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EDITOR/PUBLISHER: David Nalle
ASSISTANT EDITORS: Lew Bryson, Eric Olson
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS: Tom Curtin, Jon Schuller, Ron Pehr,
John Davies, Carl Jones, David Hargrave, John Bashaw

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Business Office
1402 21st St. NW, Washington, DC 20036

Editorial Offices
3212 Red River #108, Austin, TX 78705

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ART CREDITS

All illos from 'Jugend',
issues from 1896-1899
except Peter Chen p. 24

Maps for 'Revenge in Rio'
from Os Guias Verdes do Brasil(1928)

CONJURINGS

You know something is wrong when you feel good about completing a project only a year behind schedule. This is known as the Ragnarok Way. Every project seems to be late, pushed to completion by the rabid belief that the unbounded quality will make up for delays in getting to press. As a result we find Siege and Fortress coming to press two years after it was planned and there are only four bi-monthly issues of ABYSS for 1985. This is all a way of leading into informing you that your next issue of ABYSS will be #37, but will be v.8, n.1. Don't think you've lost the last two issues of 1985. They just don't exist. Subscriptions go by sequential numbers anyway so you won't miss any issues...trust me.

Many people ask me: 'Hey, Dave, just what the hell is the price of ABYSS, anyway?' This is a good question. Too bad that there is no good answer at hand. Subscriptions are either \$10 for 6 issues or \$7 for 6 issues, depending on who you are and how we feel about you. If you are reading this you can pay for the next year at \$7 if you want. Other people who don't share this secret knowledge pay \$10. As for the cover price, pay whatever anyone asks you for this copy of ABYSS, if you are buying it in a store. It will probably be either \$1.50 or \$2, depending on how we feel at the time. If you don't buy ABYSS in your local game store, go down there now and tell him to order some copies. We are running a special discount offer this spring and he can't afford to miss it.

This issue brings us a bounty of wonder. I'm particularly glad that we can offer the first in a series of articles from David Hargrave, author of Arduin, The Arduin Adventure and the forthcoming Arduin, Bloody Arduin. This first offering will be found on the facing page and should be of interest to most fantasy gaming enthusiasts. Later in the issue you'll find an expanded version of 'In the Speculum', with somewhat more material and longer reviews. Let us know what you think of running more detailed review material of this sort. 'Echoes' is also longer this issue, not by design, but because people just seem to want to write in and make their feelings known. It looks like this tradition will be continuing in future issues. Naturally, there is yet another article from Eric this issue, something sort of wet and briny sent in from wherever the hell he is in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Finally, I heartily recommend this issue's adventure 'Revenge in Rio', an unusual scenario which can be run with a number of different game systems.

Look for more good stuff in the next issue, which may come sooner than you'd expect from past experience. It should include a new article from Lew Bryson, lots of reviews, an adventure, fiction and some typically weird and mind bending other stuff as well.

That's about all the drivel I can spare for this issue. If you have questions or answers or just want to say something, drop me a line. The paper shredder in my mail box is oiled up and ready to grind.

MAGIK IT'S A SECRET DAVE HARGRAVE



There is no single FRP game I can think of that doesn't have magik and its use as a central theme in its set-up and play. Yet, as far as I can ascertain, none of them address the problem of players being too free with the knowledge available to their magik using characters.

It seems that, given our own world's past history, anyone who has just spent umpteen years learning how to do something few other beings will be able to understand (much less employ), is not about to freely discuss what he has learned with anyone else.

The concepts of arcane learning will be (or should be) beyond the ken of the majority of the folks a magician will come into contact with, and others of his/her own ilk will certainly be rivals at the very least. Yet, in game after game, I see players jabbering about what spells or conjurations their characters know.

More often than not they will want to 'trade' knowledge with other characters as a shortcut to acquiring/learning new mystik operations. This seems to happen even among groups that are just meeting for the first time. I tend to regard such shenanigans as 'bad form' in Arduin, and usually refuse to allow them.

Magik, of any kind, is a very difficult thing to master, and takes a great deal of effort and concentration for those who choose such a path. They must go through a dangerous and even fatal learning process that is not for the faint hearted. A College of Magik or similar institution is the sole place a person should be able to lawfully go to learn the arcane processes required to become a magician. This college should be a powerful and monolithic entity that wields great political power within the land, power that it does not want to share with anyone else. Thus, part of the learning process should be the protection of the knowledge which brings this power, through blood oaths so terrible and horrific that no magician would dare break them.

The other guilds and colleges of the campaign world should also have their own secrets, powers (to a greater or lesser extent) and binding oaths. They exist in a rivalry which can be either friendly or unfriendly. Most playercharacters should belong to such a guild, association or college. Some examples might be a College of Alchemy, a College of Technology, a Thief's Guild, a Mercenaries' Guild or even a College of General Theology, to mention only a few.

Even though a magician might become friends (over many years and shared dangers) with thieves, warriors, priests and others, they will never be likely to forget their oaths of secrecy and their basic loyalties to their craft, just as those friends will remember their own professional associations.

You may wonder what reasons there are not to share such knowledge with another magician. It is best to keep in mind that all stratified societies (guilds, colleges, etc) have a hierarchy and 'pecking order' of their own. Power and position should be considered at all times. The friend with whom you share an arcane secret may become a rival for power someday and use that same secret against you in a 'Duel Arcane'. Most magicians will want to keep the majority of their unique learning as secret as possible as a sort of ace in the hole should such a need ever arise. No one would want to have their best trick known to a potential enemy. Even setting this paranoid argument aside, there are several other factors which GMs should also consider.

The average magician will have spent the majority of his formative years (from about age seven or so) 'locked away' in school or apprenticed to a master magician. Such training will last some ten years, so that when they emerge into the 'real' world they are, more often than not, totally unprepared for the hostility (overt or covert) directed towards them by the general public, putting them in a potentially persecuted and naturally paranoid position.

Hostility is the natural reaction of the common mob (and many ill-bred scions of the upper classes) towards that which they cannot understand, but which they believe has the potential to harm them. Just look at the Spanish Inquisition, the Salem witch trials and other such cases to see what I mean. Those who cannot understand something often tend to fear it. That which is feared is often hated and attacked. This is one of the common tendencies of human nature.

Finding himself hated and shunned, the magician will react with anger and alienation from the general ranks of society. With such mutual dislike there is little chance that understanding and accommodation will be achieved. The rabble will fear the magician and he will look down on such 'lesser' beings. This will perpetuate an endless cycle.

Don't get me wrong here. Magicians can and do work (quite frequently) with other types of character in Arduin. They are just not extremely friendly. They share a guarded relationship. They do their 'job' and will do it just as well as a Warrior or Thief. Still, they are unlikely to trade magical secrets with other magicians unless there is a specific need for it.

For example, a magician named Killraven Firestar has reached EL9, and in getting there has learned many magical processes. He has an EL8 'friend' named Sindrin Lionslayer who is also a magician. They are 'friendly' because they have travelled together frequently in the last four or five years and Killraven has found Sindrin to be relatively trustworthy (in battle mostly). During the last few adventures Killraven has seen (and admired) Sindrin's use of a relatively minor magik called Ishorg's Spell of the Awful Sting (see The Lost Grimoire). Killraven does not know the spell, but would like to learn it. Thus, he might approach Sindrin with a proposition about 'trading' one bit of knowledge for another. He would broach the subject with some trepidation, knowing his own reluctance to take up such a bargain, but not sure how his friend might feel. Thus, he would be polite and careful so as not to give offense and possibly cause a 'Duel Arcane' with Sindrin.

If Sindrin had been eyeing a similarly minor magik in use by Killraven he might then decide to accept the proposal. But if Killraven didn't have something he really wanted he would probably not be inclined to make a deal. It would be very difficult for him to come out and ask Killraven to list the minor magiks he knew, which would be extremely bad form and probably cause Killraven to 'call him out' for a duel.

Not that the two magicians in this case are at similar levels of experience, which puts them on relatively equal terms and makes them able to be a bit more free with their knowledge. But had Killraven been only EL3, for example, then he would have a hard time being so presumptuous to approach someone so far above him. On the other hand Sindrin could approach him with a deal and appear to be magnanimous, helping out the 'little guy'.

This situation is probably the most reasonable circumstance under which two (or more) magicians might exchange knowledge. In other situations fear and distrust would be too great.

As a final note, remember that there are several factors which keep magical processes secret. These include paranoia because of an unfriendly populace or environment, the demands of the learning process with blood oaths and binding promises of secrecy, the hierarchical structure of magical colleges and internal rivalries in such a college, and the danger of creating friction and bringing on a 'duel arcane' for which secret knowledge is an essential ace in the hole.

This is a short summation of a practical way to approach magical secrecy. To be sure there is much more I could say, but much of that is Arduin specific. I'd welcome letters sent to ABYSS with your ideas on magical secrecy, agreeing or disagreeing with this approach. I'd be glad to respond to reasonable discussions on this or future subjects. If you have a different point of view, then lay it on me! But do be a gentleman about it, please.

AFRICAN CULTS

DAVE NALLE

INTRODUCTION

The goal of this short piece is to provide a general background and overview to accompany my previous article 'Gods of the Slave Coast'. In addition to all of the deities and beliefs mentioned in that article there are many practices, superstitions and institutions in that area which are worthy of note and might be of use in setting up similar situations in a role-playing campaign. Many of the ideas and institutions presented here are typical of this type of society and could be an exciting aspect of play.

ANCESTOR WORSHIP & INITIATION CULTS

Poró

This is a secret society of ancient origin which is central to the society of the Mende people. The Poró originated in ancestor worship and was connected to the rite of passage. Members of the society take on the roles of dead ancestors and then steal goods for the dead from people who they frighten away with gruesome masks and violent antics. It has developed into benevolent group which trains both men and women to assume their role as adults in society. They hold secret meetings in sacred bushes near the village. These are provided over by the Gbeni who has assumed the role of the chief of the spirits of the dead. The membership of the Poró is selected from among the adult males. The female Poró is called the Sande and performs a parallel function.

Nesuhwe

This cult maintains a list of the dead and worships deformed children whom they believe to be the spirits of ancestors returned to life.

Zangbeto

This is a major secret society of the Nigerian coast. They are known as the 'Hunters of Night' and the 'Spirits of the Sea'. They are symbolized by traditional dress of grass robes, a crown of horns and a mask. They carry out elaborate initiation rituals. These begin when the Zansi or heralds speak in a special nasal tone said to sound like the voices of the dead and announce the start of the initiation. A procession of society members representing ancestor spirits is led up from the sea to the village at night by the Zangan or chief spirit. They come to the village by surprise and initiate the young men into the society of their ancestors.

Egungun

This is the cult of death and ancestor worship among the Yoruba peoples. It is a magic working cult. Their main role is in celebrating funeral services. During the day of a funeral members assume colorful costumes and beg. These are called the Children of Egungun. At night the elders in the cult participate in funerary rituals wearing elaborate masks. Members of the cult are feared for magical powers, especially the ability to assume the forms of animals at night. They are thought to play tricks on people in these forms. The membership is mostly male.

Oro

This Dahomeyan society exists mostly to honor the dead, with each member assuming the persona of some great dead leader. The membership is kept secret, and one of the functions of the society is to hunt down witches, which they do with the bullroarer, which is called the Voice of Oro. Among the Ijebu people the same cult exists as the Eluku or the Agemo, and is also associated with shapechanging magic. In Lagos there is a similar cult called the Adamu-orisha.

Gelede

This is a Yoruban ancestor worship cult which believes that the spirits of the dead come back in the bodies of alligators, and as a result they keep sacred alligators and venerate them.

Ndako Gboya

This cult is found among the Nupe and is also known as the Igunnu. It is oriented mostly towards the elimination of witchcraft and is extremely powerful socially and politically. They travel in groups, wearing huge full-body masks made of bamboo designed to represent the spirits of the dead. They seek out witches, and when they find them they try them by ordeal and punish them appropriate. The membership is kept secret and they are greatly feared.

Ekpo

This cult is found among the Ibo and Ibibio and is also called the Mmo. It is another ancestor worship and initiation society, where boys are brought to manhood by being beaten by elders who wear masks in the personae of dead spirits who are summoned to examine the worthiness of the youths through a series of ordeals. The society is limited mostly to the upper social classes.

OTHER CULTS

Fa

This cult is found in Dahomey, mostly among the Fon, and centers around a system of secret writing, which assigns a name or identity code to each man at birth, which is used in casting horoscopes and in working name-based magic.

Spear Masters

These are a ruling warrior/priest caste among the Dinka peoples. Membership is hereditary. The symbol of the group is a fishing spear. The society was founded by Aiwel Longar, the legendary son of a river spirit. He is an ancestral deity who protects the herds and is accompanied by a rainbow colored ox.

Oqboni

This is a politically oriented Yoruba secret society which honors various spirits of the earth, but is also concerned with government and tribal law.

Ekpe Owo

This is one of the most feared and secret societies in West Africa. It is a society of assassins who take the leopard as their symbol. It is extremely widespread with considerable political influence. Members meet in secret in a hidden forest and practice cannibalism as part of their rituals, claiming to consume the souls of their victims to add to their strength. When a member is initiated he is said to be reborn from a leopard mother. He is given a set of iron claws with which to kill his victims, drugged into berserk state and then sent out to eliminate enemies of the society. Naturally, the Ekpe Owo is greatly feared and respected.

Ikuru

This is an Ebo cult which honors Ale through rituals involving the use of sacred drums.

Snake Cults

The snake or python is quite popular as a religious and magical symbol. The Snake of Eternity is said to encircle the earth with 3500 coils of his body above the earth and 3500 below earth. He holds up the earth and was originally the mount of the creator. The snake is also symbolized by the double rainbow. The snake is also believed to represent the power of life which is in all things, the mana, as it were, which suffuses the world.

Snake god cults are common, especially those which revere the sacred Daboa serpent which is also called the Dange. Followers of this cult are usually female and considered to be 'Wives of the Python', though this same title applies to male cult members. This cult is looked on as rather immoral by society. Snake gods include Da and Li among the Ewe and Damballah among the Yoruba. Snake cultists are often thought to practice evil magic and to assume the forms of snakes.

WITCHCRAFT, MAGIC & SUPERSTITION

Shiqidi

This is a magical cult or practice among the Yoruba, a sophisticated school of magic which summons demons and spirits through sacred images and blood sacrifices to the demons, including human sacrifices. They also practice sympathetic magic using images of intended victims. They fit into the general class of witch cults, though most practitioners of Shiqidi operate as individuals. They are feared and disliked universally.

Vodu (Vudu/Voodoo)

Vodu is the magical practice in which the new-world Voodoo religions have their roots. It is a sort of spirit worship especially common among the Fon. Among the Fon and Ewe, the term Vodu originally meant spirit or god and was expanded to cover a cult centered on ritual

possession and invocational magic. It now is usually found with the later, magical meaning and terms like Orisha (Yoruba) or Chi (Ibo) are usually used to refer to gods and spirits. Many of the spirits invoked in West Indian Vodou originated as West African deities. It should be remembered that Vodou is not the practice of afflicting people with the fingernails and little images of relative and sympathetic magic.

Obayifo (Obeah)

The source for the other main branch of West Indian magic can also be found in West Africa, in the Twi practice of Obayifo, which is the origin of the West Indian Obeah magic. This is much closer to the traditional image of Voodoo, with an orientation on sympathetic and relative magic, the use of images and involvement with powerful curses and magical afflictions.

