

Penguin Dip



Scott
Ruggels
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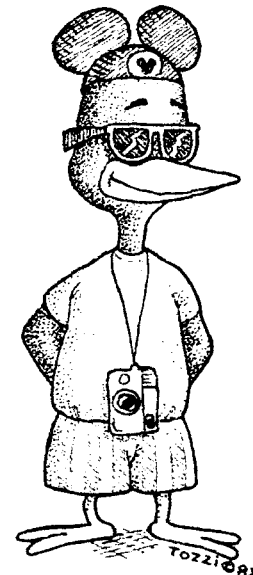
Welcome to PENGUIN DIP #4. PENGUIN DIP is a science fiction and fantasy fanzine, an artzine, a general gaming and role playing game fanzine, and a Dipzine, running postal Diplomacy games. It is edited, published and copyrighted (except where noted) by Stephen H. Dorneman, 95 Federal St. #2, Lynn, MA 01905, and a 10 issue (1 year) subscription is available for \$6.00 (until June 27th). There are currently no game openings.

FROM THE FLOE: PENGUINS IN PARADISE

Maybe I was wrong. Maybe the future won't be the gritty world of the homeless and the heartless of Max Headroom. For I have seen another future - a much brighter, cleaner, happier future. A future where the deserts of the world bloom with crops to feed the world's hunger, where Seabase Alpha divers watch 3-D Michael Jackson videos, in which monorails glide past giant mirrored golf balls while Figments of your imagination wear Goofy hats and where China is within walking distance of Italy . . . In short, Penny and I spent 3 days of our Florida vacation in Walt Disney World. One day in the Magic Kingdom, two days at Disney's Experimental Prototype Community Of Tomorrow (EPCOT Center) and the World Showcase.

According to my Trivial Pursuit game (surely an unimpeachable source), Walt Disney World is the single most popular tourist attraction in the world and now, having seen it, I can understand why. If it were still just the Magic Kingdom it would be an incredible amusement park, fun for all ages but especially wonderful for children. But when you add EPCOT Center for adults (not to mention the wildlife preserve, River Country recreational area, the resort hotels, golf courses, etc.) . . . Disney manages to combine entertainment and education, customer service and cleanliness, high technology and high fantasy to create an alternate reality for the visitor. An Earth, and especially an America, not as it is, but as it could and should be. At times cynics may find the presentations may cross over the line from boosterism to propaganda, but it is still unparalleled entertainment, and I recommend that everyone visit there at least once.

Three quick tips for the Orlando-bound: 1) A few weeks before your Disney vacation, buy a copy of Birnbaum's Guide to Walt Disney World, and read it. We found its advice on dinner reservations, times to visit the various attractions, and transportation information to be particularly useful, and it's full of fascinating trivia (Did you know that Ray Bradbury was a consultant on the Spaceship Earth pavilion? That while much of the mining equipment at the Thunder Mountain Railroad are authentic antiques, the rocks of the 'Mountain' itself are fake?). 2) Be prepared to stand in lines. In general, the lines do move quickly (more so at EPCOT than in the Magic Kingdom), but you can't avoid them. Bring some patience, and a hat to wear while standing in the Florida sun. 3) Plan to spend more than one day if you want to do the park justice. We found three 12-hour days to be just about right to see everything at least once, at an unhurried pace.



Can't Miss Attractions: Thunder Mountain Railroad and the Haunted Mansion in the Magic Kingdom, and in EPCOT Center you must visit Journey Into Imagination (including the Captain Eo 3-D movie), the China pavilion in the World Showcase, and the Universe of Energy. But there are lots of little gems to be found scattered throughout Walt Disney World with little or no waiting involved.

Renaissance comedians at the the England and Italy World Showcase pavilions. The Carousel of Progress in Tomorrowland. The Kitchen Cabaret in EPCOT's The Land attraction, for lovers of bad puns, nutrition, and audio-animatronic vegetables. And don't forget the EPCOT Poll, where you get to see an instantaneous tabulation of you and your fellow tourist's opinions on a variety of subjects.

Can Miss Attractions: There are some. Most of Tomorrowland (go see the real thing over at EPCOT), except for Space Mountain and the Carousel of Progress. Snow White in the Enchanted Forest. The ferries from EPCOT's Futureworld to the World Showcase. But not much else.

The landscaping is incredible (take the time to read the labels that are on many of the plants in the complex), the crowd control is handled as unobtrusively as possible, and the attractions are state-of-the-art extravaganzas of sight, sound, and even smell (breathe deep during your Journey Into Imagination in particular). Walt Disney World isn't perfect (even the ever-present maintenance crew gets overwhelmed by the trash by late in the day), but they manage to succeed in their business of entertainment while still celebrating and informing the public about science, technology, and nature. We'll be going there again.

