesn't bother you anymore? Maybe you will want to spend some time with your players and see if there isn't some better way to insure that the clods with the plate armor and chainsaws don't become an endangered species.

**ARMORED
COMBAT
ROB NORTON**



Realism is a value that most gamers honor. All other things being equal, realism in combat is more interesting and more fun. However, realism is often sacrificed in the interest of playability. The desire for additional realism has spawned myriad new rules, tables, and systems. Sadly, the effect of many of these is to slow play down to the point at which 5 rounds of melee takes an hour. The effect is not only less enjoyment but also a loss of realism in the feel of the pace of combat.

Over the labor day weekend, at the Society for Creative Anachronism's 'Known World Challenge', at a beachside park near Santa Brbara, I got the benefits of some 'real' realism. To actually put on body armor, take up sword and shield, and go forth into battle was eye-opening. FRPG rules often do a good job of representing melee combat, but there are glaring weaknesses that can be resolved by more and more rules (no thanks) or good sense based on some actual experience. I'd like to share some thoughts and observations, but you can learn more from direct experience yourself.

ARMOR: Body armor is uncomfortable. The covering itself and any padding serve as a wonderful insulator. World War II soldiers had to be threatened with a fine just to keep them wearing their helmets. Warriors throughout history did without the protection, preferring comfort and coolness. Even today, police who have access to bullet-proof vests do without to avoid discomfort. No one in his right mind sleeps in armor. Those who do should wake up with skin rashes, muscle cramps, and worse. Wearing plate in a warm climate is the next best thing to being in hell.

HELMETS: Head protection is a wonderful thing, and I for some would never enter combat without it. However, helmets seriously restrict both vision and hearing. An attack from behind is almost a total surprise, side attacks often surprise, and a helmeted fighter backing up will almost certainly find something to trip over. The traditional +2 for rear attacks doesn't do enough to represent the advantage of an attack from the rear, and flank attacks should also get a bonus. A fallen fighter should also not be able to jump up like a gymnast.

SHIELDS: Shield size can really make a difference. A large heater shield or a kite can literally be hid behind. With a sword to help block, a fighter can cut off virtually every forward attack angle. However, trying to attack while carrying a large shield is more trying than successful. The shield that gets in your opponent's way can hinder you too. A smaller shield interferes less, but also requires more skill and covers less. By the way, the gain of only one AC for not using a shield in D&D is very unrealistic. There is a lot more difference between shield and no shield than between chainmail and plate armor.

POLE ARMS: Before there were cannons there was cannon fodder, the poor blokes on the shield wall. Usual SCA tactics are to put pole arms in a second rank behind the shield line and thrust over it into the enemy. It works very well. The polemen are almost impossible to get to until the shield wall is broken down. One SCA fighting-GM I know manifests his sadistic tendencies by sending pole-backed shield walls down dungeon corridors.

REACH: In an open field, in one-on-one combat, only those who are tired of living give their foe the advantage of a longer weapon. However, in confined quarters, shorter weapons do avoid the problem of striking walls, ceilings, friends, etc. I literally cannot practice with my SCA broadsword in my living room, because my 10ft ceiling is too low. It may not be physically possible to use a 2-handed sword in most dungeon corridors.

ARROWS: Arrows are surprisingly easy to block. I don't know about heavy crossbow bolts or a long shot from an English Longbow, but the short and light missile weapons are not really the threat they are in most games. Unless otherwise engaged, a man with a shield can block missiles all day. Experienced SCA missile-defenders can not only block arrows but often hit them hard enough to break them (eat your hearts out, kung fu studs). Obviously a 10 pound shield will win most contests with an 8 ounce arrow.

MULTIPLE OPPONENTS: Unless you are very, very good, fighting more than one opponent makes you a very poor insurance risk. Even assuming you can see all the jokers out of your helm, and assuming you are terrific, you still only have one sword and one shield to block with. The third opponent is the big problem. Ever notice how, in the swashbuckler movies, the other opponents stop as the hero kills one of them? If they kept on going, as they do in a real fight, he would be dead very fast as he tries to pull his weapon from the body.