Good Magic

There are a number of kinds of practitioners of good magic as well. These should never be mistaken for the types of magic noted above, as these people are not feared or hated by their society. They include magic-working priests, healers and herbalists. Particularly notable among these good witches are the witch doctors and witch smellers who seek out evil spirits and witches respectively and then eliminate them, the first to cure the afflicted and the second to protect society. Witch smellers are often part of secret societies like the Oro or Ndako Gboya. Perhaps the most common form of good magic is divination and oracular prediction, which is sometimes tied to Vodou, and is usually performed with the aid of spirits who are summoned into the body of the diviner, though many other methods are also used. The Babalawo in Yoruba society are particularly highly respected priest/diviners. The most famous oracular site is Aro in Nigeria which has a great deal of influence and was known as the Long Juju by Europeans.

Totems, Taboos & Animism

Animism takes a number of forms, mostly centered around the belief that everything in the world has a soul, either one of its own or that of a dead human. As a result, hills, animals, caves, trees and even winds are often objects of worship and sacrifice.

Taboos are common in African superstition, associating many places and things with spirits and powers so that they are avoided as a matter of course. Many groups hold the Iroko tree to be sacred in this manner and will not cut it, making it a center of worship.

Along with this, many clans or families may pick a totem which is associated with their members as a protector or guardian. Such totems are usually animals which are protected by the clan and sometimes ritually sacrificed. Popular animals include leopards, pythons and oxen.

Ancestral Spirits

Ancestor worship and the belief in the power of ancestral spirits is are very strong. Most believe that the spirits of ancestors wander the earth, enter places and things and even possess people. Some of these spirits are good and some are evil, and they must be placated, cared for and defended against. How this is done varies widely from place to place.

One of the major fears is that an evil spirit will enter the womb of a pregnant woman in order to be reborn and work evil in human form once again. On the good side, many believe that the first chief of a tribe watches over his descendants as a sort of demi-deity, and the same is often also believed of lesser spirits. Among the Ibo pillars called Ndichie or Nidi-Oke are carved in the image of ancestors and set to guard places.

In some areas ancestor worship cults are very strong, especially in initiation rituals, and they tend to usurp the place of traditional gods, rising in importance while the gods may be lowered to the spirit level.

There are many ways of protecting against spirits, from simple wards to complex rituals. The most common method is to scare off the spirits with their own image on a wooden mask or with tools like the Bull Roarer, an iron whistle on a string, which is whirled through the air to scare spirits.

Death

Death in the abstract is a very popular figure, personified as a powerful spirit who lives beneath the ground and who stole immortality from mankind. Many believe that death never actually kills anyone unless he is called upon to do so by someone else on earth, either through witchcraft or a curse, something which leads to an awful lot of suspicion in the community.

Were Beliefs

In addition to the were beliefs already mentioned of those who can take the forms of leopards, snakes or whatever through magic, many people also believe that animals can assume human form to cause trouble among men. This is particularly suspected of lions and hyaenas. Along with this there are many who ascribe human intelligence to animals in the wild.

CONCLUSION

How you wish to apply the ideas is up to you, and they need not be used in an exclusively African setting. The same ideas are found in many other societies which share animistic beliefs or are involved in ancestor worship. Nonetheless, the African setting is a fascinating one, and I hope that this glimpse which I have given of that world will encourage gamemasters to consider trying such a setting.



IN THE SPECULUM

MAGAZINES

BALROG BANTER

APP:3 CON:3 VAL:8 PER:4 OVE:4
 22 Five Fields Rd., Willenhall, Wolverhampton, WV12 4PA UK
 This is a late arrival in our slew of UK zines. The issue at hand is #2, which is 44 digest-sized pages, edited by Paul Evans and reproduced by horrible looking xerox. An issue is 50p, so if you are in the US send something equivalent to \$2.

BB #2 has some interesting features, particularly a nice piece on medieval tournaments and some good fanzine reviews. Aside from that the issue is mostly monsters and modules fair, but the modules are a bit above average and cover a variety of game systems and background types. On the whole the content is fairly typical of new zines, and will have to be improved and perhaps given a unique style if BB is to survive.

Like many UK zines, BB is a great bargain for the money, if you live in the UK. For US readers, I'm not going to recommend it, though some might want to check it out. It isn't really striking enough to recommend over other more distinguished zines unless you are a completist. (Dave Nalle)

BOOKLET OF MANY THINGS

50p Issue 3



BOOKLET OF MANY THINGS

APP:3 CON:7 VAL:7 PER:6 OVE:6
 15 Cross Lane, Dronfield, Sheffield, S18 6SH UK
 This is another late arrival from the UK. BOMT #3 is on hand, 24 digest-sized pages, with a rather bizarre cartoon on the cover. It is 50p an issue, so send \$2 or something equivalent and pray, unless you are in the UK too. BOMT is edited by Stephen Gilbert and Mark Beresford.

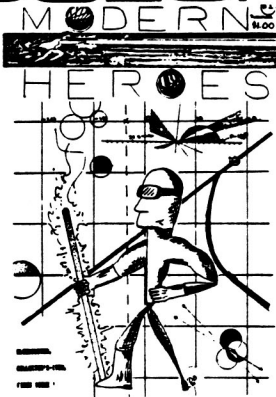
This zine has a nice, informal tone to it. This shines through the most in the incredibly silly cartoons which festoon it. Although these are not artistic, they actually are funny, and appropriate to the topic and the zine as a whole. If you can't have good art, you might as well have funny art. That seems to be the motto here. Aside from that it's all monsters, magic and modules, with some reviews and letters, all presented with a sense of humor. Basically, this is standard fare, but made more palatable by an engaging style in a zine which doesn't take itself too seriously.

On the whole I'd give BOMT a guarded recommendation. If you want to pick up a rather new zine with fairly standard fare, get this one. Because of the style and wit involved, it might grow into something quite worthwhile in a few issues, especially if they can add some more substantive content. (DN)

MODERN HEROES

APP:4 CON:7 VAL:6 PER:7 OVE:6
 14701 Cambridge Dr., Upper Marlboro, MD 20772
 This is one of a very few new gaming-oriented zines being published in the US. To make it completely unique, it is a Superhero zine, something there are very few of anywhere. This specialized orientation may be an extremely clever move or instant death. We shall see. The first issue is in hand. It is 28 horribly xeroxed pages with truly gruesome art. The cover price is \$1 and subscriptions are \$5 for 4 issues. The editor is Dan Searing.

Well, MH looks awful. This issue was rushed into production for origins. It has condensed dot-matrix type, the xeroxing is too dark, and the art is hilariously terrible. These things aside, this is a great magazine. The half-dozen substantive features are intelligent and well put together. They are well focused on their topics, useful and literate. Two articles 'Realism in the Campaign World' and 'Rationale for Supergroups' stand out as



particularly good. There are two scenarios, one of which is awfully short, but both are moderately interesting. This issue even has a home-grown comic-strip called 'Sector Man', which is fairly amusing, but bears little resemblance to what most people know as comics.

As I see it the problems of appearance and organization will most likely be solved with the application of experience, growth and attention. The content is already of good quality. The real problem facing MODERN HEROES is that, like superhero games and many comic books, articles on superheroes and the magazines that carry them may be fated to become unoriginal and repetitive. This issue is good, but will they be able to do new and original things every issue for more than a couple of issues. ADVENTURE GAMING has had real trouble doing this, because in the world of comic books and superhero gaming there really is nothing new under the sun.

These things notwithstanding I can heartily recommend MODERN HEROES, especially for superhero gamers, as it offers a fresh perspective on superhero gaming with original and imaginative material. There are so few US fanzines these days that we should all do what we can to support new ones, and MH deserves that support. I'm looking forward to seeing what develops in future issues. (DN)

EMPIRE

FOR THE SF WRITER

No. 34

\$2.50

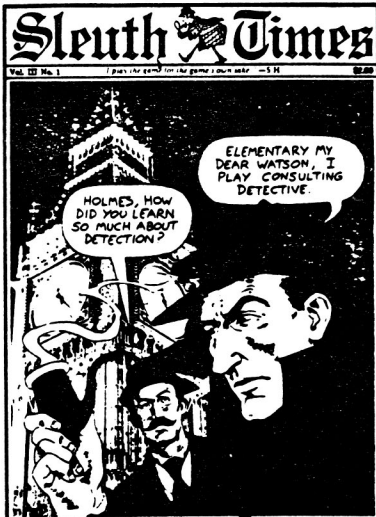
MAG AVOCY
 BRADLEY
 MATHAY
 CARL
 MULLOCH
 KILLOUGH
 D'ANNASSA
 SCHWETZER



EMPIRE APP:5 CON:8 VAL:2 PER:6 OVE:6
 Unique Graphics, 1025 55th St, Oakland, CA 94608
 EMPIRE is subtitled 'For the SF Writer', so it is clearly not typical of the zines which we usually review here, though it is a small press publication and might be of interest to our readers. I have the 34th issue at hand. It is 32 standard sized pages with horrible xeroxing but fairly good art. A copy is \$2.50 and a subscription is \$9 for 4.
 Essentially this is a magazine for all those people who want to write professionally or at least successfully, and don't have the experience or knowledge which will let them cross the line into the larger markets, or at least into print. To aid this readership EMPIRE provides articles,

and there are dozens of them. What makes it interesting is that these articles are not by fans bemoaning their own inability to write professionally, but by professional writers, some of them successes and some of them on the brink of success with strong ties to the fan press. Thus, in this issue you find Ardath Mayhar, Darrell Schweitzer, Roberts MacAvoy, Marion Zimmer Bradley, and Don D'Amassa all of whom are in positions where they should be in touch with new writers and yet have had some success and experience of their own. There are articles by less well known writers as well. Most of the content of *EMPIRE* is surprisingly good and usually helpful. The best articles are those which give advice on topics like plotting and background, but there are also some good reviews and attempts at humor. Although it is 'for the SF writer', more than half the material in this issue is fantasy-oriented, so it should appeal to a variety of interests. *EMPIRE* is surprisingly free of the childishly awkward attempts at writing which plague most SF fanzines, with only one jarring exception, an attempt at humor by Charles Craig which is annoyingly derivative of a much better article by Karl Edward Wagner which was in *FANTASY NEWSLETTER* some years ago.

I can recommend *EMPIRE* without reservation if you are an aspiring writer. It is useful, informative and enjoyable reading. It is the kind of magazine which has a real value for its targeted audience and lives up to its potential. Of course, for almost anyone else it is only marginally useful, though many of the world/setting design articles would be of as much use to a gaming campaign designer as to a writer. (Jon Schuller)



SLEUTH TIMES

APP:5 CON:4 VAL:5 PER:7 OVE:5
689 Florida St., San Francisco, CA 94110

This is a strange but interesting irregularly published magazine from the makers of *Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective*. The issue I have on hand is v.3 n.1, and comes to 40 FULL sized pages in nice black and white offset with decent art in the Paget tradition. The cost is \$2 per issue or \$6 for 4. The editor is Gary Grady.

The magazine is, not too surprisingly, devoted almost entirely to Sherlock Holmes and his world. This issue contains a number of interesting articles on Victorian London, particularly what it was like to live there, interesting reprints of a Sax Rohmer story and a history of the Pinkertons and a nicely reproduced and analyzed map of London. On the whole the quality of the material is good and valuable to those interested in this period. This material makes up a bit more than half of the magazine. The rest is a huge selection of ads. Some of them are for independent companies, but most of them are in a section called 'Ye Olde Sleuth Shoppe', through which Sleuth offer a wide selection of Holmes related material for sale, from busts of Holmes and Watson, to Wikkie Collins novels, to Ordnance Survey maps, to a variety of games including their own *Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective*. Descriptions of the items available through Sleuth are pleasantly detailed, though rather straggly organized. All this promotional material may seem a bit much to some, but it is interesting to see just what is available, all gathered into one place. I was a bit offended that they seem to carry almost every Victorian game except London by *Wish!* (the only other absence is the British publication *Victorian Adventure*), but perhaps when they read this review they will mend their errant ways.

I can't really recommend *SLEUTH TIMES* to the average gamer, though it is a treasure trove for those fascinated with the Victorian period or with Holmes and his cohorts. Even if you are only a little interested in this sort of thing you might consider picking up at least a single issue. Perhaps what you read and the items you see offered will spark your interest. (DN)

BOOKS

LIAVEK

ed. Will Shetterly and Emma Bull
Ace Books (\$2.95)

Liavek is a new anthology from Ace which is very much in the vein of *Thieves World*. *Liavek*, aka *Thieves World*, uses a common setting—Liavek, city of Luck and wizardry—and even uses a few common characters, some of which are very intriguing. *Liavek* differs from *Thieves World* in that it revolves around the world's practice of magic rather than religion and political intrigue. This form of magic differs from the normal fare. Magic comes from within each person here and is something tangible, expressed as his luck. Each year a person has to invest his luck into an item if he wishes to perform any magic during that year. This is the premise for many of the stories, and is rather easy to turn into a plot. In the case of editor Will Shetterly, it provides one of the best and shortest stories. There are two very good stories as well written by Steven Brust and Patricia C. Brede. This book, like *Thieves World*, promises more to come.

Overall the world is mildly interesting, the characters fresh, and the stories mostly good. The series will live or die on the selection of writers for the next book and the development of more connection between the stories and a dash of the intrigue which is so strong in the *Thieves World* series. *Liavek* looks a bit like a pale version of *Thieves World* right now, but shows signs of a bright future. It has added interest because most of the authors are new or close to unknown. If you like *Thieves World*, you should like *Liavek* though the characters don't leap out at you like those in *Thieves World* (to which I've referred altogether too much in this review). (Eric Olson)



TO REIGN IN HELL

by Steven Brust
Ace Books (\$2.95)

Steven Brust is an up and coming fantasy writer. I have thoroughly enjoyed his last two books, *Jehereg* and *Yendi*, and he has surpassed himself with his most recent effort, *To Reign in Hell*. Briefly, the book deals with the formation of heaven, the origin of the angels, and the revolt of Satan and the other luminaries of Hell. This book differs from what most people would call fantasy. There are no wizards, gallant warriors or fantastic monsters. This book deals with the growth of the heavenly host and the formation of the division between the founders of heaven. It is a very enjoyable story that doesn't pronounce a religious philosophy, but uses the biblical characters to tell an interesting story. It is also a story that I find very difficult to explain, so you would be better off just reading it for yourself. I strongly recommend this book with the warning that if you are into classic swords and sorcery type fantasy it may not be quite what you are looking for. (EO)

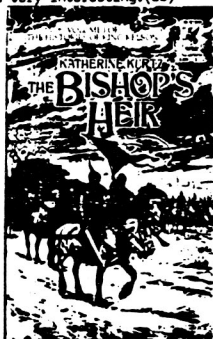
FLAMESONG

by M. A. R. Barker
DAW Books (\$3.50)

Flamesong is the second book by Professor Barker based in his world of Tekumel. As with his first book *Man of Gold*, *Flamesong* can be very confusing for those who have not played in the world of Tekumel. In some ways Barker is trying to make up for this in *Flamesong* by taking what appeared to me to be a quick tour through Tekumel. Once again, the book revolves around the war between Tsolyanu and Yan Kor with characters on both sides trying to gain advantage and prestige. The book starts with the capture of a small fortress by the Tsolyanu and the discovery of one of the ancient tube cars that once connected the various realms. A small party of Tsolyanu soldiers, the leading Yan Koryan General of the area, her maid, and their small non-human physician all enter the tubecar which shuttles them to various parts of the globe and a variety of strange occurrences. The meaning of the title does not become clear or assert itself in the plot until the last sixty or so pages of the rather ponderous 412 page total. All the time, a number of sub-plots with different characters run through the book. It is surprising how everything that happens seems to involve the major figures of the world who become the central characters. It would be interesting to see a Tekumel book that did not have

Isoyaru princes, Baron Ald, and most of the other major figures of the world involved.