ICE CHIPS

I will be attending ORIGINS 87 this year, arriving Thursday morning and leaving Sunday afternoon, staying at the Lord Baltimore hotel. I'm looking forward to meeting many Penguin Dippers at the con, and I'll have a con report on this, the self-styled 'premier gaming convention', in PD#6, so if you want to see your name in boldface, better plan on buying me a drink. If there's enough Interest I can be persuaded to run a special convention scenario in my variant AD&D world, and I hope to be entered in the Titan tournament, the Diplomatic Encounters game, the Talisman tournament, and a couple of RPG competitions. PD#5 should be out right before the con, so I plan to have an extra 50 or 100 copies printed up to distribute in Baltimore, so let's get those gaming articles in soon!

There'll also be a price increase of some sort announced in the next issue (probably to \$10 for 10 issues, which still won't cover production costs, but it'll be a lot closer), so now would be a good time for current subscribers to extend their subscriptions, especially those subbers in the Dip games. Don't say I didn't warn you! Of course, articles and artwork used will still earn you at least two issues sub credit, soon to be worth Even More! And speaking of which . . .

CREDITS this issue for artwork go to **Scott Ruggles**(Cover, Page 4, 14) for 7 issues subscription credit, **Jim Tozzi**(2,12 -4 issues), **Nhan Vu**(5,7 -4 issues), **Steven Fox**(9,11,13 -6 issues), **Rick Kohman**(15 -2 issues) and **Scott Washburn**(19 -2 issues) and we have articles by **Nhan Vu**(5), **Michael Hopcroft**(8), **John Schlosser**(10), and **Jack McHugh**(14) for your enjoyment, earning

each author 2 issues of subscription credit. See you at ORIGINS! 

Letters

JACQUES BELANGER: "I just bought a IBM-PC clone with 30 meg hard disk and modem and I'm starting to learn MS-DOS and C-language. I enjoyed Bob Olsen's computer game review. His story reminds me of a Quebec City friend of mine, who copied that fantastic game [*Alternate Reality: The City*]. While he was visiting some planet, he was thrown out of the game by the Binary Patrol for having made an unauthorized copy! [*There are a number of creative copy protection schemes for various games. In the April Mackey Newsletter it notes that in PBI's Strategic Conquest, running from an illegal copy causes the program to crank the skill level up to "unbeatable" and cheat against you, without telling you.*]

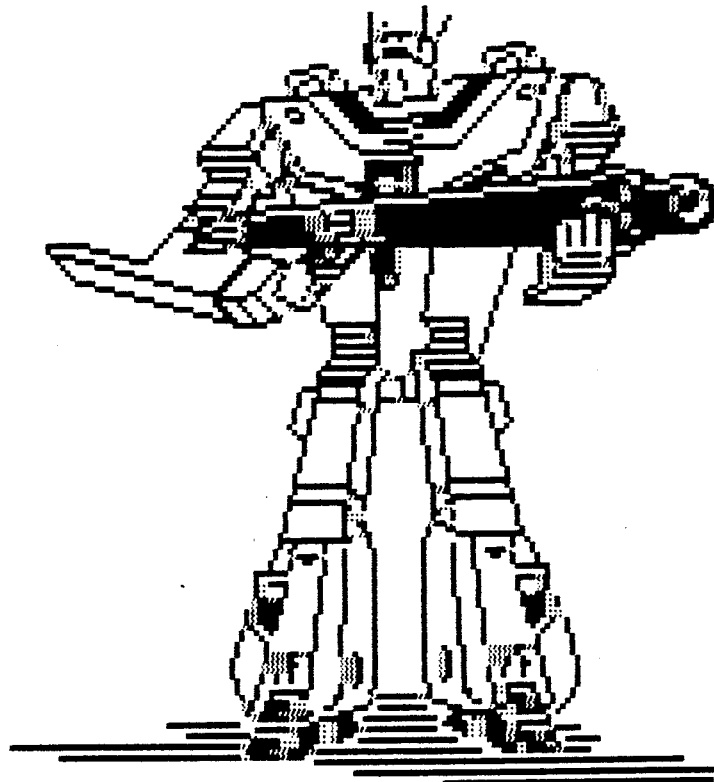
JESSICA AMANDA SALMONSON: "Dear Sir Penguin: I have never received a fanzine from a penguin before and was very glad to get one. The last time a penguin touched my heart was at Tacoma's depressing zoo. It was a summery day and the penguins, in an outdoor enclosure, were very gnarly looking, downcast, partly defeathered, and on a hunger strike. They could barely move. The next time I went to that zoo they didn't have any penguins. My assumption has always been that they escaped. I hope that you are doing much better in your confines."