DISARMING/DISLEGGING: Hits to the arms and legs, denying the victim the use of that limb, are very common in armored combat. Fighting off-handed, without the usual shield, or from one's knees is seriously underrepresented in most games.

Finally, players often have their characters do things that an authentic persona would never even consider. Since FRPGs need more rules like Beirut needs more cluster bombs, what is really needed is thoughtful good sense, and not just from the GM. People whose characters do things like sleeping in body armor deserve the unrealistic game that is the inevitable result.



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YOU ASKED FOR IT... MORT MUNCHKIN

In our ongoing efforts to please every segment of our readership we introduce a new feature this issue, sprung from the unfathomable imagination of that famous folk figure, Mort Munchkin, who is truly inspired by the same muse who brought us *Snits Revenge*, 'Tenser's Floating Disk', and the entire world of endless dungeon mazes and random encounters.

Hi, I'm Mort, and I've got some really great ideas of things you can put into your dungeons to make them as exciting as mine (It has 32 levels, 85000 monsters, and over 30000000GP in treasure!). In this and future issues I plan to give out all sorts of suggestions for adventurous delvers, like special weapons for Hobbit Thieves, my new self creating dungeon with random room generation, secret Kobold rune languages, the Deity (Non)Player Character Class, and the history and culture of Shambling Mounds. But for this issue I'd just like to tell about some spells and magic items which have provided hours of fun for my players, plus give some dungeoneer ideas.

SPELL: Figby's Groping Paw (Divination-Excitation)

Level: 6 Components: S & M
 Range: 1"/Level Casting Time: 6 Segments
 Duration: 1 round/level Saving Throw: None
 Area of Effect: 2ft Radius

Explanation/Description: Figby's Groping Paw is a superior version of Figby's Fondling Fingers, being like it in many ways. The Groping Paw can actually locate and stimulate mammary tissue of up to 40 inches in girth, or unfasten buttons as a double dexterity Fondling Fingers. The material component is a rubber glove.

ARTIFACT: Lumbert's Pointless Whatzit

Perhaps this strange device was built by gods better forgotten and lay about a really long time until someone found it, for it is pretty rusty, and won't fit out of my basement door. The Whatzit has a shelf where my cat had kittens, but in the time since then we had to push it away from the washing machine. It is dark down there, but I think it has about 17 dials, 13 knobs, a lever, 7 broken diodes, a bunch of loose wires, a set of rabbit-ears, a long cable-TV hook-up, a CRT, two Leyden Jars and a Van de Graf generator. There is also something that looks like an old VW engine on the top, plus a condenser from a 58 Norge. Fiddling with the controls is not possible until the rust is scraped off, and then results in any of a number of clankings, whirrings, creakings, and sidewise shufflings. If you kick it, it will print out your horoscope for June 6, 1971. It smells a little like peppermint, and lists to the left. If a human sacrifice is made it will cook a frozen dinner, drink some beer, and fall asleep watching M.A.S.H. reruns.

A NEW IDEA FOR DUNGEON DESIGNING

One time, when the characters are just tooling around the dungeon listening at doors, killing orcs, eating their rations, or dividing up treasure, why don't you have them come on a strange room full of people huddled around a table with little figures on it, talking in hushed tones in a strange language, while one of them looks through a book and describes things. They could even be rolling bright-colored gems across the table. Then, after they've leapt in and sliced up the odd monsters who will only defend themselves with little sharp sticks, you can rip up their characters, step on their miniatures, tell them they're all dead, and throw them out of your house.

REVIEW: DUNGEON MODULE B-3

I was reading along in this really stimulating dungeon for the first time, but before I could get very far my door burst in, and a guy in a big white suit came in, knocked it out of my hand, and burnt it up with a flame-thrower. Ever since then I've been waking up in the middle of the night, I'm losing my vision, and I think there's hair growing on my palms, so I'd better not really do this review.