Flamesong is built around an interesting premise and the portions of the book that deal with this premise are good. I had the feeling that a great portion of the book was filler, taking a tour of the various hot spots of the world. If you have never played Tekumel or read Man of Gold, this book can be confusing. Still, I would give Flamesong a qualified recommendation as I am a fan of Tekumel and some of the ideas (especially the basic ideas) are very interesting. (EO)



THE BISHOP'S HEIR

by Katherine Kurtz
Del Rey Books (\$3.50)

The Bishop's Heir continues the Deryni saga during the reign of King Kelson. Less than a year after Kelson establishes himself on the throne, rebellion rises once against the vehemently anti-Deryni Archbishop Loris escapes from his house arrest and allies himself with the remnants of the ancient house of Meara. Adding to Kelson's problems, Archbishop Loris is able to rally a significant number of bishops behind him who wield significant power. One of the major facets of Kurtz's book is the power of the clergy. Kurtz's clergy is reminiscent of the Catholic Church in the middle ages, really more than just reminiscent. Their powers of excommunication and interdiction are quite effective. These books are worth reading just to get a feel for how to run a monolithic clergy and the problems within a large religion.

Kurtz brings back all of the old characters and introduces a whole selection of new ones. Her characterizations make the characters on their personalities very clear but they tend to be too black and white with very few who can tread in a gray area. Also, it is getting to be predictable that every major character on the side of truth and light is secretly and sometimes unknowingly a Deryni. Any who have read the earlier books is probably already aware of how outrageously derivative the world and background is of Celtic Britain and some aspects of the Middle Ages. Another problem is that the book seems the wender a bit more than previous books. The Bishop's Heir is not as tight as the previous Kelson series, but it still has most of the positive qualities. Overall, I'd recommend it despite its flaws, because it is good storytelling. I would suggest that new readers of Kurtz material start with the first Deryni saga before reading The Bishop's Heir as the extensive background material there will add greatly to your understanding of events in The Bishop's Heir. (EO)

THE SHATTERED WORLD

by Michael Reaves
Bant Books (\$3.50)

The Shattered World is based on an unusual fantasy-setting concept, that of a world which was broken apart a millennia part into myriad parts kept in a delicate orbit among themselves by the combined magic of the age's wizards. The various fragments have a breathable atmosphere and are connected to each other by a web of breathable air. Travel between the fragments is accomplished by traveling on boats swarmed entirely of the remains of Dragons who live in the void. Each fragment has progressed since the cataclysm and has developed a unique culture and language. All of this is kept alive by the runestones of each fragment. These are powerful magical items which keep the fragments in their orbits. Now, however, this magical power is weakening and a solution must be found to keep the fragments from destruction.

Into this picture is thrust one Beorn, a thief cursed with lycanthropy. Beorn is captured by the Sorceress Ardeth after pulling off a daring theft. Ardeth works for a group of mages known as The Circle, who seek to reform the world into a single globe by reviving the greatest magics of the past, the dread Necromancers. Beorn is promised his freedom and removal of his curse if he can steal the runestones of the fragment called Darkhaven. Darkhaven is guarded by a wizard named Pandrogos who opposes the circle and is a famed sorcerer. The book goes on from this point to be a chase to recover the stolen runestones and prevent the raising of the Necromancer. The book gives the reader a good feel for the world, its people and the system of magic (though somewhat briefly).

I recommend The Shattered World on the basis of its plot, the characterizations and the treatment of the lycanthropic curse. It is enjoyable and original reading, though I wouldn't mark it as a heavyweight of fantastic literature. (EO)

GAMES

OTHER SUNS

by Niall Shapero
from Fantasy Games Unlimited

Thanks to Operation Gamesweep at ORIGINS this year we are finally able to review some of the large selection of new games available from FGU. One of these games is Other Suns by Niall Shapero. Like many of FGU's newer game releases this is a nicely but inexpensively produced boxed game. The book covers are in my favorite color, so I have no complaints. It is in full-sized format, with two books of rules and several play aids. As you might gather from the title, this is a fairly traditional type space fantasy game.

The first book is on character creation and skills. There are 12 basic stats, all rolled with dice, using different selections depending on race. The selection of stats is bizarre to say the least. Some of the expected ones are there, but there are three stats all of which describe physical size in one way or another, two stats covering telepathy, and no stats for speed, reaction, education or social status. The stats provided don't seem to have really been thought out. Secondary stats are determined from these basic characteristics. These have various applications and some should really have been primary stats, and the way some are determined makes little sense. Most statcon can be increased by money and time. Combat, as in most up to date games, has an action point system. How this works is somewhat unclear and a bit cluttered, and the system of ads for stats in determining AP costs is awkward. Essentially, the AP system here starts out over-simplified and then has various adjustments added to it so that it ends up overcomplicated. There is a hit location system and the basic percentile combat system is fairly good. The organization of the sections on 'Mechanics and Rules' and on 'Combat' is very strange, with elements sort of thrown in randomly and the whole thing put in before skills are even described. There is a detailed fumble system, but no differentiation is really made between missile and melee weapons, and the difference between types of damage is not fully clear. There is a section on saving throws, but it is awfully sketchy. My overall impression is that combat is very brief and very deadly and that the rules which seem to be a collection of exceptions are too confusing and complex for the type of results they produce. There is some nice detail on a variety of weapons and armor. A section on skills follows, with a large and intelligent selection of skills offered. Unfortunately, the training system is a farce. Skills are learned by making a percentile roll to increase skill by a die roll. The roll is harder the more the character knows of the skill, and this is a good idea, but there don't seem to be any strict limits on what the character can learn and when, though it is suggested that some learning be through training and some be based on experience in adventures, another good idea. Some skills have base percentages, and on the rolls this system reminds me very strongly of Runesong, almost enough to expect a lawsuit from Chaosium or Avalon Hill. The skill descriptions are nice and complete. The next section is on Psionics, something I believe is necessary in a SF game, though many players I know feel Psi has no place in hardcore SF. They can leave this section out if they want. Really, for my taste the treatment is awfully brief and undeveloped. They could certainly provide a lot more Psionic talents. There is a good section on employment and making a living, and a previous experience system which looks like a compacted version of the enormous one in Traveller. The final section is on intelligent species. This is a good idea, but all of them seem to be larger versions of terrestrial creatures, most of them felines and rodents. There are a few variations, but although the detail is good, the ideas are strikingly unoriginal. There are some interesting ideas for unusual abilities for alien races.

The second book is on space travel and world building. It is somewhat better organized than the first book, and the mechanics for building spaceships fit into a dozen pages of coherent information and examples. A variety of drive types are provided and there is an attempt to be intelligent and logical variety and well detailed examples. The spaceship system may be too complex for most people, but I sort of like it. It told me pretty much everything I want to know about a ship. However, the ship to ship combat is very sketchy. It is based on an odds system which gives very little room for inventiveness. Essentially characters just bring their ships into an encounter, choose basic tactics and make a few rolls. The results are always win, tie or lose. Given the detail of designing ships a more specific system would have been nice, with hit location within the ship and specialized targeting, disabling techniques, etc. Such a basic combat system isn't really fair to the superior ship design system. There is a random star system generation section as well, which seems to be an abbreviated version of the one found in Spacequest, and it seems awfully cut and dried. There is no chance of planets in a binary system, and most systems are binary according to this system. Most GPs would be much better off thinking up and designing their own systems. There are also 12 pages of charts on spectral

type, planetary temperature and mean year length, when this could have easily been set up fairly accurately with a few simple formulae and basic charts filling no more than a page or so. The same applies to the two pages of escape velocities by planetary radius and density. However, despite the ramblings of it all and the protracted sections, it is possible to get a lot of useful information out of all the charts and tables so that an inventive GM could use the information to design some good, original and realistic worlds. This book winds up with descriptions of some planetary creatures which have the same problem as the alien races, in that they are just adaptations of earth species for the most part. I'm surprised there wasn't a system for random creature generation, as I've seen some rather good ones done which produce more convincing and unusual creatures than these. The last couple of sections of this book are additional rules, clarifications and what seem essentially to be errata and playing examples. There is also a very brief scenario stuck at the end of the section on 'Playing the Game' there is an index, which is a very good idea, especially for this game.

Other Suns has some interesting elements. The spaceship design system is good, as are parts of the skill and combat systems. There are essentially two general problems with the game which really disable it. First, Niell Shapero just doesn't seem to be very imaginative, at least not here, and SF is supposed to be an imaginative genre. The mechanics and systems are highly derivative. There are elements of RunQuest, SpaceQuest and Traveller here, some of them dangerously thinly cloaked. In many ways the rules almost seem to be modifications or adaptations of basic systems drawn from somewhere else, presenting the basic ideas of the source system with the changes, rather than a new and integrated system. I think this problem is seen most clearly in the combat system. Shapero is not very imaginative in his approach to world and species design. He relies on random tables instead of logical guidelines which anyone could use and seems to be unable to envision anything outside of certain very narrow, scientifically popular guidelines. The examples he gives also suffer from this problem of being very similar to things in the real world or traditional SF. It would have been nice to see him go out on a limb and put in something wild, controversial and original, such as you find in games like SpaceMaster. The second problem lies with the editors and playtesters of the rules, a group of people who just did not do their job. Other Suns is a potentially promising system, but it needed some serious going over before publication. It is extremely disorganized. Systems are not integrated and logically consistent, and there are some areas which could be expanded quite easily to the ultimate benefit of the game. Playtesters should have advised streamlining in some areas and added detail in others, and editors should have radically rearranged much of the first book so that it followed a more logical sequence.

I have to give Other Suns a very provisional recommendation. It will be a familiar sort of system to many players because of its ties to popular types of games, but it is a raw and unrefined game which you will have to work with and adapt to fit your needs. It is not daring and it is not exciting, but it is fairly simple and playable and has some strong elements, particularly the skill and ship design sections. (DN)

FLASHING BLADES

by Mark Pettigrew

From Fantasy Games Unlimited

This is another relatively new and recently acquired game from FGU. It is the first 'three Musketeers' type game since the classic En Garde, and somewhat more complete and detailed than its predecessor. Like Other Suns, it comes in an inexpensive boxed package, containing two standard size books and some play aids. The longer book contains all the mechanics and background. The other book consists entirely of scenarios. There are also some play aids, including a nice little fold out of all the charts and tables and a map of 17th century Paris. As seems to now be standard at FGU the only color art is on the cover of the box, with the book covers in black and white, something that strikes me as a very sensible economization. Mechanically Flashing Blades is compact and well organized. Character set-up is simple, covered in a bit over a page. There are only 6 basic stats, mostly combat and backtracking oriented. Perhaps the most notable lack here is a differentiation between Dexterity, Agility and Reaction, and a social stat of some kind. Characteristics are determined by die roll plus an additional roll for size, which modifies some stats. I was not impressed by the random nature of this set-up although the selection of stats is possible. What did impress me was that secondary stats are done away with altogether, as in Tunnels and Trolls and a few other systems where primary stats function directly in skills and actions. This is one of the few benefits of a very limited set of characteristics. Unfortunately, when you go into background type, in a style reminiscent of D&D character classes, but these restrictions are very general, essentially skill divisions, and need not be rigidly enforced. Each of the four groups (Rogue, Gentleman, Soldier and Nobleman) has a particular set of recommended skills. Skills all have the same cost. Skills appropriate to the character's background cost less than skills from other groups. This is a very simple, very sensible way to handle skill learning. The descriptions of the skills themselves are intelligent and complete and there is a good selection of

skills. Some of the skills are a bit over-generalized, such as 'espionage' and 'stealth', which don't seem to fit with specific skills like 'cut purse' or 'artillery'. One of the big flaws in the system is that it is not consistent in skill learning, as martial type skills are learnt on a different system from normal skills, a system which is fairly simple, but will lead to many characters being clones of each other, especially as there are only 7 combat skills total. Given next are some interesting social rules which should help flesh out characters, but tend to be a bit random. This section includes weapon and equipment purchase and some aspects of social status determination. Combat is dealt with next. It is a fairly basic system of ads and modifications based on attack and defensive tactic. A few too many small numbers to keep track of, but certainly quite playable. It is rather reminiscent of a cleaned up, logical version of Chivalry and Sorcery with a bit of D&D thrown in. Damage varies depending on weapon and attack type, which is nice to see, and a variety of combat options are described and clearly encouraged. There is a hit location system which is fairly simple and playable. The remainder of the first book, really the greater part of it, is taken up with rules on background, social situations and history and politics of the 17th century French setting of the game. There is a lot of good guideline material here, but also a significant emphasis on random rolls for things like social rank, events, treasure and advancement in one's profession. The ideas are good, but the mechanics are somewhat restrictive. There is a final appendix which seems to be where they stuck everything which did not find a place in earlier sections, which is okay in this case, as much of the material in the appendix is not immediately useful or important. Although I do not like the kind of mechanics found here, as they tend to be artificial and work against natural role-playing, imposing ideas rather than facilitating inspiration, there is much to be said for a game which is simple and playable and whose essential mechanics can be summed up in less than 20 pages. Whatever its flaws, this is a game which is easy to play, easy to learn, and which captures the flavor of the topic it covers.

FLASHING BLADES



The second book is a mere 16 pages, but it is really the prize of the game. It is a collection of three detailed adventures for the setting. They are striking for their clear presentation and excellent detail, though 'Tavern Beverage Noir' is a rather limited, though essential setting for the inevitable bar fights. The two major scenarios 'The Man Behind the Mask' and 'Monsieur LeDroit's Secret' are both complete and interesting adventures in the tradition of the genre. All of the scenarios provide information and leave it pretty much in the hands of the GM, but there is the inevitable appendix with a random encounter system, something which can be ignored but certainly detracts aesthetically from an otherwise intelligent set of scenarios. Certainly, this book will provide just what is needed for a Flashing Blades GM to start up an enjoyable campaign.

Presumably Flashing Blades was developed to supersede and outdo En Garde, which was the supreme game of this type for many years. There is no question that it does this admirably in the area of background and development of the setting. It does not do so well in attempting to bring the mechanics of the system up to date. Certainly these are more complete and playable than their predecessors, but they are not particularly innovative, nor do they encourage role-playing. One of the big problems with En Garde was that it was a very rigid system which substituted die rolls for imagination. To a great extent this is also a fault in Flashing Blades. There does seem to be a tone of reluctance about this throughout the rules, as if the author realizes that players might have more fun with

REVENGE IN RIO DAVENALLE

INTRODUCTION

This adventure is designed for use with several systems, especially To Challenge Tomorrow, Call of Cthulhu, Chill, Daredevils and Indiana Jones. However, the background and situations could be used with any game system which can be adapted to the period if you are willing to undertake a few adjustments.