LINDA COURTEMANCHE: "Eric Anderson's "In Defense of the Builder" was very good writing and was fascinating to read. I would also venture to guess he reads Ayn Rand, considering his applause for what is 'in tribute to the best that is possible to man'. I don't get to read that kind of statement nearly often enough in this world, and always am grateful for the chance."

JOHN SCHLOSSER: "From reading your zine, I gather that you enjoy RPGs. Do you think a RPG could ever be made into a PBM game? I've been playing RPGs for about 11 years now, and have even written two. In my opinion there are a few major stumbling blocks inherent in play by mail RPGs. First, how do you handle players playing at a different pace or dropping out. Deadlines in RPG would SLOW the game to a virtual stop. (Combat could take months.) Second, there is no direct access to the game master (and the players). Exploration, for example, would require dozens of letters. Third, role playing would be difficult without the immediacy of other characters . . . The first can be solved (I've done it). The second can be solved if the players are willing to do a lot of writing and write a lot of conditional orders. The third in my opinion is the real stumper. What are your feelings on the subject?" [*Well, you asked. Of course an RPG can be made into a PBM game. Cathy Ozog and Michael Hopcroft are both doing it in their Dippy zines, a fantasy system and a superhero game respectively, and the back pages of DRAGON magazine are filled with ads for people who run professional RPG PBMs. You're right, though, that a lot of the flavor of role playing (where you assume a different persona than your own, and interact with other fictional personas in a fantasy world) is lost, leaving you in the best of cases with the feeling of reading a first person story you suggested to an author. Anyone out there have any better experiences with PBM RPGs? Have you ever played in one that approached the experience of a mediocre-to-good face to face RPG?*]



ROBOTECH



TV and Games Review by Nhan Vu

Some of you may have noticed the recent popularity of a new science-fiction cartoon series called Robotech. Of course, you're wondering what this has to do with you, the real SF fan. After all, isn't it just another kid's cartoon from Japan? You know, the kind where the character's eyes are as large as the rest of their faces. Well, think again. It may be popular with kids, but that doesn't mean adults can't like it. I, for one, am addicted to the thing.

Of course, your first question is "Why?" Well, there are a number of reasons. First of all, the idea is so original that you have to see it to believe it. Who could imagine an animated "soap opera" for the after-school prime time slot? In addition, this cartoon has legitimate and realistic portrayals of human drama. To top it all off, the series puts characters into life-and-death situations where the outcome is often less than ideal (i.e. death). Quite frankly, this goes against everything animated programming has stood for in the past three decades. Let's face it, most cartoons are less than realistic with their portrayals of life. Robotech is a breath of fresh air to the average kid. For once, he knows there is a cartoon "for" him that treats him like an intelligent human being.

In this article, I'll concern myself mainly with the first saga, commonly called Macross. It is the longest of the three parts and the one most "giant robot" role-playing games are based on. In addition it is the one I enjoy the most. The story is set on Earth around the beginning of the twenty-first century. A global-civil war comes to a halt as it is learned that a giant spaceship is hurtling its way towards Earth. The spaceship lands on Macross Island in the South Pacific. Although no crew can be found and the superstructure is badly damaged, many of the internal systems are found to be in working condition. These reveal a civilization that is technologically centuries ahead of Earth and definitely not peaceful. Scientists around the world work frantically to learn everything they can about the spaceship and hope to eventually rebuild it. If an alien invasion should occur, it is hoped that the rebuilt spaceship will be able to defend the Earth.

Ten years pass and the scientists are extremely successful. They have learned a great deal from the spaceship. In addition, the spaceship has been rebuilt and is now fully operational. On the opening day of the launching of the Super Dimension Fortress One, or SDF-1 as the spaceship has been renamed, an alien armada appears in the Earth's solar system. Using their vastly superior numbers and technology, they begin to bombard the Earth. The commander of the SDF-1, Captain Gloval, knowing full well that the aliens are only after the SDF-1, decides to hyperjump to an orbit around the moon in hopes of drawing the alien fleet away from the Earth.

Unfortunately, as the SDF-1 hyperjumps, Macross Island is pulled along with it. In addition, instead of being transported to the moon, the SDF-1 finds itself orbiting Pluto. As the crew of the SDF-1 attempts to hyperjump back to Earth, it is discovered that the hyperjump system has vanished into thin air! Captain Gloval is forced to evacuate all of Macross City's 70,000 inhabitants into the SDF-1. The rest of the story is about the SDF-1's long trip home and of mankind's fight against the aliens, who call themselves Zentraedi. Even after the Zentraedi are defeated, problems continue. Almost 80% of the Earth's surface has been obliterated. The Earth's population is forced to sort out the rubble and rebuild.