PLANT DEITIES

Guess what. There's something missing from Deities & Demigods. All those regular gods are OK, but players should be able to thin them out in a few sessions. One area I've filled in is Plant Deities, gods for all of our vegetable buddies, trees, shrubs, weeds, and flowers. The Plantdon is led by Te'aichse, Lord of Magical Herbs. Prostud, Lord of the Bushes, Dandlon, Evil Queen of Weeds, and Woudie of the Great Trees. Use your imagination. After all, plants are people too, and certainly deserve someone to worship as much as Kobolds, Green Slime, and Beetles.

For some time *Abyss* has been featuring articles on various aspects of pagan and pantheistic religion, looking in detail at myths and sources, both obscure and well known, to the end of broadening religious perspectives in FRP campaigns. With this article we're taking a new approach on a more theoretical level, so that those game players who really want to work with religion will have a grasp of the basic principles of comparative and theoretical mythology.

Myths and deities vary widely from place to place and time to time, even within the indo-european tradition. However, there are certain essential figures and elements which can be abstracted from a comparison of major myths and trends. We could call these abstracted figures 'generic deities', but I prefer the term 'archetypes', as they are the essence of ideas which are represented in many variant forms. Described here are some of the major examples of these archetypes.

THE FISHER KING

This is perhaps the most famous of the mythological archetypes, as it is extensively discussed in several major works. This is the character of the wounded god-king, a ruler strongly linked with magical overtones. Traditionally this figure is of great authority and nobility, but flawed, this flaw usually represented as a wound which will not be healed. Associated with this is an ability to heal others or to work magic. He is often wise but imperceptive. Some of the greatest examples of this figure are Math, Odin, Arthur, Jesus, and Baldr, representing a cross-section of western myth. Often connected to this myth are symbols of the spear, the throne, the holy stone(or chalice), and other representations of royal power. This role is often mixed with the foll owing one.



THE HUNTSMAN

Some of the most striking parallels are found with this figure. The huntsman partakes of the nature of a god of war and death, but also of uncontrolled and wild nature. In many tales he leads spectral hunters across the heavens, or seeks out the souls of the sinful, or even collects the valiant after they fall in battle. In most cases he is seen as a male god, but in some cases(Diana, the Valkyries) he may be connected with specific female deities. More than half of the examples of this deity may be considered cognate with the Horned God or Goddess mentioned later, a key to the connected attributes of lunar associations and connections to madness and irrationality or fate. Major examples of this include Gwyn, Finn, Huon, Heimdallr, and even Horus. The first three of these are particularly important, because they share so many multiple parallels. Not only are their stories very similar, but their attributes match on several levels, including being sons of sky-god types the possession of hounds and horns, and even more significantly, the similarity of the three names, suggesting a common early Celtic source. Later stories like that of Huon are debased by christianization, but the clear elements are there, if masked. Major attributes here include the hunting horn, hounds, and a role as ruler of the fairy kingdom and the powers of the supernatural wilds and nature magic. The stag and horn are common symbols for this deity.

THE TRIUNE GODDESS

This is another common archetype, one of the more important, but less obvious female ones. It is of a group of three goddesses, usually associated with fate, vengeance, judgement, destruction, magic, or doom. Some major examples are the Y Mamau, Morrighu, Norns, Fates, Furies, and also Hecate, who is often depicted as having three aspects. Symbols of these deities vary, but they are almost always seen as implacable and incomprehensible.

THE REBORN GOD

This idea can be seen in many myths, especially ones associated with the cyclic seasons, as this is essentially a deity of the conversion from winter to spring, dying with the coming of cold and being reborn with the arrival of spring. He is also often associated

with light and the new sun, and sometimes also connected with the Lunar Goddess. Specific examples of this deity are Mithras, Attis, Dionysius, Jesus, and Baldr, all of whom are attributed with resurrection myths. The same figure also surfaces in Celtic myth, through Belenus, who is represented as the Green Knight in the romantic tale of Gawain. This god is often seen as being slain violently, and his blood and burial place have mystical significance.