It is important in preparing to run this adventure to be sure that the right kind of characters are selected. It is intended for a fairly small party, probably with no more than 4 actual player characters, though they might pick up a henchman or two along the way. There should be one central character. Ideally he should be a private detective or mercenary type who would be willing to undertake a search and rescue mission in a foreign country. He would be responsible for selecting other characters to help him. He might have regular associates, such as a strong-arm man of some sort, an associate adventurer, a researcher, even a girlfriend. Given the location and nature of the adventure it might even be good to pick up someone who speaks Portuguese, perhaps a former client who is a Portuguese-American dockworker, or something along those lines. It is also possible that a character associated with the subject of the mission (Elaine Patterson) might be able to go, perhaps her brother. Remember that it will be the primary detective-type character who will be hired, so their should be a logical reason why he would hire assistants, and they should be meaningfully employed. Naturally, characters will have to be from Baltimore or somewhere nearby.

Since this is an international adventure and takes place in several nations, matters of travel, passports, visas and accommodation will have to be dealt with. It would be difficult to list rates for every hotel or means of transport, so to make things easier the most logical choice will be provided and detailed. You can deal with this by saying that arrangements were made by Jerome Patterson through his agents in Rio. Keep in mind that as this is intended to be a fairly compact adventure, the organization is fairly linear, and you may have to add digressions and variations as you feel they are needed. Also, many descriptions will be fairly general, dealing mostly with situations, so you may have to add detail and specifics. Remember that you are the GM and how you adapt or adjust the adventure is up to you.

BACKGROUND & SET-UP

It is April of 1931 and Baltimore is already beginning to feel the heat of summer. The Primary Character receives a letter, presumably at his office, inviting him to meet with wealthy industrialist Jerome Patterson at the Patterson estate at Clifton Park in North Baltimore. One half of a \$1000 bill is enclosed with the letter. The meeting is set for 10 that evening.

Patterson meets the Primary Character in the smoking room of his large house, carefully arranging things so that none of the family or servants except the butler see his visitor. When the PC arrives he will give him the other half of the \$1000 bill. He has a situation which he wants resolved by a professional. When it is completed to his satisfaction he will pay the PC an additional \$4000. This will be a flat fee, and any expenses will have to be taken care of out of the \$5000 total paid, which should be more than enough for any expenses, as it is a respectable year's wages in this period.

Patterson is a wealthy industrialist from an old Maryland family. He has lots of money and even more power, but he cannot afford even a whiff of scandal to touch his family.

Characters may have heard rumors that his two children, Elaine and Jerome Jr. are rather less responsible than the family had hoped for, and there are hints at darker problems. The basic problem is that three days ago Elaine Patterson left for a party with some friends and was not seen again. After the party a car was sent round to pick her up, but she had left earlier in a cab and that was the last which was seen of her.

The background of the situation is that while Elaine was home from Smith College earlier that summer she met Roger Mulliken, a rising executive in her father's operation. They became romantically involved, much to her father's chagrin. He forbade Elaine to see Mulliken, and arranged for Mulliken to be transferred to oversee his large sugar cane interests in Brazil, thus separating the lovers. All this happened three months ago, and now Elaine has been missing for three days, and her father suspects that she had been in touch with Mulliken and has taken a ship down to Brazil to be with him. He mentions that she has always been a headstrong and impulsive girl.

What he wants is for someone to go down to his plantation near Rio de Janeiro, talk to Mulliken, find his daughter and bring her home so that she can return to school with a closer eye kept on her. They should feel free to take whatever measures are necessary to deal with Mulliken, but should try to avoid embarrassing publicity. He will arrange for round trip first class passage for the PC and up to 3 additional people on the Zeelandia, a ship of the Royal Holland Lloyd Line leaving for Rio de Janeiro the next afternoon. It is of Dutch registry, but it is the soonest available transport, and will be arriving from New York in the morning, staying for 6 hours and leaving a bit before nightfall. If there are no problems with this, he will consider the \$1000 an advance and they should rush right home and start packing for their imminent departure.

One thing which Patterson may also reveal is that his son, Jerrome 'Jerry' Patterson, Jr., may become involved in the search. He disappeared on his own in search of Elaine the day before, and he has been known to be rather obsessive, and to harbor an unnatural affection for his sister. He may select what parts of this to pass on, but he suspects that Jerry may try to sail on the Zeelandia, as it is the only ship leaving Baltimore for Rio that week. Emily is presumed to have left on the Flandria, which left three days ago. As part of their service he would like them to keep an eye on Jerry and see that he stays out of the trouble which his unstable character and nasty trouble could get him into. They might even try to dissuade him from sailing, if they encounter him, but he should be handled with care.

SAILING DOWN TO RIO

The Zeelandia is a large, fairly recently outfitted passenger liner. When the characters come aboard they some of the other passengers will also be boarding and some will already have boarded, some earlier that morning and some in New York. Passengers they are likely to see when boarding include Sturm Dirrikson and the five Nomarian Elders. There will be some 50 passengers aboard, all first class, plus mail and cargo. When they board they will be greeted by Captain Johan Haas and escorted to their cabins by a steward. First class cabins have two bunks and a shower each, and are relatively small, as this is not one of the grand luxury liners of the time. There is one dining room. Breakfast is served from 7am to 9am. Lunch is served from 12pm to 2pm. Dinner is served from 6pm to 8pm, and the bar in the dining room is open until midnight. After dinner entertainment will be provided throughout the voyage by Ricardo Boro and his Rio Balladeers, who are just completing a successful tour in the United States and returning to their native land from New York. The trip to Rio will take 10 days if all goes well, with brief stops in San Juan, Caracas and Natal.

While they are on the ship it is possible that they may interact with or become curious about several of the stranger passengers. This is covered by the following descriptions of possible encounters to use on the boat.

Meeting Jerry Patterson

While they are aboard the ship it is quite likely that they will encounter Jerry Patterson. There are not a great number of passengers, and he will stand out at dinner

the first night as being rather drunken and behaving rather obnoxiously to a waiter. He is seated at Captain Haas' table, but the captain tactfully ignores him. The characters will probably recognize him at this point, and if they are wise and can get to the captains table (where they will be seated if they have SOF of 16 or more) they can befriend him and escort him out of the dining room. If they offend him fairly civilly and get him to bed, he will become friendly for the rest of the voyage, perhaps even confiding in them his mission to rescue his sister.

An Evening with Ricardo Boro

After dinner each evening of the trip the dining room is given over to dancing and musical entertainment, featuring 'Ricardo Boro and his Rio Balladeers', a 12 piece band from Rio which has been playing in a New York club and is now on its way back to Brazil. The band is quite good, playing a selection of popular tunes and updated versions of traditional Brazilian folk music. Much of the material is instrumental and suited to dancing, but Boro sings many of the numbers as well as conducting the orchestra. Boro and his men are all young, healthy and athletic, with some military background, which they may need before the adventure is over. Characters who stick around after the entertainment will notice that Boro is quite attractive to the ladies, with his dark foreign looks, and that he favors some of the fairer passengers with significant attention, though none of them are ever seen to get back to his cabin. As the tour goes on, if the characters get connected to some of the older, gossipy women aboard, they may hear a rumor that Boro has a woman in his cabin who takes her meals there and does not emerge. Observing the cabin will reveal that the kitchen does deliver food there, but the pursar will reveal no more about the occupancy of the cabin.

The Strange Cargo of Sturm Dietrikson

One passenger who is seated at the captain's table, and whom they may meet is Sturm Dietrikson, a German merchant who claims to be looking for new sources of rubber for an unspecified German automobile manufacturer. However, if any of the characters know anything about rubber or cars, he seems to have no more than a lay knowledge of the topics. He is fairly affable, and will talk gently about such things as racial destiny and the improvement of world conditions through selective breeding. If anyone seems receptive he will even distribute some appropriate literature from National Socialist organizations in England or the US, and talk in more detail about his dream of a new order in Germany and the destiny of the Aryan peoples. He will only open up to someone he sees as a fellow Aryan. Aside from his political views he is a bit of a drinker, but a decent enough sort. Remember that this is 1931 and Nazism will be a fairly obscure political deviancy, and he could easily be taken as perfectly harmless. He certainly seems too innocuous a sort to be a spy or foreign agent. Characters who associate with him will also note that he has a bad back, and often needs to be helped up from his seat after a long evening sitting in the lounge or dining room.

One evening, if he has made friends, he will seem agitated, and confide in his friend that he has a rather valuable cargo aboard which he is concerned about, though he does not want to trouble the crew. He would like to check on it, but it is in a trunk in the hold, and his back makes it hard for him to move the trunk so that he can open it and check the contents. If someone is willing to help him, he will go down to the hold and inspect his trunk. Note that a good judge of character may suspect that he wants company more to show off his prized possession than for labor, as he could have a crewmember help him. The door to the hold is kept locked and if there has been trouble there will be a guard (the Nomarian Elders may have caused some trouble). The Pursar's Mate will have to accompany them to let them into the hold and make sure they don't molest anyone else's cargo. Once they move several boxes from around it, they can watch while he opens it. Inside they will see a selection of items, including clothing, some common artworks, and an ornamental wooden box containing a large, decorative book which seems to have been written by hand in a strange script which none of them recognize. After looking at the book,

Dietrikson will close the trunk again with a new lock. He will say little to them if asked about the book, save that it is very valuable and that he plans to sell it to friends in Germany. He will have to trust them not to steal it, and since he will ask help only of one person, and only if he seems reliable and well enough off not to resort to theft.

Note that this book is in fact the book of Nomar, and if circumstances seem right, this inspection might lead to a confrontation with the Nomarian elders, who are trying to get the book back before it gets to Rio or at least before it gets to Germany. This might also be valuable information for some characters.

The Nomarian Elders

Most of the characters travelling on the Zeelandia will notice some strange passengers at dinner, notably a group of five men who sit at a table together, dress in what appear to be black evening clothes (inappropriate to the season and place) and keep pretty much to themselves. If asked, they will explain that they are Elders of the Brotherhood of Nomar, sent by their church on a special mission to rescue a holy relic, the Book of Nomar, which was stolen from their temple at Tempe(AZ) and which they believe a certain passenger (pointed looks at Dietrikson) may have knowledge about, as he was in Tempe recently and certain evidence makes him suspect. Note that they may do several things to aid their mission. They may offer to pay a PI to recover their book for them, something on the level of \$3000, though they are cheap and will try to pay much less. Failing this, or even before they are approached, they may try unsuccessfully to break into the hold and check out Dietrikson's luggage, which will lead to a guard being put on the hold. Their standing plan is to keep an eye on Dietrikson and ambush him somehow in Rio. However, they profess non-violence, so they really do need someone to do their dirty work for them, either on the ship or in Rio.

The Veiled Lady

Late on night during the journey, a member of the party may be walking on deck, preferably a single person alone. He will wander towards the back of the ship, where he will see a fairly tall woman in a dark dress wearing a veil and looking out over the sea. If she is approached, she will flee and will not speak. If she is followed, she will be seen to go into Ricardo Boro's cabin. If they try to start trouble there they will be met by Boro who will not be pleased, and will do his best to discourage them, claiming that the woman is his sister, who was at a special school in America and speaks only Portuguese. If there is an incident of this sort he will keep the cabin locked and open it only himself. If they keep a watch on the cabin, they will see meals delivered only when Boro is there. If they do not disturb the woman she will continue to take an hour walk on deck around midnight each night.

The woman is, of course, Elaine Patterson, but there is no evidence or reason to believe that. If they should break into the cabin to kidnap her, Boro and some of his hefty band members should show up, possibly with crew support, to discourage them. She does not want to go with them, and will be very angry if discovered, though she also speaks Portuguese and may try to pass as Brazilian from behind her veil.

When they arrive in Rio Boro and the girl will be met by more of Boro's friends and taken directly by car to the Copacabana Palace Hotel (on Avenida Atlantica/\$12 per room per night), where Boro maintains rooms and entertains in the casino. They can be followed, but are in too large a group to be interfered with.

IN RIO

The characters, when they arrive will be met by a car from the Hotel de Londres (on Avenida Atlantica), where rooms are reserved for them (rooms are \$4 per night). This hotel is some three blocks from the Copacabana Palace and other major hotels on the Praia de Copacabana, and all the way across town from the main port (almost 4 miles).

There are several things which they may wish to do while they are in Rio, and several things which may happen to them or events which they may encounter. These are described in the following sections.

Mama Lemoja

While the Copacabaia has Ricardo Boro for entertainment the Hotel de Londres has a rather less sophisticated form of entertainment in its lounge, in the form of Mama Lemoja, a local character renowned as a witch and mystic, who performs predictions and tells fortunes in the hotel lounge.

Although she puts on a good show of mystic power, it is not all show, and she does have considerable knowledge and ability with the supernatural, as well as good knowledge and connections in the underworld of Rio.

Mama Lemoja may be a good contact, because for the right fee she can pass on valid information masked in mystical mumbo jumbo. Among the things she can discover for them is the fact that Elaine is with Ricardo Boro and not Roger Mulliken, and even some of the activities which are going on out at the plantation. She could be a useful source, but will require significant payment for any services, and does not advertise her abilities or connections.

At the Plantation

Roger Mulliken can be found at Jerome Patterson's sugar plantation north of Rio. Locally the plantation is known as the Plantation of Sao Francisco de Sertoies, after a ruined church on the grounds.

They will probably decide to visit Mulliken at the plantation at some point, either to enlist aid or investigate him. If they come to the plantation house during the daylight hours they will be told that he is in the fields supervising. If they come at night he will meet them at the house and deal with them there. If they go to the fields to look for him they will have a very hard time finding him, and may eventually be led to the ruins of the Church of Sao Francisco de Sertoies, which is covered in jungle growth at the north end of the plantation. Rather than supervising the sugar planting, which he has left in the hands of assistants, he has taken a crew of workers to the old church, and is digging out artifacts which seem to be part of a treasure hidden there by refugee nobles in the early 19th century during the Reign of King Joao I. Mulliken will become embarrassed if discovered and will wind up confessing all. He has been removing these treasures for some weeks, has not informed Mr. Patterson, and has made arrangements to get them out of the country without dealing with the Brazilian government which would surely regard them as state treasures. He is essentially an honest fellow, and is ready to split the \$25000 or so of treasure with Mr. Patterson, though he might be receptive to a direct deal with the investigators where they get some 10th of that amount for their silence.

Aside from that there is little which is questionable going on at the fairly well-run plantation, and he is certainly not harboring Elaine, who he has been too busy to worry about lately. If he hears that she has taken off with Boro he will become enraged, and may gather a group of his tougher workers and head into town to rescue her. The investigators may have to guide or control this intention.

A Visit from the Police

With all the activity which the characters are likely to become involved in, they may get a visit from the Rio Police. This will be in the form of the diminutive and vicious Inspector Cabrales and three of his rather tough looking men, who will ask their questions quickly, with implied nasty actions threatened for those who do not cooperate. Keep in mind that the Getulio Vargas and his military Junta have recently (1930) taken control of the country and that the police currently have considerable power in the unstable situation.

Likely areas for questioning are the Nomarian business on board the ship, just what the investigators are doing in Rio, any information they may have on Boro, who is suspected of being a dissident, and anything they might know about questionable activities out at the plantation. More specific and appropriate questions might depend on what the characters have done at the point that the police are brought in and what of their activities will have become public knowledge, though questions about Dietrikson and the Nomarians are probably inevitable.