The story is filled with real life conflicts. These range from the standard love triangle to a debate on the morality of killing other life forms. The show deals with culture shock (as Zentraedi defectors become accustomed to Earth life), mixed marriages (between humans and aliens), the problems of bureaucracy (the chiefs of staff refuse to let the SDF-1 or Macross City's population stay on Earth), politics (one faction wants to make peace with the aliens and the other wants to continue the fight), holocaust (the destruction of the Earth), coming to terms with reality and the problems involved with death.

Of course conflicts are nothing without characters. Robotech is fittingly enriched with real, believable characters. There is Rick Hunter, one of the main characters. He is an idealistic young man who is forced to grow up quickly in the war. There is Lisa Hayes, the strict bridge commander on the SDF-1. Although she seems all military and no emotions, we see short glimpses of a deeply emotional person who desperately needs to be loved. There is Lynn Minmei, Rick's girlfriend. She is the self-centered girl whose whole world is changed when she wins the Miss Macross beauty pageant. She neglects Rick and finds out all too late how important he is to her. These and many other characters help to liven up the plot of Robotech.

As you may have guessed, my interest in gaming has been heightened by the release of several games based on the Robotech series. To date, there are two major role-playing games of this nature, "Battletech" and "Robotech". I am acquainted with both. Presently, the basic set of "Battletech", which includes rules, counters, dice, etc., is about \$20. There are also two expansion sets ("Aerotech" and "Citytech") and a number of modules and expansion books available. "Robotech" is in book form and costs \$10 per book. Book one, which concerns itself with just the Macross part of Robotech, is the only one out at present. Additional books, which will cover other parts of the game, will be published later.

"Battletech" is set in the Earth's future. The world is divided among various warlords, each with his own battalion of battle droids. It is these battle droids that keep him in power. The society is very feudal-like, with the warlords fighting amongst each other in search of water, the most precious commodity.

Although meant to be a role-playing game, the combat section has just enough structure to make it playable as a wargame, albeit one with little strategy. In fact, that is what I've found many people with only the basic set to be doing. The components are pretty impressive, even for the price charged. The main objective of the game is to custom build your battle droids and send them to mash up your opponent's battle droids. I found the rules to be simple and the playability was good. In addition, the game is fairly realistic, but does have an unorthodox hand-to-hand combat system. Of course, it's not a perfect game. Making characters takes quite a bit of time, something you should do before the other players arrive.

Combat is often a monotonous shoot-dodge-shoot ordeal. The only strategy involved is moving behind a bush to get a modifier. Also, keeping track of the condition of your armor in about a dozen places at once can be a drag. The minor problems shouldn't keep you away though. "Battletech" is an interesting game and stomping on my opponents always gives me a thrill.

"Robotech" is more of a mainstream role-playing game than "Battletech". As such, the game is based on the world after the Zentraedi are defeated. As a member of the Robotech Defense Force your job is to defend innocent people from the rebel Zentraedi who are still holding out in South America and from the bandits who roam the land. You are literally the only law and order for miles around.

The main idea is to make a character and send him through a scenario. There is a short pre-made scenario in the book, but there are no other scenarios presently available. The game in general is good, but the system it's based on is hardly new. You roll up attributes for your character, you roll for hit points, you select an occupation, you select equipment, and you select an alignment. Sound familiar? Its main attractiveness is that it is a complete game; all the information needed to play is in Book One. In addition, its tried and true system means that you'll run into relatively few hitches during play. The only thing I can't stand about it is the combat system. It is so boring and unrealistic. It's even worse than "Battletech" because your location doesn't make any difference. In fact, combat just depends on who can inflict more damage faster. Missiles are so devastating that it is hardly worth the time to waste your attacks by using lasers. A salvo of missiles can take out a Zentraedi battle pod in one round when it would have taken your lasers at least ten rounds. What's the use? If you like role-playing games (in other words you prefer D&D over Squad Leader) then you'll like "Robotech", otherwise you may want to wait until other books are published and then see if the game meets your standards. Robotech aficionados should note that since the book was written in cooperation with Carl Macek and Harmony Gold (the creators of Robotech), it contains a wealth of official Robotech information not found elsewhere.