THE HORNED GOD/GODDESS

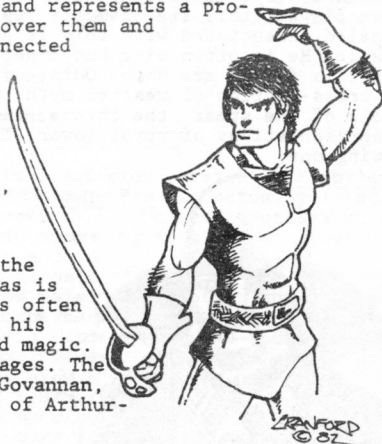
This is a lunar deity, just as the Reborn God is a solar deity. This god is often connected with the woods and wild animals, and can be either male or female, or sometimes both. There are some shared elements shared here with the Huntsman image. Often the male version has stag horns, while the female version usually has horns like a crescent-moon halo. There are also bestial associations in some of the manifestations. Some prime examples are Pan, Njord, Gwyn, Cernunnos, Dionysius, Satan, Cybele, Ishtar, Isis, Diana, and Nerthus. Naturally, from the moon connection with insanity, the tides, and the female cycle. This deity often has power to twist man's mind and create illusion.

THE ALL-SEEING

This deity is also seen as the Sky Father, and represents a progenitor deity, father of the gods, who watches over them and knows all. Sometimes this archetype becomes connected to the Fisher King, and even in the case of the Babylonian deity Sin, to the Horned God. This deity has the powers of knowledge and awareness, being the embodiment of wisdom and disdain for the material world. He is above the things of this earth. Good examples of the All-Seeing are Nudd, Ludd, Ogmios, Coel, Uranos, and Odin.

THE SMITH

This is a familiar common deity, embodying the principles of craft, skill, and manufacturing, as is shown in many myths from a range of areas. He is often depicted as blind to human nature, wrapped up in his craft, which rests somewhere between science and magic. He is often also associated with Fisher King images. The best examples of this deity are Vidar, Whelan, Govannan, Soibhne, Haephestos, Vulcan, and perhaps Merlin of Arthurian legend.



THE DEPTHS

One of the common archetypes is not so much of a specific deity, but of a type or breed of deities common in several myth groups, the deities of the underwater world of the deeps. Primitive man feared the waters, because they could not be controlled, and could swallow a man without warning. As a result, a tradition of sea-depth gods of evil, death, and darkness grew up. Main examples of this are Tiamat, the Fomori, Hella, Dagon, and Proteus. Powers often relate to illusion and the ability to alter form and semblance.

THE UNKNOWNABLE

This concept of a deity is represented a few times in more advanced mythological systems, but comes up frequently in literature, so is worth noting. It is the archetype of a deity of the inconceivable powers beyond nature and supernature, the inexorable forces of the void and universal law. Examples are Ptah or Kronos from mythology, or numerous others from literature, such as Lovecraft's pantheon, or Moorcock's Lords of Chaos.

These are only some of the common myth archetypes, and they are not all the most common. For example, we have passed over those already exhausted, like the Earth Mother. These examples show the common threads which run through mythology as one way for man to represent and come to terms with his universe. You can draw from them to understand the principles which underly some of the structure of the myths which we build. You might be surprised at just how far these archetypes extend. Certainly they continue in many works of surprisingly modern origins. Some good sources to use for further study are: The White Goddess (Robert Graves), The Masks of God (Joseph Campbell), Celtic Heritage (A & B Rees), and any of a large number of works on comparative mythology and Arthurian myth origins. Examination primary myths and a little analysis can also bring out most of these ideas which are often self-evident.

CONJURINGS

(continued from page 2)

plays, it fulfills its function well, because everyone involved is working towards the same general ends, a convention which benefits all aspects of the gaming community.