Jerry Patterson Takes Action

If Jerry Patterson is still around and on the loose by the time they reach Rio, he will probably be able to discover where Elaine is in 2 or 3 days. At this point he will take action, going to the Copacabaia and confronting Boro. If he is friendly with the investigators he may ask them for help or tell them he is going to do this.

Boro and his men are able to handle themselves well, even against a dangerous type like Jerry. However, Jerry may be armed, so he may shoot or kill one of the band members before being disarmed. If he just shows up and causes trouble he will be beaten and left in an ally where he will be robbed and beaten some more. Then he will probably get drunk and be arrested. If he injures someone he may be killed and left somewhere obscure, which could lead to more trouble, though no one will finger Boro or his men. How you work this up is in the hands of the GM, but there are many options possible.

Dealing with Ricardo Boro

With the example of what happened to Jerry to look at and a good idea of what Boro and his crew are like, when the party finally find out that he has Elaine, they will probably be ready to proceed with caution. Although they do not know it, their best option would be to play a waiting game, because in 3-6 weeks Boro will probably become bored with Elaine and send her to Roger Mulliken, who it should be easier to get her away from. However, chances are they will either not figure this out or will want to take direct action anyway. Note that a good contact like Mama Lemoja may know about Boro's tendency to get bored with women and give them a hint in that direction.

Anyway, Boro lives in the Hotel Copacabaia and does his show in the casino annex there. He has a suite of rooms which he shares with three other members of his band. They don't travel around armed, but these are dangerous times in Brazil, so they have weapons available for easy access. Elaine will stay mostly in the suite and get room service, though she will come down to see the occasional show in the casino. However, if there is any indication of interest in her Boro will get possessive and be with her at all times, having her in the casino during all shows and leaving someone with her whenever she is in the suite. If they are wary there should be at least two people with her at all time, either band members or associates.

How and when the investigators approach Boro or try to reach Elaine is up to them. If they case the situation well first they will note that Elaine is cooking for the band in a kitchenette in the suite, and that she goes to the Central Market accompanied by two band members every second day. This might be a good time to try to snatch her, but at these times her escorts are armed and they should expect fairly rapid reprisals. Boro is well connected in the underworld, and will hear of a snatch quite quickly and be able to gather a good, skilled force to deal with it. In general he will not put himself in danger, but will take drastic action and has an understanding with the police.

Jerry Goes to Jail

Given Jerry Patterson's personality, it is almost inevitable that if he stays alive in Rio he will eventually get arrested. In such a situation he will call on anyone he knows for aid to bail him out, and it would be convenient if by that point he knew some of the investigators so that he could call on them. They might feel obligated to help him out as they are working for his father. Unless he gets involved with Boro he will probably be in for drunkenness or getting in a fight, so the bail will be something around \$20. It can be assumed that any money he had will disappear in the fight, while he is drunk or after he gets to jail. This is not an essential event, just a nice little annoyance.

Thug Attack

If Boro finds out what is going on or if the investigators cross Mulliken, there is a good chance that a group of about a dozen thugs will be sent to teach them a lesson. These will be people who are familiar with the streets of Rio and will have little trouble ambushing them, beating them up and robbing



ATLANTICO

Lagoa Rodrigo de Freitas

OCEANO

BAY OF BOTAFOGO

NOVO

PROJETO
BAIRRO INDUSTRIAL

ILHA SAUVAN

**MAP OF THE CITY OF RIO DE JANEIRO
SHOWING**

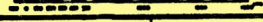
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them. It is also quite likely that while they are out their rooms in the hotel will be searched, possibly by the police.

Roger Mulliken Takes Action

If Mulliken learns that Elaine is being kept by Boro before she has been rescued, he will probably take action. This will consist of getting two dozen of his favorite toughs dressed up in their best clothes, taking them down to the casino and having them raise hell with the band while he and his three best men go to the suite and rescue Elaine. It would be best that if this should happen it happens when the investigators are trying to do their rescue or while they are at least around, so that they can get involved and even get in trouble. There is a good chance that this approach will lead to open violence which, if prolonged will bring the attention of the police or military and find a nice spot for those involved in a rather nasty Brazilian jail. If investigators are arrested they will be treated badly and relieved of their money. However, should this happen it would be good if one cautious character were to escape so that someone is left to bail them out and clean things up.

CONCLUSION

If they succeed, they have open return tickets on a Royal Holland Lloyd ship to Baltimore, and will be paid off on their return with Elaine. If Jerry is humiliated but not hurt they will get a \$500 bonus. If Jerry is hurt or killed they will get a cold brush off after payment. If he dies through their negligence Baltimore will be unhealthy for them. If they bring back Mulliken's treasure to split with Patterson they will get a \$2500 bonus. If all goes well Patterson may use them for future jobs and recommend them to friends.

Out of all this you should be able to make a good solid adventure. Stats for the background characters with translation guidelines follow in the next section, and maps are in the central insert. There may be some areas you will have to adjust or flesh out, but that should give the adventure a personal flavor. Keep in mind that a fast pace is essential and dimwitted characters may have to be helped along from time to time.



BACKGROUND CHARACTERS

These descriptions are for characters mentioned in the text of this adventure. Some are for specific characters and others apply to general groups of characters. The basic stats and skills given are for *To Challenge Tomorrow*. However, at the end of this section there is special section for use in converting those stats to other appropriate game systems.

ROGER MULLIKEN

SIZ 13	PSI 4	AP:58	AFR:23	Accounting(10)	Demolition(5)	Intimidation(5)	Riding(5)
CON 14	RAT 18	FP:42	HAR:15	Administration(12)	Dodging(15/MAR25)	Legal(5)	Rifle(15/MAR30)
STR 17	EDU 18	HP:40	HDR:10	Boxing(15/HAR30)	Driving(5)	Logistics(8)	Survival(5)
REA 13	APP 13	MP:39	MAR:13	Business(15)	Electrical(5)	Mechanical(5)	Swimming(5)
DEX 13	CHA 15	HT:6'0"	REP:10	Clerical(5)	Farming(5)	Perry(15/HDR25)	Thrust(10/MAR25)
AGI 13	SEC 18	WT:185	REP:20	Communications(5)	Geology(5)	Pistol(17/MAR30)	Wrestle(5/MAR20)

Roger Mulliken is fairly young, recently graduated from the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania, but he comes from a good background and has a natural aptitude for business and management. He is running the Patterson Plantation near Rio fairly well, but has become involved in smuggling valuable relics out of the country and is a bit out of his depth. His involvement with Elaine Patterson was brief and not too significant, though they might make a potentially logical couple for a future match. He likes her and is concerned for her welfare, but they do not actually have a relationship of any sort. While at the plantation he will be accompanied by armed men, usually two, and will carry a Colt .45 Automatic Pistol, a machete and a whip.

STURM DIETRIKSON, GERMAN AGENT

SIZ 15	PSI 2	AP:48	AFR:27	Boxing(17/HAR30)	Concealment(5)	Forgery(10)	Survival(8)
CON 15	RAT 14	FP:45	HAR:13	Riding(3)	Conning(10)	Lockpick(8)	Torture(15)
STR 18	EDU 16	HP:45	HDR:7	Silent Move(5)	Cover(10)	Surveillance(10)	Security(12)
REA 15	APP 12	MP:35	MAR:13	Cat Fall(5)	Street Sense(10)	Infiltration(7)	Dodge(11/MAR20)
DEX 10	CHA 8	HT:5'8"	REP:9	Climbing(5)	Demolition(10)	Observe(10)	Perry(13/HDR20)
AGI 10	SOC 13	WT:230	REP:15	Club Att(22/HAR35)	Investigate(10)	Intimidate(15)	Pistol(27/MAR40)

Diatrikson is actually a merchant, but he is also an agent for the Nazi party in Germany. He is carrying the Book of Mazarin in his trunk which is stored on board the ship, and is rather proud of his illicit possession of it now that he is out of US coastal waters. He is rather garrulous, and while he won't be too pushy, he would love to discuss Nazi themes, particularly racial purity and supremacy with anyone he sees as a receptive equal. He goes armed at all times with a Messer 9mm Parabellum.

RICARDO LOBO, MUSICIAN

SIZ 10	PSI 12	AP:76	AFR:15	Acting(5)	Hypnosis(5)	Street Sense(15)	Boxing(8/HAR25)
CON 15	RAT 15	FP:45	HAR:17	Boardgaming(8)	Sexual(15)	Pistol(22/MAR40)	Trip(10)
STR 15	EDU 12	HP:35	HDR:16	Cards(12)	Music(20)	Dodging(13/MOR30)	
REA 18	APP 15	MP:36	MAR:18	Gambling(10)	Voice(20)	Cover(10)	
DEX 17	CHA 17	HT:5'4"	MDR:17	Conning(15)	Poetry(12)	Parry(9/HDR25)	
AGI 13	SOC 09	WT:128	REP:25	Dance(15)	Observe(10)	Fast Draw(9)	

Ricardo Lobo is a skilled musician, with a way with the ladies, but a roving eye. He works at the Hotel Copacabeia in the casino. He also has connections with the underworld in Rio, and can gather a good amount of muscle on command. Although he is enjoying his fling with Elaine Patterson, he will tire of her fairly quickly, as he is not disposed to fidelity. These same stats can serve for his men as well as for Lobo, and all are armed with newly purchased American Colt .45 Automatic Pistols.

JEROME PATTERSON, JR.

SIZ 10	PSI 18	AP:82	AFR:24	Riding(10)	Anthropology(8)	Pistol(24/MAR40)	Swimming(5)
CON 12	RAT 10	FP:36	HAR:18	Silent Move(10)	Intimidate(10)	Wrestling(7/HAR25)	Torture(10)
STR 24	EDU 16	HP:32	HDR:14	Cards(10)	Archeology(10)	Boxing(12/MAR30)	History(10)
REA 18	APP 15	MP:34	MAR:16	Hunting(5)	Cat Fall(5)	Dodge(13/MOR30)	Literature(8)
DEX 14	CHA 17	HT:5'3"	MDR:17	Business(5)	Conning(10)	Parry(16/HDR30)	Folklore(10)
AGI 12	SOC 20	WT:124	REP:20	Concealment(5)	Rifle(19/MAR35)	Thrust Att(22/HAR40)	

Jerome 'Jerry' Patterson Jr. is rather botheaded, young and intemperate. He drinks too much, gets in fights and is a general embarrassment to his family. He has an unhealthy attachment to his sister, and tends to go off on tangents with little provocation. He is unusually strong despite his small size, and has a tendency to ignore pain and injury when angered. There is more than a little of the berserker in his makeup. He is foolish in many ways, and should be used to embarrass and misdirect. He is heavily armed, with a Colt .38 Revolver on his person much of the time and a Thompson .45 Submachinegun in his luggage, ready for use if he wants to get serious. He may also have a small amount of explosives (sticks of dynamite) hidden in his luggage.

MAMA YEMOJA

SIZ 14	PSI 24	AP:56	AFR:20	Acting(10)	Folklore(20)	Manual(15)	Sympathy(12)
CON 12	RAT 18	FP:36	HAR:16	Business(10)	History(8)	Coercion(12)	Contagion(12)
STR 14	EDU 10	HP:40	HDR:10	First Aid(15)	Conning(15)	Passage(10)	Relative(12)
REA 12	APP 8	MP:34	MAR:14	Life Saving(5)	Dance(8)	Necromancy(12)	Hypnosis(15)
DEX 16	CHA 16	HT:5'11"	MDR: 9	Pharmacology(15)	Intimidation(20)	Demonoscopy(12)	Shapeshift(10)
AGI 10	SOC 14	WT:210	REP:30	Surgery(5)	Intrigue(12)	Spirit Magic(12)	Precognition(12)

Mama Yemoja is a Cafuso, or mixed-blood Brazilian with Negro, Indian and White blood. Although she puts on quite a show as a witch woman for the tourists, she is a powerful and respected Priestess of Umbande or Macumba, the voodoo-like witch cult found among the mixed-bloods of Rio, combining elements of West African spirit magic and local Indian traditions. She has genuine psychic powers, but also has good connections for information in the underworld of the city, and could be a great source of information for investigators. She is a large woman, though fairly young, and might develop an amatory affection for one of the characters if they deal with her a lot. This could be dangerous and embarrassing, as she has the power to compel cooperation if she really wants something.

LOCAL THUGS/PLANTATION WORKERS

SIZ 15	PSI 5	AP:44	AFR:27	Riding(5)	Intimidate(5)	Wrestling(11/HAR25)	Fast Draw(6)
CON 15	RAT 10	FP:45	HAR:14	Street Sense(5)	Resistance(5)	Unbalancing(10)	Folklore(5)
STR 18	EDU 8	HP:45	HDR: 9	Survival(5)	Hending(5)	Dodge(10/MOR20)	
REA 14	APP 10	MP:43	MAR:13	Cards(5)	Boxing(11/HAR25)	Parry(16/HDR25)	
DEX 12	CHA 8	HT:5'9"	MDR:10	Farming(8)	Club Att(11/HAR25)	Entangling(11/HAR25)	
AGI 14	SOC 8	WT:195	REP: 5	Hunting(10)	Pistol(12/MAR25)	Cover(5)	

These stats should serve for street thugs and plantation workers used as guards or to assault characters in the city or elsewhere. They will most likely be armed with clubs or machetes, though there may be a few rather old and clumsy firearms among them.

SYSTEM CONVERSION

The basic stats provided for the characters are in terms of To Challenge Tomorrow, but conversion to other systems is a fairly easy matter.

The stats provided include 12 basic characteristics, plus secondary values like AR(Attack Rating)[For all weapon skills mentioned], DR(Defense Rating)[For both missiles and melee attacks], AP(Activity Points), AFR(Attack Force Rating)[For modifying damage] and FP(Fatigue Points) are for use primarily with TCT

Some stats like REP(Reputation), HT(Height), and WT(Weight) are universally applicable. Skills are provided with levels, which indicate a relative level of ability when combined with appropriate characteristics.

For Call of Cthulhu or similar games conversion is fairly easy. Many of the skills and basic stats are comparable. PSI is the same as POW and Skill Levels can be converted to percentages by multiplying by 5%.

For Daredavils Wit should be equal to RAT, Will should be STR, Strength should be STR, Deftness should be DEX, Speed should be (REA+AGI)/2 and Health should be CON. SL with various skills can be considered as roughly the same as BCS.

For Espionage and similar games STR=STR, DEX=DEX, CON=CON, BOD=SIZ, INT=RAT, EGO=PSI, PRE=CHA, COM=APP. The Skill Level provided for skills can be considered as equivalent to the Skill Roll.

For Chill and similar games STR=STR/3, DEX=DEX/3, AGL=AGI/3, WPR=PSI/3, PER=RAT/3, STA=CON/3. Some of the other stats would have to be derived as the game master finds most appropriate. Skills are of limited importance for conversion to this type of system, save as guidelines for play.

All in all, the stats and description provided should give a good basic idea of the characters and provide the framework for application to any system.