Well, that's about it. I hope to see more games of this type come out in the future, especially one that is more of a wargame than a role-playing game. I think it might be an interesting change. I've already heard of a game called "Mk. IV" and no doubt other game manufacturers will jump in on this increasingly popular gaming subject. You can be assured that I'll be looking into these games and with the permission of our esteemed editor, I'll try to keep you informed about them. Until then, see 'ya!

"Battletech" is available from FASA Corporation, P.O. Box 6930, Chicago, IL, 60680.

"Robotech" is \$10 from Palladium Books, 5926 Lonyo, Detroit, MI, 48210.



JUST SOME MADMAN RAMBLING ON ABOUT CTHULHU

Observations by **Michael Hopcroft**

I waited years to do it, but I finally picked up a copy of Call of Cthulhu, which is universally considered the classic horror role-playing game. Really looking at the game for the first time has brought back to mind many of my own peculiar memories of the work of H. P. Lovecraft. This is the only time I know of that an RPG has been specifically created as a tribute to the talents of one lonely man.

I am of relatively short acquaintance with the work of Lovecraft. I read my first Lovecraft story three years ago, in a collection I purchased at a used bookstore for 25 cents. One of the stories in that collection was THE SHADOW OVER INNSMOUTH, and although that story riveted my attention it was the diversity of what that particular collation offered that sold me on Lovecraft. There was the story about the hero who ascends a dark tower to the world above, only to find a horrible monster staring at him from the other side of a mirror. There was the story about a spaceman trapped in an invisible labyrinth on the plains of Venus. It was months later that I found a copy of THE CALL OF CTHULHU in another collection of Lovecraft and other writers.


I have found my understanding of this writer is very difficult to share. About a year ago the "new" Twilight Zone series ran an adaptation of Stephen King's story GRAMMA, which placed an innocent child in the position of awaiting the death of his monstrous grandmother. Grandmother was a sorceress, and in her room were hidden books of power. The little boy finds the books and starts to read them. One is the Necronomicon, a name that thanks to my knowledge of Lovecraft was quite familiar, and at that name I felt a sudden chill of horror. My face whitened visibly, and I could not keep myself from uttering a prayer under my breath. Of what followed to the unfortunate boy I will not go on; the story is still in print. It is what followed to me, the knowledgeable viewer of this tale, that concerns us at the moment.

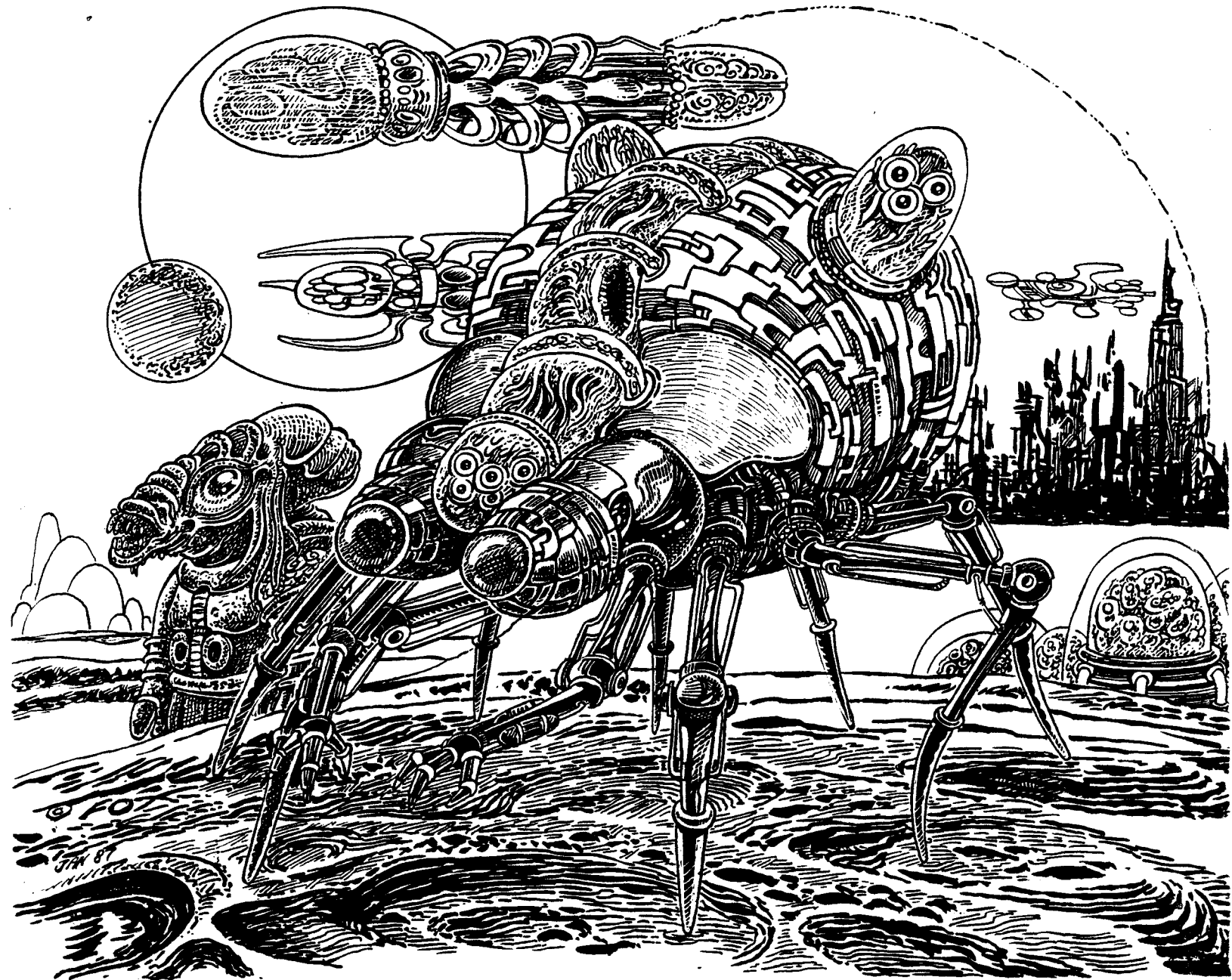
I had a friend at my college, and we often watched Twilight Zone together. At the word "Necronomicon" she saw me flinch and whiten and wondered why. She had never read Lovecraft, so after the show, while my behavior continued to confuse her, I decided the best way was for her to see for herself. So I lent her my copy of The Call Of Cthulhu.