Representatives of TSR have accused Origins of being a convention run by and for manufacturers with little regard for the gamers, while GenCon and associated conventions are the true conventions of the masses. This view is sadly warped and totally removed from any kind of factual support. In fact, all the evidence cries the exact opposite. The key to enjoyment on the part of gamers is the events being run at a convention. GenCon's policies actively discourage the running of interesting, skillfully run events, while Origins does so much less. The best events at any convention have traditionally been those run by gamers who have become skilled and experienced enough to consider themselves professionals and worthy of some payment for the considerable work they do on a convention event. This includes a number of excellent lecturers and tournament running groups. This relatively small group of 'experts' can make or break a convention, but they need some incentive to do their work. True, Origins takes \$30 or 30% of fees for any event. This is reasonable, although some excellent conventions such as Eastcon take far less. However, GenCon insists on 50% of the gate for all tournaments and forbids any fees for lectures or seminars. As a result, at Origins you will find interesting, innovative, even scholarly lectures, plus complex and developed tournaments for every game system, while at GenCon all you will find are D&D tournaments run by amateurs, demonstrations of new games, and seminars on why you should buy particular products. Last year at Origins Lew Bryson gave the most successful lecture event of the weekend, attended by well over 100 people, with a large number of visual aids and considerable preparation. Had he not gotten his fees for this, not only could he not have afforded to give the lecture, but he might not have been able to afford to come to the convention, and gamers would have missed out on what many praised as the best event at the convention.

It is only logical that a convention run by a single monolithic company would be suited to the needs of gamers less than one run by a consortium of smaller companies with the support of gaming clubs, who run most of the events.

Enjoy this issue and keep looking for more improvements. Future features will include letters, articles on play-by-mail games, mini-games in the issue, competitions and much more. Tell us what you want to see, don't want, and new ideas.

PRODUCT NOTES

DRAGONLORDS is now available by subscription at \$7 for 6 issues, direct anywhere in the US or Canada. A sample copy is only \$1.50. DRAGONLORDS is the top British fanzine.

YSGARTH is still available in the 2nd edition for \$11.95 and Supplement #3 will be out soon. #4 is in the works.

MIDDLE PASSAGE is still on hold, but work is beginning on DEMON PRINCE, a strategy mini-game of corrupting souls to fill the pits of hell.

TO CHALLENGE TOMORROW is still available on advance order for \$5.95. Right now we are putting together the scenarios for the packet, and the publication date is in flux.

Also in the works is a book called THE BEST OF ABYSS: THE FIRST 3 YEARS, which should be self-explanatory.

Use the form to the right to order these or other relevant items. Send in the feedback while you're at it.

#	Item	Cost	Post	Total
—	Dragonlords(1)	1.50	.50	_____
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RESULTS #22	Rating	Change	Fanzine	%Read
In the Speculum	90	+6	No Others	24%
Backgrounding	97	+26	A&E	15%
Familiars	92	--	Dragonlords	12%
Taking the Waters	82	+12	Wild Hunt	10%
Cymric Deities	93	+6	Oracle	10%
Illusion	75	--	Fantasy Her.	7%
Lord Darcy's World	92	-1	Stormlords	5%
			All Others	17%
Mike Cranford	97	0	UK Zines	27%
Nequi Dharsee	87	+3	US Zines	49%
Sven Koehler	89	--		
R. Schwerdtfeger	84	--		
Cover	90	-8		
Titles/Graphics	98	+5		
Overall	89	+9		

FEEDBACK

QUESTIONS ON THIS ISSUE
Rate items 1(awful) to 100(great)
Rating

Conjurings	_____
In the Speculum	_____
In Arduin	_____
The Kshatrya Code	_____
New Fields	_____
Lands of Wind and Fire	_____
Mission of Intemperance	_____
The Myth of the Save	_____
Armored Combat	_____
You Asked for it	_____
Myth Archetypes	_____
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Tom Curtin	_____

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