NEW FROM RAGNAROK

SPELLCRAFT

Ysgarth is a world of magic and fantastic powers. SpellCraft is the second book of the new edition of the Ysgarth system and provides the most flexible and realistic mechanics for magic in any role-playing system ever published. SpellCraft features 500 magical skills and spells fully described, complete rules for spell casting and details on over 200 religions and mage guilds and colleges.

This is the second in a series of three books. The first, RoleCraft, covers character generation, skills and combat. The third, WorldCraft, will be out this summer and provides guidelines for world design, campaign set-up and background, with a large selection of adventures, characters and creatures.

Ysgarth is a unique system which has been developed and playtested over half a dozen years, growing to meet the needs of imaginative players who are looking for a system which allows them to be creative without artificial restrictions. The rules emphasize role-playing and character development, allowing lots of freedom for player and gamemaster. Ysgarth is a revolution in role-playing.

Each book sells for \$5.95, and they can be ordered in advance at \$15 for the complete set. Each book will be sent when it becomes available. The complete set will be released in a boxed edition later this year at \$15 for the set.

RIVERMASTERS OF ARANIA

Rivermasters of Arania is the latest adventure in the Jahannam Adventure Series. It is a complete campaign aid for use with Ysgarth or AD&D. Characters take a dangerous journey up the River Kare from the troubled Ilchanian Empire to the heart of the powerful young Kingdom of Arania. In their journey they must deal with the strange passengers who share their barge, hostile Karaman tribesmen and imperial agents bent on foiling their mission to King Ilyamir of Arania. Rivermasters of Arania is an exceptionally well developed adventure with complete description of a variety of events, encounters and situations, plus a dozen detailed maps and plans. Also included are detailed descriptions of a number of original creatures, characters and magic items. This is the tenth adventure in the Jahannam series and sells for only \$3. It is also available in a larger format for store sales at \$4.95.

SIEGE & FORTRESS

This is the long-awaited comprehensive gaming aid for use with any system or campaign which has a fantasy or medieval setting. It is a complete guide to the construction, siege and defense of a medieval castle. It features detailed and useful text by Lew Bryson with expansions and notes by Dave Nalle and Rick Bueker. Sections cover almost every aspect of medieval fortification and warfare, from economics to technology to social life. In addition, Siege & Fortress features hundreds of detailed maps and plans as examples and for use in any campaign, covering every major type of castle or siege engine.

This book is exceptionally well researched and unbeatably detailed, providing an accuracy and depth of analysis which has yet to be achieved anywhere else. Siege & Fortress will be out soon, but right now you can reserve a copy for only \$4.95, including postage, and it will be sent as soon as it is available.



<This Part You Read>

FEEDBACK RESULTS FOR #35

Article	Rating	Change
Conjurings	61	+7
Totems	91	—
Origins	79	—
In the Speculum	69	-2
Robbers	87	—
On Golem Const	87	—
Echoes	87	+5
The Eye of Odin	82	—
Peter Chen	78	-5
Undead Artists	88	-7
Overall	83	+2

<This is the section you clip and send back to us—\$0.00 IT!>

RAGNAROK ENTERPRISES	ORDER FORM	Price Total
# Item		
— ABYSS(6)		10.00
— ABYSS(13)		18.00
— London by Night		6.95
— Challengers		8.95
— Guns at Noon		4.00
— Ysgarth(Bk 1)		5.95
— Ysgarth Reserved		15.00
— Citadel of Zushran		3.00
— Dark Waters		3.00
— Rivermasters		3.00
— Chal of Toyemaker		3.00
— Siege & Fortress		4.95
	TOTAL\$	

YOUR FEEDBACK ON #36

Rate these items on a scale from 1(awful) to 100(great)

Conjurings	_____
Magik	_____
African Cuits	_____
In the Speculum	_____
Revenge in Rio	_____
Seaborn Encounters	_____
Echoes from the Abyss	_____
Art: The Look	_____

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greater imaginative freedom, but is bound by tradition to providing lots of charts and tables to determine how characters eat and breathe. The result of all this is a good, playable game system with a bit too much die rolling but a clear sense that restrictive mechanics are there to be ignored when appropriate. It is strange, but no other game system has given me as strong a feeling that I could play it and essentially ignore most of the mechanics most of the time and get away with it. I heartily recommend *Flashing Blades* to gamers interested in the swashbuckling setting (and more of you should be). It is certainly the best game on this period published to date. (DN)

Lands of Adventure™



by Lee Gold



LANDS OF ADVENTURE

by Lee Gold

From Fantasy Games Unlimited

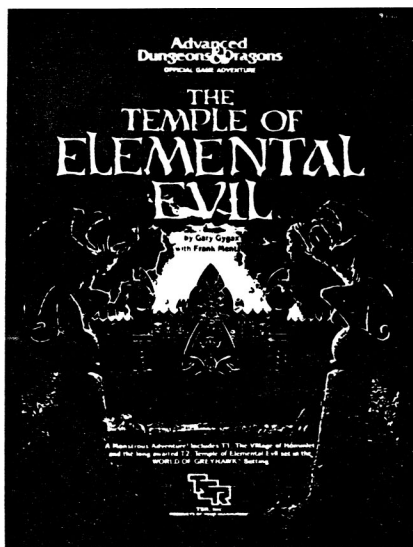
This has one of the nicest box covers I've seen on an FGU game of late, and continues the attractive economy of having black and white covers on the books themselves. *Lands of Adventure* comes in two fairly thin books, one with mechanics and the other a 'Culture Pack'. It is interesting that in her introduction Lee Gold says "all these years I had been dreaming of the ideal Role-Playing System. It would have a minimum of rolling—and a maximum of role-playing", for as seems to be the preferred style at FGU the dice seem to dominate here, though they are not as overpowering as they are in *Other Suns* or *Flashing Blades*. There has clearly been a strong effort here to sublimate mechanics to background, though it does not always work.

The first book starts, as all first books seem to do, with character creation. There are 11 basic characteristics plus height/weight, gender and a few others. There are a minimum of secondary characteristics, and all of them logically necessary. The selection of basic characteristics is interesting and says something about the game. There are such characteristics as Voice and Appearance, as well as Talent for magical power, and an interesting division of the powers of the mind into Craft, Prudence and Intelligence. Some of these stats are determined in part from other stats, which is a bit confusing, and the most annoying aspect is that they are not arranged or explained in any logical order, though this is easy enough to puzzle out for the experienced player. Beginners would not get through the second page of the rules. The nicest thing about the basic stats is that, while a system for rolling them is given, an alternative of allocating points is also offered, the first such system I've seen in an FGU game, and a definite improvement from a role-playing perspective. One particularly interesting secondary stat is Piety, indicating a character's relationship to his deity. This first section shows a lot of interesting ideas, none of them unique to this system, but all of them promising. The skill system is potentially interesting, but somewhat confusing. No skills are actually described, but they are classified by categories of difficulty and usefulness to determine how hard they are to learn and use, with examples of skills which would fall into each of 10 categories. Success if based on a percentage roll, and skills can be improved both by training and experience, though there is a limit on how high a skill may be trained. A character may choose specialized skills with which he is somewhat more skilled. Improvement by training is based on time of training and the type of skill. Improvement by experience is based on a roll as in *RuneQuest*, and again there is a maximum limit to advancement. A lot of control of how the character develops is in the hands of the player, but responsibility for providing good skill lists rests with the DN. This is really a rather good skill system. It is fairly simple and playable, but has one major problem in the limits which are placed on advancement. The system would have much more

prolonged playability if it were more open ended. Combat is simple and straightforward as well. However, it follows the rather unrealistic *RuneQuest* model, with separate attack and defense rolls, with an added rather confusing optional critical, fumble and location systems, and a very heavy emphasis on encumbrance. Without the optional rules combat is very generalized, playable but unrealistic. With the optional rules combat is a bit too detailed to be playable. The magic system is also fairly simple, though there does not seem to be any indication of how one learns spells or supernatural powers or how they relate to the skill system, though their application is clear. Again, this is a very general and easily employed system. The rules conclude with a brief summation of creatures, how to create them and how to run them, plus random encounter tables and random non-player character generation tables. There is also an index, which is always a nice addition. Basically, the mechanics of *Lands of Adventure* are fairly good. It is a limited but playable system which is extremely flexible and generally encourages role-playing and originality. The only structural problems is the vagueness of some of the rules, as in the skill section, but this should not be a problem for experienced players who can deal with what are guidelines more than hard and fast mechanics. A result of this is that the system is too undefined and makes too many assumptions to be well suited for beginners, which is a pity, because the generic concept behind the game might appeal to them. The crippling problem here is not in the mechanics, but in the organization of the rules. They are an almost incomprehensible mess. *Lands of Adventure* needed serious editing, and should not have gone to press in this form. There are no clear indications of where one section ends and another begins, except for paragraph numbers which are in the titles. Some sections of explanation seem to be missing altogether, especially in the parts on magic. Many terms and concepts need to be described in much more detail. Finally, the selection of basic stats and how they are set up seems almost nonsensical, as if the author grabbed a handful of stats from a pile and shoved them together as they came into view. I have read dozens of RPGs, and I found *Lands of Adventure* to be bewilderingly hard to puzzle out despite a smaller type of mechanics and an essentially simple system. The rules are not incomprehensible, but the lack of organization does not do justice to the quality of the mechanics and ideas.

The second book is a 'Culture Pack' for 'Mythic Greece and Medieval England'. My first reaction to this book was disappointment. This was mainly because of rather impressive build up I had seen for the 'Culture Pack' concept in *ALARUMS & EXCURSIONS*. It had led me to expect something more impressive. Basically, this is a good idea, to present a basic, flexible system of mechanics with aids to cover a variety of backgrounds in which the mechanics can be applied. Actually, the first background presented is fairly good, and seems best suited to the flavor of the mechanics in book one. No major adaption would be needed to use this setting. Information on the period, social activities, magic, religion, skills, and equipment is provided, with encounter tables, a very short scenario and an index. 'Mythic Greece' is a playable background. The information is useful, if a bit sketchy, and much of it is interesting and imaginative. Purists should take note that it is more 'Mythic' than 'Greece', sort of Mary Renault filtered through Margaret Murray. Don't approach it expecting any resemblance to classical myth or historical Greece and you will find it a good setting for adventuring. The 'Medieval England' setting should also be taken with a grain of salt (maybe several). Again, it has little similarity to history or traditional legend. Here we have Howard Pyle and Arthur Rackham filtered through the omnipresent Margaret Murray. Picts seem to be a non-human race, something my Pictish ancestors would have probably killed you for saying. It just isn't possible to cover the whole Middle Ages in one background, so there is a half-hearted Arthurian focus. There is some interesting data on legendary monsters, a nice weather table, a very brief scenario and the usual tables for encounters, etc. As a medieval historian I find it hard to be objective about this section, because it is distinctly ahistorical. As a general observation it does seem awfully sketchy for a topic which really deserves more development. I think that this 'Culture Pack' serves as a good example of how to structure such an aid and the type of info to include, but a serious aid of this sort would need much more detail and more serious scholarly research. One thing is certain. Lee Gold should learn that Margaret Murray has been discredited as a historian of religion and mythology for more than thirty years and is not the best source to base so much of a background upon. I hope that there will be more 'Culture Packs' available, perhaps with greater detail and expanded scenarios and campaign design guidelines.

Lands of Adventure is an intriguing and promising game. The idea of a generic system for a variety of backgrounds is a good one. The mechanics are basically sound. Unfortunately, the rules are dreadfully confusing and the 'Culture Packs' need fleshing out and a sounder grounding in history, myth and literature. This is certainly a game worth checking out and maybe picking up, especially for experienced GMs who can wade through the mangled areas, but as it stands it cannot touch its best potential market, slightly experienced gamers who are looking for their first serious, mature game. FGU should seriously consider undertaking a serious revision and reorganization of *Lands of Adventure*. It would be more approachable and fulfill its potential. (DN)



THE TEMPLE OF ELEMENTAL EVIL
by Gary Gygax & Frank Mentzer
from TSR Inc.

The Temple of Elemental Evil is a long awaited module which is now almost three years late. This module was to follow The Village of Homlet and was part of the Gygax Grayhawk Campaign. It has now been released as a soft cover 8.5x11in book with 128 pages, selling for \$15.

I'm sure that this will be a major seller for TSR and can be claimed to be one of its greatest productions. The text deals with a great temple that spread evil and was only put down by a mighty gathering of the forces of good and at a great cost. The temple, while magically sealed and greatly damaged, was not destroyed and its most dangerous inhabitant was merely imprisoned. The party is led through a series of preliminary adventures in the area so that they can gain levels, magic and power to be able to delve further into the Temple's dungeon. This follows TSR's tried and true format of structuring adventures to be easy at first, literally throwing magic and money at characters so they can gain levels quickly to be able to face stiffer opposition later in the adventure. Quite often the adventurers will conveniently find the simple magic item needed to kill a creature they face shortly after finding it. It is amazing how undead carry 'Protection from Undead' scrolls or how you find silver weapons before fighting werewolves. Then again, you will find ready made allies who just happen to be hale and hearty (and very well equipped) in the heart of the inaccessible dungeon, just waiting to give you a hand. If not, there are always at least a dozen or so potions of healing around. TSR modules all seem to follow a pretty basic pattern, and you can write an equally mindless adventure just by following that outline. This is not always bad, especially for younger players, but it is starting to wear awfully thin. Another problem here is that this adventure was originally run a long time ago and the style and script are old hat by now and offer nothing fresh. It might have been more viable if it had been released when it was first being promoted.

Basically, in The Temple of Elemental Evil you are just going into another TSR dungeon (glory hole) and fighting your way down, clearing it out as you go. I thought even TSR was beginning to advance a bit beyond that point and might be moving away from the illogical and random 'dungeon'. Obviously this is not true, or someone is very much behind the times. This product is extensive, has a few good ideas and it is interminable (read boring). The Temple of Elemental Evil is too expensive to be worth buying unless you are a diehard D&D fan or you have money to burn. There is no joy in mudville...mighty Gary has struck out.(ED)

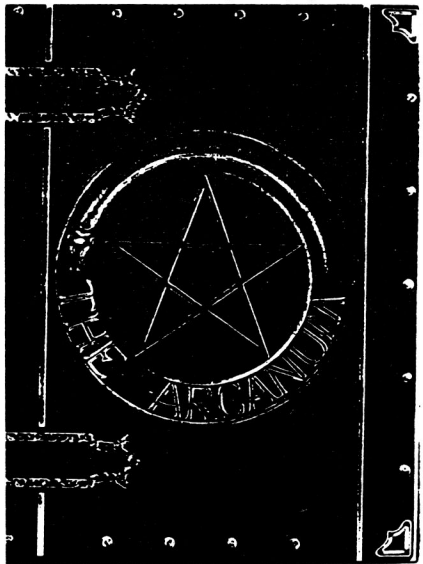
THE ARCANUM
from Bard Games

The Arcanum is the first of a trilogy of game supplements to be published by Bard Games. The book is meant to be complete within itself, but leaves space for future books and for it to be adapted to different campaigns. There seems to be a rash of this sort of game on the market, games which attempt to maintain as much as they can of AD&D and yet introduce some of the rudiments of a progressive skill based system, though there have been several fully developed skill-oriented on the market for at least half a dozen years.