The next day I got the book literally thrown in my face. She had reached a point where the menace had grown unbearable, where the flight-or-fight instinct is triggered by words on a page. She was angry that she had allowed me to convince her to read as far as she had. What did the anger mean? In retrospect, it must mean that the book had upset her, somehow. That she had felt, for a moment, real, stark horror and found it, not a pleasant thing, but a thing that can strike to the soul.

A few days later I was discussing this with another friend, who had read Lovecraft but was not absorbed in it. A third party joined the conversation, and when the topic of Cthulhu came up made a very odd turn. "The name of Cthulhu," he said, "is not to be spoken lightly." He claimed to be a white sorcerer, a wizard whose spells helped to keep back the power of the elder gods. Mad? Perhaps. We like to believe that there are no sorcerers or demons in this day and age.

And that is why the achievements of H.P. Lovecraft are so astounding. Not that he could imagine or see what he imagined and saw, but that he could translate those imaginings into words. Lovecraft's dark vision is so powerful because it overturns all our notions about a rational universe. It is little wonder that Lovecraft's is a universe inhabited by the monstrous likes of Nyogtha, The Thing That Should Not Be. The Gods of the Lovecraftian cosmos are the direct opposite of the benevolent, unitary deity many of us worship. Instead, the greatest deity is Azathoth, a mindless being described as "monstrous nuclear chaos", dwelling in the center of the universe and writhing unceasingly to the monotonous piping of a flute. We would like to believe that there is harmony at the source of our universe; in Lovecraft's cosmos that harmony becomes

chaos. 



WORLDS OF FANTASY

Criticism by John Schlosser

Part of the enjoyment in reading fantasy literature is that it allows the reader to journey in a world quite different from the one in which we live. I think we all enjoy fantasizing about living in the worlds created by our favorite authors. It is, therefore, not difficult to understand why some of the most successful authors are those which are best able to create comprehensive, consistent, and plausible worlds. Authors who create unbelievable or incomplete ones make it difficult for their readers to relate to and comprehend their creations, thereby hindering their reader's ability to project themselves into their worlds. In this article, I will endeavor to outline what I consider to be the vital aspects which make up a well-crafted fantasy world.

Most worlds prove incomplete because they lack the proper foundation. As a means of explanation, let me ask how many of you have been frustrated or confused by the lack of a map for a fantasy world. This omission, especially in quest-oriented books, makes it very difficult to figure out where the characters are, where they are going, and where they are in relation to various important landmarks. The first book of Sheri Tepper's True Game series unfortunately exemplifies this. This otherwise well-written book exasperates its readers, who are forced to perform mental mapping in order to follow the plot line. This inevitably detracts from the book's enjoyment. Fortunately, Tepper corrects this oversight in the next book of her series.

And can you imagine reading Tolkien without the maps! Granted, some books involve a limited geography and therefore do not necessitate large regional maps. Steven Brust's Vlad Taltos series, for example, takes place primarily in the city of Adrilankhan. But wouldn't it be nice to see where the Eastern Quarter and the other landmarks are in relationship to Vlad's turf?

But the creation of a world geography involves more than just mapping out the land. Climate, terrain, flora and fauna are also an important part. It adds that something extra when the characters must take cover from the rain, trudge up a mountainside, or have raccoons rummage through their saddlebags at night. These subtleties of nature lend a touch of reality and familiarity to a fantasy world. Let's take, for example, Terry Brooks' newest book Magic Kingdom For Sale/Sold. The book contains a map, but lacks any kind of real geography. The climate is uniformly gloomy, the terrain absolute, the populations isolated, the habitations nondescript. It is very near impossible to conceive of this place as even plausible. Brooks' world cannot stand by itself, nor does it invite its readers to journey within its boundaries. As a fantasy world, it is a dismal failure.

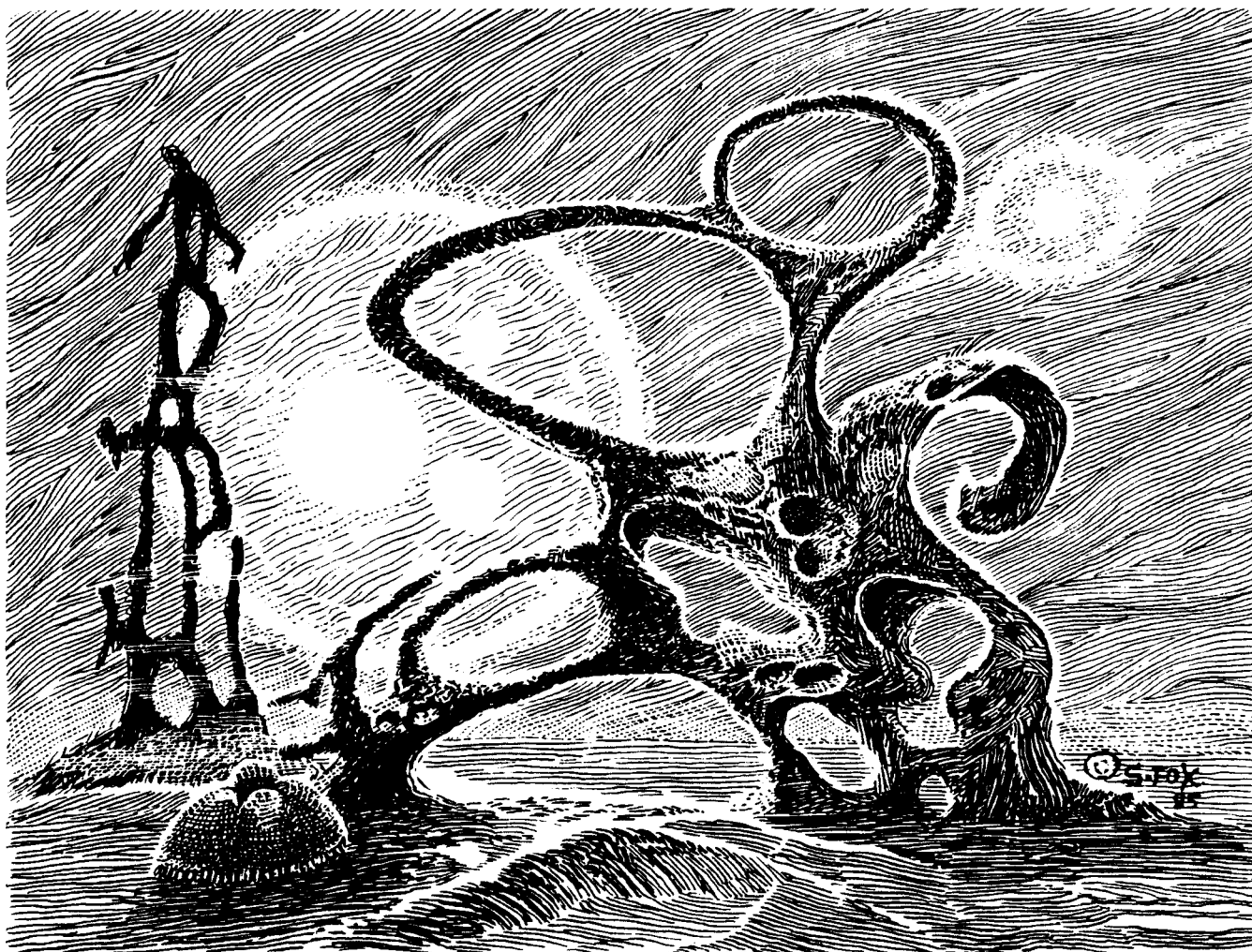
Getting back to what makes a world a complete and comprehensive entity, there are other aspects of a fantasy world which provide a strong foundation on which a story can be built. Some of these include the existence of political, social, economic, judicial, and religious institutions consistent with the world in which they exist. In a well-realised fantasy world, the author is able to convey to his readers how these different institutions work and how they interact. A world that excludes these institutions can not be considered complete, for how can a society exist without them. True, some of these institutions will play less of a role than others in relation to the author's story, but their complete exclusion is unforgivable. As long as the author is able to convey enough information as to the nature of these institutions, the reader should be able to fill in the gaps himself. But as with geography, the less conjecture required by the reader the more complete the world.