The Arcanum has 26 classes, a number of new spells and a small list of skills. As you read through the book you get the feeling that you've seen it all before. In most

cases the classes don't seem to be all that new, just versions and variants of the old D&D classes, with a few skill differences and the spells for different types of spell casters (basically a good idea) have the same effects, just different names. As a role-playing system The Arcanum is very weak and not worth your money. As a supplement or a source for ideas, especially for AD&D players, it might be worth a look. Most of the ideas are not new, but some are interesting and well stated. This appears to be another system (like The Palladium Role-Playing Game which might have been fairly innovative 5 or 8 years ago, but is not up with current trends and really can't compete with other new releases.

On the whole The Arcanum is one to convince a friend to buy so you can borrow it to look at the few items which may interest you. It is not a bad product, but it just doesn't offer enough to make it worth a major investment. Perhaps with the other books Bard Games plans to publish we will see the game fleshed out and improved.(ED)



ELEMENT MASTERS
by Robert Finkbeiner
from Escape Ventures

This is one of the weird ones. It is a major effort from a hitherto unknown publisher, released in 1982 and again last year, finally achieving some attention with a nomination for an ORIGINS award as best RPG in 1985. You won't find Element Masters in your local gaming store, and this may be the first and last you ever hear of it. It is a single book of about 150 full-size pages, fairly neatly typeset, but printed on a rather poor paper so that the print is soggy. The type is small, but there is lots of white-space. There is some rather interesting and amusingly original art by the author. The cover is in color, but unfortunately dark and unattractive. Inside the front cover is one of the longest lists of playtesters I've ever seen, and a claim that it is 'the best Fantasy Role-Playing Game of all time'. An interesting claim. If they changed 'best' to 'strangest' or 'most incomprehensible' I might be able to go along with them.

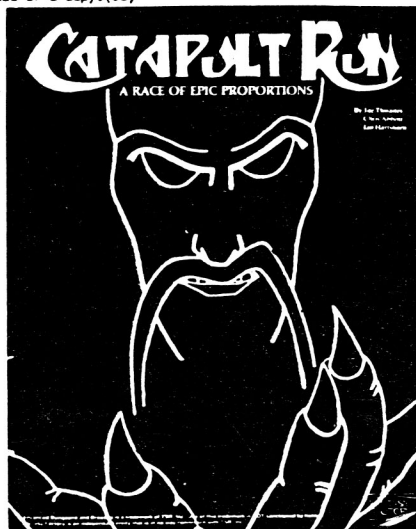
Element Masters is set in the world of Vinya, and contains both rules and extensive background. These are not really separated in the book, so they will be dealt with as they come up. The rules start out with character races and character creation. The races are exceptionally unoriginal, taken more or less straight from AD&D. There are nine stats which are pretty well chosen, covering most of what one would like to know about a character, all rolled with 5D4, so that characters tend to come out exceptionally average with most of their stats around 12 or 13. This section is fairly clear and informative, though there are some amusing sections. According to their height and weight tables I must have a 'formidable' strength, which frightens me, but doesn't convince me of the accuracy of the tables. The illustrations in this section are particularly apt. This is followed by a 'previous experience' section, where you roll such things as who you are, what you can do, how you think and whether you lived through it all. This is where the game begins to fall apart, when you start rolling for professions, skills and how good you are with those skills. The selection of skills is fairly limited, and some of them are rather strange, and they seem to have been added almost as an afterthought, sort of as minor modifiers to characteristics or in combat. Skill use is on a percentile basis, and every character seems to have some knowledge with every skill, though he is better in some than in others, by choice or because of characteristics. In general, this

skill system seems to work, though the random factor could be removed, the selection of skills could be more realistic, characteristics could be made more meaningful, and players might be given more control over how their characters' skills increase by experience based essentially on the RuneQuest system, with a bit of the AD&D combat experience system thrown in. This seems to be the trend in games these days, though in this case it has become rather more mechanical and less realistic than usual. Skills can also be improved by training. Magic is the next major section, and is the most developed section of the book. Everything here is based on your Magic Potential, which mixes the concepts of mana, psi and fatigue, being expended by using spells, determining the power of your spells, and regenerating with sleep. Spells are for the most part interesting and well described. Most are original and some are quite interesting. There are not a great number of spells, and there is no differentiation of types or schools of magic. One of the best ideas here is that spell power can be variable. Perhaps the biggest problem is that there seems to be no spell learning system. Everyone seems to be able to cast every spell if they can cast spells at all. There does not seem to be any skill involved at all or any relationship to the skill system dealt with earlier. A very few magic items are also described in this section. Finally, we get to combat, which is done on a bonus system based on skills and characteristics, involving a lot of adjustments and modifications. Most of combat seems to be based on special cases and attack options, each of which is dealt with differently, though a great number are covered. Attacks are based on percentages, and the explanation of just how they are done is rather hard to follow, though the examples make it a bit clearer. There is a hit location system given in the character set-up section, but how it relates to combat is not explained. In addition, defense is treated as a separate 'dodge' roll, an unnecessary over complication, especially in a percentile system. There are rather interesting fumble and critical tables as well. On the whole, however, combat is definitely the weakest of the mechanical sections of the rules. Basically, this concludes the mechanical section of the book. Taken alone, each of the different mechanical sections of Element Masters is interesting, though combat is not up to par. The biggest problem is that there is no integration of the different systems. Magic really needs to be part of the skill system, and combat needs to be part of the same skill system as other skills. There are too many bonuses and special cases, and what really is a fairly simple system becomes rather bewildering. Also, there is an awfully heavy reliance on random die rolls rather than imagination and originality.

The remainder of the book deals with world background and adventure design. There is a nice large selection of well-described and original monsters, which include specialized hit-locations and everything else you might need to know, as well as some excellent illos. These creatures are much more original and imaginative than the character races, something which strikes me as a little strange, since many of the creatures are humanoid races. Some of the creatures really are marvelous and have to be seen to be believed. The one flaw in this section is a rather annoying random treasure and items table, though it does seem to be restricted to humanoids. Next we get appendices. The first is strange. It seems to be a list of things to do when creating a character and the pages to check when doing those things. Actually, this is a rather good idea, because some sections are rather obscurely organized. The second appendix is essentially an adventure write-up used as a mega-example of play, rather detailed and probably longer than it really needs to be. They even have complete searching sheets for all the characters involved. This is followed by another similar example, this time focusing on magic. The last appendix is a moderately interesting description of a popular gambling game from the world, called Triad. A character sheet and a map of Vinya (shaped and colored like a potato) are provided. On the whole, I'm left mystified in a sense. The whole game seems to be set for the world of Vinya, rather wedded to it, but there is no real description of the world, except for that which is incidental to mechanics or creatures which are described and a sketchy timeline at the start of the book. This seems to be a pretty serious flaw, unless Vinya is a world without society, customs, economy or history.

Basically, Element Masters strikes me as a system which developed in a fairly active campaign, as a hybrid of AD&D and RuneQuest. The result is better integrated than some similar systems, but the mechanics lack internal consistency and aren't really committed to being either a skill-based system or a characteristic/random-roll based system. In addition, the rules are rather confusing, and I suspect that playing with them would become annoying quite quickly. The biggest problem with Element Masters as a game is that those who put it together and are marketing it seem to have no idea that role-playing is more than giving a character a deformity or a bizarre personality aberration, something established by statistics and tables and a few interesting descriptions from numerical scores and that big selling point 'the character's carrying and lifting capacity are computed to the nearest pound' on the back cover. Although there are a lot of rough areas and the game seems incomplete, especially in the area of background, I think I can recommend Element Masters for some players, but as an aid, not a game. The magic system is simple and believable and could easily be adapted to any

game where you wanted something basic, realistic and not too detailed. The section of creatures is extensive, original and interesting, and could be of great use, especially for AD&D players. Basically, this is not a sophisticated or innovative game, but it has interesting ideas especially for less ambitious players. I don't want to encourage anyone to start an Element Masters campaign, but I think that there are plenty of players who might find a lot of enjoyable material in the game if they can get hold of a copy.(JS)



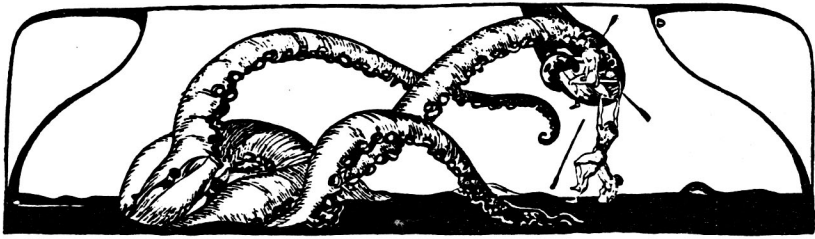
CATAPULT RUN
by Joe Swales, Chris Abbott and Ian Hartshorn
from Fantasy Factory

This is another item which I picked up at ORIGINS, mainly because its cover just about knocked my socks off. It is the best work I've ever seen without using full color. With only 3 colors this cover grabs the eye in a way none of TSR's thousand dollar covers could ever do. This is an excellent example of a small publisher making necessary cost cutting into a positive virtue. Catapult Run is a module for use with AD&D, published in the standard format used by TSR and other initiators. The cover is a wrap around with a map on the inside, and the module itself is a 32 page booklet in full-size format, with large typeset print, lots of white-space and plenty of illustrations. On the whole the production is excellently done on what was clearly a small budget, and though the art and maps are pretty wretched and the text could definitely be condensed, it is a nice looking package which should sell well if it can get some distribution.

Catapult Run is well organized and presented. I'd like to call it a 'campaign module' because of all the background and information on the world which is presented, but the one is limited so that it could really only be run for one extended session. The plain in the introduction that it could be used for an 'endless supply of adventures' is rather overblown, though the background could be adapted to adventures created by inventive GMs. It is the first module in a planned series set in the world of Cypher, and functions well as a sort of guided tour of that world, because it is an adventure set in the midst of a huge, round-the-world type race in which the characters compete against various NPCs for a large purse. The adventure is intended for mid-level characters (5th-7th). The adventure is essentially set up on a linear system of encounters, based on the route suggested to the players. I think a regional encounter system might have worked better, but this is well suited for inexperienced GMs. The way it is set-up it would break down well into several playing sessions, based around the major legs of the race. Basically, the adventure is quite good, and while the encounters are not dazzlingly original, they are logical and intelligent. The only major omission is that there are not really any encounters with or guidelines for interference from other racers, something which I would have thought was essential for drama. Also provided are notes on magic items, NPCs, weather and random encounters.

This adventure is a nice package. It is original enough to please imaginative players while maintaining a fairly simple and basic level of complexity. There is an emphasis on role-playing and interaction rather than just fighting through encounters. If there is any overall flaw, it is that the background world seems to be pretty much a generic fantasy world, with little original to distinguish it, pretty much a world straight out of the AD&D books, though this aspect may fade as it is developed in future adventures. If you are an AD&D player I heartily recommend Catapult Run, and if you play other systems you might check it out for some interesting encounter ideas.(DN)

SEABORNE ENCOUNTERS



ERIC OLSON

One of the toughest encounters for a GM to run and make believable is an encounter at sea. Let's face facts, you're one small ship in a large ocean. Let me guess, you just happened to stumble across the hunting ground of that giant Kraken; give me a break. Too often sea encounters seem extremely contrived if not totally ridiculous. Most GMs therefore avoid sea adventures or just say that your voyage took nine days and nothing happened in that time. In most campaigns it is either that or roll up wandering monster after wandering monster. To get away from this, I have divided sea encounters into five categories and I'll try to explain the logic (or illogic) behind each. With any luck this will help you to create more convincing encounters at sea.

The first category of sea encounters is for those of natural origin. Being in the Naby (and putting my life on the line daily in the defense of democracy), I can truthfully say that natural events can be the most fearsome of encounters. A good ocean storm can send any medieval type vessel rapidly to the bottom. Weather can be used to thin the ranks of bothersome NPCs, to separate forces, strand characters on desolate shores, or send the party into uncharted waters. Weather can drive the party into areas where you wish to send them or isolate the characters in potentially hazardous areas. One of the best series of adventures my group ever had was when they were shipwrecked on an island (with little or no gear or supplies) and they became the hunted instead of the hunters. Weather can also delay missions and a ship can easily be driven well offshore or become totally lost after a strong storm. Weather need not do much actual physical damage to seriously hinder a party.

The second and most commonly used form of encounter is the sea creature. This is probably the lamest encounter possible. The chance of an open ocean sea encounter should actually be fairly small. In the case of magical creatures, there are just too few of them and the ocean is too big. In the case of natural creatures (whales/squid), they will normally not attack unless provoked. Creature encounters should only occur within easy range of land, as most of the possible creatures to encounter would tend to live in shallow water or be based off the shore. Fortunately, few fantasy/medieval campaigns will be at a technology level where ships will want to venture out of sight of shore for fear of never finding it again, so travel may tend to be along the coast. You could also use weather or avoidance of another encounter to push a ship into isles or regions known to be dominated by particular dangers. As a final note on creatures, remember that mariners quickly learn which areas to avoid and this knowledge will be fairly widespread. Creature encounters should be used sparingly enough so that they do not begin to seem improbable.

Another popular encounter is Pirates. You might think that the previous argument of a big ocean and a small number of pirates would apply here and that I would also write off this sort of encounter. This is not the case for several reasons. First, pirates also rarely go into the open ocean. They rely on boarding and large numbers of fighters, and will not go far from the shore because of the difficulty of maintaining their crew. Pirates also don't just wander around blindly looking for ships. They tend to have a very good network of eyes and ears placed in major ports and know which shipping lanes to prey on. They will often have good information on the cargo of a ship, destination, crew strength and proposed route. In addition, there will be fairly limited good sea routes available for a given destination, making it fairly easy to find victims. Pirates will tend to avoid the most heavily trafficked routes, because they are liable to be patrolled by naval vessels as well. Pirates are not suicidal. They will tend to attack only when the odds are clearly in their favor. Pirates don't expect high-powered characters to be aboard most ships, so this could be a factor working against them. They do like to take prisoners for ransom or to sell as slaves. They also like to take ships intact, as most good merchant ships will be in better shape than most pirate ships. It is also possible that they will work

for hire by enemies of a party or competing merchants to prevent a ship from making its run successfully.

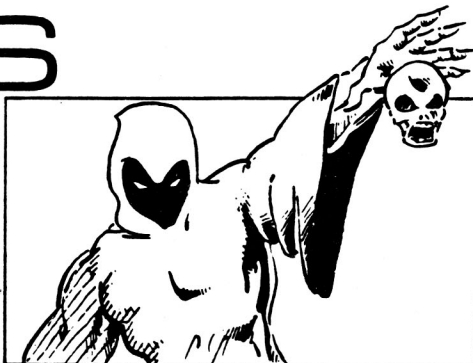
A popular encounter in fantasy literature is the appearance of the mysterious, uncharted island. This is found in works by such writers as Clark Ashton Smith and Robert E. Howard, among many others. Such an isle could be a potential sidetrack more involved and more dangerous than any objective the characters had originally set out for. It is always fun to spring surprises on a party which was prepared for something quite different. A mysterious island can add a bit of spice before an adventure or perhaps be linked to the main adventure. Quite often these islands are the abode of a powerful being or a strange race, possibly capable of moving the island, or masking it from most passersby and cartographers. A good literary example of such an island can be found in Robert E. Howard's short story "The Pool of the Black One".

The final and most important group of encounters are those which take place aboard ship, often as a sort of 'timebomb'. This sort of encounter usually has roots before the start of the voyage, but is not manifested until the ship is well under way. Often this is based around members of the crew being planted by a foe to cause trouble, or around a fellow passenger with strange and dangerous plans. Onboard a ship enemy agents bent on vengeance can be quite a problem as there is nowhere to run away to. Such a situation can develop into a sort of mystery; a whodunit. A rash outburst from the party or actions against apparently innocent persons without any real proof will quickly alienate the crew and captain and make the situation quite hazardous. A few plants in the crew might also attempt to turn them against the party and cause trouble for them. A popular way to do this is to play on the sailors' superstitions and implicate the party in all sorts of devilry. A crewman murdered with the weapon of a party member is a quick way to get that character to take a swing from the yardarm. Sailors are a volatile lot, and a good crew can quickly become a mob when guided by a clever operative. If you are going to use plants in the crew another good option is to have one there to stir up trouble on board the ship and a second one to cause trouble for the party once they reach their destination. It is always nice to finish a tough adventure and discover that your ship has left without you or that the natives are up in arms. The most classic timebomb type encounter is the unknown killer who breeds paranoia aboard the ship. Night after night, crewmembers disappear without a trace (easy enough to do with all that ocean). As more disappear fear and panic set in. The crew whispers of the unknown and unclear, and look for an unusual element aboard to blame, like the passengers. Does this sound familiar? It is the kind of atmosphere which Bram Stoker develops rather well aboard the 'Demeter' after it leaves Varna in his novel Dracula. In this case the ship eventually grounded on the English coast with all the crew dead and the captain lashed to the wheel with his throat torn out. In such a situation paranoia becomes as dangerous as the original threat as passengers and crew turn on each other out of fear. Another variation to go along with this is the magical 'sending', some force or power sent by an enemy to pursue someone on board the ship unhindered by physical distance. Demons and undead spirits are good for this, as are storm elementals and other spirits of wave and weather. Encounters can have purpose to them, and need not merely be things run into randomly on the sea.

Sea encounters can be far more varied than you find in most campaigns. They can be interesting and believable if you throw out random encounters and plan encounters in advance with some purpose in mind. That's not to say that each voyage must have an encounter or that all encounters should be fully planned, but determine before the adventure starts at least the general outline of what should happen. Differentiate between encounters in the open ocean or near the coast. Very few encounters except weather and shipboard events will occur in open ocean. Coastal waters should be the domain of creatures and pirates. Make encounters as logical as possible. Pirates are not likely to attack a ship with characters on it unless there is a rich cargo or they are being paid well. Remember the basic rules of the sea. No character should be wearing heavy or restrictive armor, and salt air does bad things to metal equipment. Finally, use the seas for what they are, a unique encounter environment which should add to your campaign and not just be annoying distance to cover between land-bound adventures.



ECHOES FROM THE ABYSS



Dear Dave,

Thanks for the copy of *ABYSS* #34. Please find enclosed issue #3 of the *BOOKLET OF MANY THINGS*. We would appreciate a review in *ABYSS*.

Here are my thoughts on the 'zine as a whole and on the various articles.

Conjurings-interesting, chatty and about right in length(I don't like editorials that go on for ages. Anyway, I can never think of anything to say in my editorials).

Gods of the Slave Coast-I'm afraid I cannot see the point in such a long article about something we have easily enough of in *Deities and Demi-Gods*. It would also have been better if you had given the abilities and stats for the gods. I must admit that the article was well thought out.

In the *Speculum*-well set out and good points are made(I wish I could get hold of a copy of *Dark Dungeons* in England).

The End of Dreams-well written, but I'm not too keen on fiction in zines.

Behind the Wheel-don't know, I've never played a modern period RPG.

Unto the Gates of Death-a good idea, the best part of the issue.

Mark Beresford
Chesterfield, Derbyshire
ENGLAND

[You'll find a review of *BOOKLET OF MANY THINGS* in the 'In the *Speculum*' section of this issue. As far as the series of articles on various mythologies which we have been running, yes it is true that *Deities and Demigods* provides a great deal of information on gods. However, much of that information is incorrect and poorly researched, and our articles strive to provide more insight and variety on mythological background and characters. As far as providing stats for the gods we discuss, we don't do this as they do in *Deities and Demigods*, because we prefer the perspective that these are gods, not just bigger monsters, and that their combat stats really should not be relevant to regular play in a campaign. Also, by not providing stats and giving detailed descriptive information these articles are not limited to any single system-DW]

Dia dhuit,

Buiochas leat for the two zines you sent us. I was a mite confused when I saw an American address stamped on the outside along with an English postmark. Hm, first of all--don't you lot take role-playing seriously? Secondly, your fairly detailed research is an excellent facet of *ABYSS*.

Yeah, anyway, I was very pleased to hear from you, as the only thing I've got to 'judge' American role-players on was some rubbish film called *"Mazes and Munchkin"* or somethin' like that which seemed to make you all out to be potential satanist recruits with deficient psyches. Your magazine/zine, whatever, isn't a light read and I didn't find it particularly entertaining, but as a source of information I find it very, very interesting and more than a little useful. The way *ABYSS* sticks to what it should be writing about(RPGing) and doesn't diverge into other areas is highly laudable. I don't think I could accomplish this feat, but you do it admirably.

I recently went to an optician and discovered I have 'over-long-sightedness' on

as I call it 'teeth sight'(The Eyes of the Hunter) but although I normally hold books and things two foot away from my eyes I found that *ABYSS* was almost touching my nasal hairs due to the incredibly small print, GHOD it is tiny. Artwork in *ABYSS* is deplorable except for the cover. Layout is reasonably good, but it put me off a little having to hack my concentration through a page of solid blackness.

ABYSS #33 had a nice cover/inside cover, first page and I found the 'Japanese Bestiary' interesting. The rest was dull except for the letter from Ed. Lew. #34 was more interesting with all those African gods detailed, but that was about all.

A comment on the article in #33 by Jon Schuller. Although 'A-Team' and programmes like it are laughable in the way the heroes are indestructable, I honestly don't see how they can possibly harm anyone's sense of reality and knock their mind away from their feet on the ground. Jesus, how many heroes in programmes ever get killed? Even when they get socked in the face(rather loudly) half a dozen times, they still manage to have the wits to flatter the baddie. Is this realistic? His point about role-playing being a more real experience than some believe is honest bullshit. Recently in a game of *RuneQuest* my character was insulted by another player in a friendly way--I impishly retaliated and soon it led to an outright duel half a mile underground with the other characters watching on. I basically flattered the opponent, but was cut all over. After a while(and another fight with a duck) Ipskid Paddypaws jnr.(my favorite character) dies of a slashed heart. In the fights I'd used boulders to crush my opponent's face--if role-playing aids you by initiating you into the use of weapons of any sort greater than your own body then I feel it is a bad thing. I would never dare use even a rock against someone in case their body couldn't take it. Actually, having mouthed off above, I think I'll contradict myself. Role-playing can be a good preparation for real life experiences but only if the GMing is of the best quality, detailing such things as a sharp pain in the ribs in full adjectival form. If the GMing is not 100% then things which are very important in real life, such as pain, can be overlooked and ignored. Even with a good imagination it isn't easy to visualize pain or vertigo whilst role-playing and who really wants to? Role-playing is no more realistic than you make it--as films are no more realistic than they are made. His whole point really isn't worth writing down. Why did you put it in? I honestly deplore heavy violence in films as it

Baltimore (i.e. many Texas-area gamers) a less than perfect ORIGINS in Dallas is infinitely superior to a perfect one in Baltimore.

Rick Loomis
Flying Buffalo Inc.

[It is nice to see that GAMA and the people involved are indeed concerned with improving ORIGINS. I think we can all agree that it is good for ORIGINS to be a national convention, at least in principle. Perhaps the problem is that the ORIGINS committee needs to do a bit more advance research before accepting a site. If Texas gamers had been asked about the prospects of an ORIGINS in Dallas they might have pointed out that attendance at Texas conventions is always extremely low and that DALLCON the year before had been rather poorly organized. At the same time it might be nice to set specific site requirements and specific outlines for running events and programs with which the convention management would have to comply in order to hold ORIGINS in their city. If ORIGINS cannot do these things because it essentially has to go begging for sponsorship around the country then it is not, in fact, a national convention and perhaps should not be run as such. Just something to think about—DN]

Dear Dave,

This is a folksy, friendly paragraph before I get down to business and things get bloody. So, Dave, how you been? Heard you had a cold, sure hope it's better. You always sound like a Drano-ravaged camel when you have a cold. Right. Enough of that.

Scott Bizar. Hear me. I'm real sorry, I was wrong about which of the games I reviewed was the oldest. A reasonably brief examination proves that V&V was indeed released first. I'll say it again: I was wrong. About that. Now to the rest of it... I suppose I should be cool and professional, but 'ignorant'! That pisses me off. So here me again, Scott. I'm willing to believe that your proximity to your game has clouded an otherwise fine mind, but I was also willing to bet you could still read. I said in the review that I could be wrong; I was. Anyone who saw the V&V supplements was laughing up their sleeves at me, doesn't that make you feel better? But the fact remains that I did not see any evidence of support from FGL. Not in Paradise (which is my damn home, pal), not in DC. That's the facts, Scott.

Now, let me hit you with some of my opinions, which are, of course, only opinions. Primarily, I think that you could have been more petty and farther from the main point if you had decided that my review was morally bankrupt because I made fun of the parallel between 'V&V' and 'D&D'. Could we drop the footwork and talk about the real issues here? I have serious problems with the system and I discussed them in my review. I'm a reviewer, that's what we do. I'm not a cataloger of copyright data, nor am I a chronicler of the state of distribution in the gaming market. Want another opinion? I'd be real upset if this meant that I have to slink past you guys at the next trade show or game con. I didn't like your game system, I had to say that. Sometimes people don't like things I write. They say so and I either take it or I take issue with it, I don't write them off as cretins. So maybe sometime we get together, we talk about it, and maybe you teach me a few things. Maybe I tell you more about how I look at these things and why. Think about it, and let's not get nasty about this. Reviews are a rish, for both parties involved. I'd rather not be left friendless, but I don't want to become the baron of bullshit, either. Think about it; we'll talk.

Sorry I was so reasonable, Dave, I must be getting old. Nick Ian around a little for me, will you? Thanks. Later, m'lord...

Lew
Hampton, VA

[Lew's letter is a bit emotional, but makes a basically valid point. Perhaps it is the style of review which he writes to which some may object. However, the style and a few technical errors cannot invalidate what are essentially valid criticisms of the games which he reviews. To please his fans Lew will be back next issue with more superhero game reviews, including DC Heroes, Super Squadron and several others—DN]

Dear ABYSS Staff,

Ack, when I asked you so bluntly to pick up your act and do better, little did I know that ABYSS #35 was gonna be this good!

I found 'Totems' to be quite dull. I wouldn't expect that from Eric Olson. I usually think he is one of your best writers. 'Once Again Origins' was sort of a waste. I would have rather seen the space used for gaming material. For once I enjoyed 'In the Speculum', though the funny thing is that I don't know why, but it was good. I loved the reviews of the 'TSR' products, they were pretty funny. 'Robbers of the Sea' was well done, but it seemed like a history lesson. The best article in the whole damned magazine was 'On Golem Construction'. Very well done, I want more, I need more! I liked 'Echoes' a lot for one major reason. I noticed that you print letters even if they are against your magazine, and I admire that very much! You guys are a class act (that is when ABYSS isn't late and I'm not mad at you). Last of all, the runner up for the best article was 'The Eye of Odin'. I don't usually like fiction, but I loved this! You'd better finish the story (please?). All together this was definitely better than previous issues.

Hey, how about adding a comic strip, guys? Something similar to 'Finessing Fingers' would be great. I would also like to see a section of new magic items. Maybe also a section on diabolism or the dark forces of Ysgarth. You might even do something on fortresses, strongholds and siege weapons. I'd also like to see 7-Shirts with Cranford art on them make a comeback! How about ABYSS pins, that might be good. Well, that's all for me now.

John E. Green
Chicago, IL

[Thanks for the suggestions. We have considered running a comic strip from time to time, but so far we haven't seen any which had both good art and decent humor, though we did run a series of one-framers by Tom Curtin some issues back. We'll keep looking, but a comic strip will have to be of high quality for us to run it. I can promise an article on magic items coming in the next few issues and even new T-Shirts this summer. As for strongholds and siege weapons, I'm afraid you'll have to pick up Siege and Fortress for that (it should be out soon). We might put an extract from it in ABYSS, but that's a sort of shoddy thing to do, almost like running a big ad for the book—DN]

Dear Ragnarok,

I had just opened the staple sealing ABYSS #35 when a note dropped out informing me that if I wanted to save myself from an "...eternal plunge into a vast chasm of darkness, unlit by the insign and ideas which ABYSS provides" I should re-up. Well, if I ever had any doubts about renewing, that changed my mind. I

really love you, so I'm sending \$18 for 18 issues.

My money doesn't come free of strings, however. At the bottom of the letter was a note asking for comments, so here they are.

The first thing that I do after destroying most of the magazine trying to get the staple out is to turn to the 'Conjurings' section to find out what I'm in for. I must say that the two things I like most about the magazine are the sense of humor you manage to maintain throughout and the way you save readers from the munchkin mentality. After I discover what words of wisdom Dave has to impart to the readers, I turn to the reviews. I like these because I really appreciate the humorous yet generally truthful thoughts you leave me with about various games (pretty hard on TSR sometimes, aren't you?). As a footnote to this I have to tell you how much I enjoyed the reviews of the superhero games by Lew Bryson in #33. After I read these sections, I skip to anything which catches my eye. Sometimes the things I find suffer from the same problem I have with other role-playing magazines. This is the inclusion of new monsters, new treasures and new gods. I suppose other people may find them useful, but, if I had my way, the AD&D system (the game I play most) would consist of the Player's Handbook, The Dungeon Master's Guide and maybe the Monster Manual for reference. Your thoughts on various aspects of the role-playing world are usually thoughtful, informative and interesting (that doesn't mean that articles on treasures, gods and monsters aren't interesting, but I would rather just create my own). I usually read each issue with relish to discover what people who aren't trying to appeal to munchkins think about role-playing. All in all, I enjoy ABYSS.

In closing this letter, I would like to request information about submitting articles to ABYSS. I have enclosed an SASE. Most of the work I have done is for AD&D, so if you're up to your ears in similar articles, please tell me, but send the information anyway. I have enjoyed your magazine for the past year and hope that the next eighteen bi-monthly(?) issues will be just as good. Please make sure I don't miss ABYSS #36.

Mark C. Kehoe
Carleton, MI

[Mark asks for our contributor's guidelines in his letter, and that's worth a brief comment. We are always looking for new writers for ABYSS, especially if they have something innovative to say. Articles on AD&D are always welcomed, though we also like articles applicable to gaming in general. It would also be nice to see a few more articles for popular game systems like Champions, RuneQuest, RoleMaster and Call of Cthulhu so that our staff writers wouldn't have to cover these systems. Basically, we will look at anything, but for a better idea of what we want most, do what Mark did and send us a Self Addressed Stamped Envelope and we'll send it back with our guidelines enclosed—DN]



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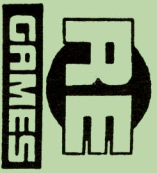
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