I do not mean to imply that the reader needs to be told how often orcs bathe (if at all), what the unit of currency for trolls is, or whether elves have trial by jury. Rather, I believe that the information should be consistent in content with the story that is being told. Consider, would Frodo's actions have been as understandable in The Fellowship of the Ring if Tolkien had omitted all the chapters at the beginning of the book concerning the Shire?

Once an author has built a solid foundation, he can then develop the rest of his world. The key here is consistency and plausibility. Plausibility is important because it is very difficult for a reader to relate to a world that seems to have no rhyme or reason. How many of you have found it impossible to relate to Piers Anthony's Xanth, where life is a pun? Even if you enjoyed the books, did you understand the world in which they took place? Once you accept a world's basic premise, such as the existence of elves and magic, it should be realistic within the context of that premise.

Consistency is also very important. Nothing is more frustrating than an author contradicting himself in the world he has created. An author should have a complete understanding of their world. The more important a given aspect is to the story, the more detailed the author's understanding of its purpose and history should be. All this need not be conveyed to the reader, and most often is not, but if discovered major inconsistencies can seriously detract from an otherwise outstanding world.

Of course a well created world cannot make up for a weak plot or poor characterization, but, by the same token a book cannot be considered great without one. 📖



SILVERTHORN

A DARKNESS AT SETHANON/RAYMOND E. FEIST

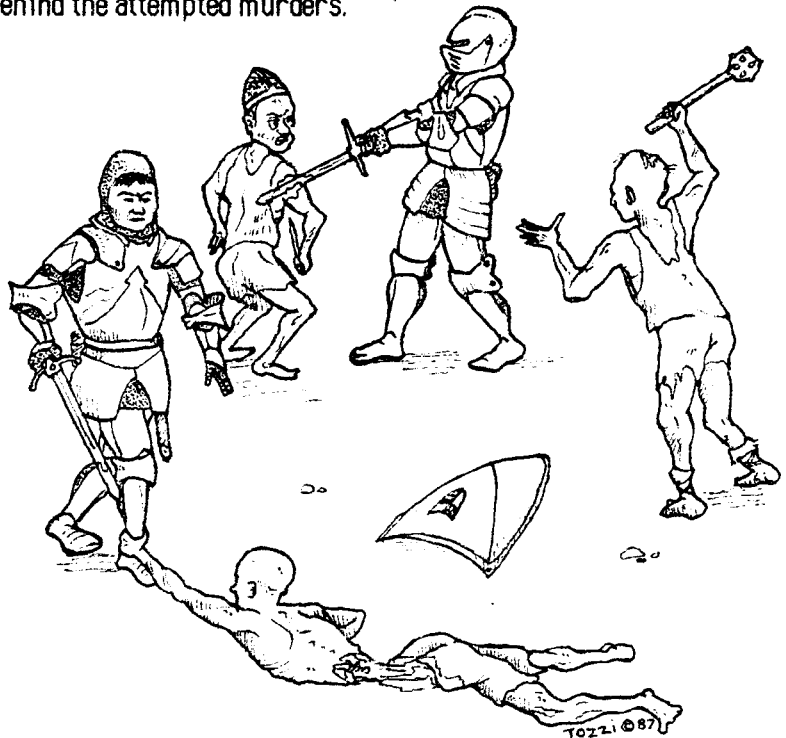
Book Reviews by Stephen H. Dorneman

When reviewing Feist's *MAGICIAN* books, I concluded that the author's strength was in realistic dialogue and endearing characters, not in the flash and fancy of fantasy's magical pyrotechnics. In *Silverthorn* and *A Darkness At Sethanon* Feist seems determined to play to his weaknesses and prove me wrong. With limited success.

Both books continue the characters and events of the generic medieval fantasy world that Feist created in *Magician: Apprentice* and *Magician: Master*, but with the major focus changing to different characters, particularly Prince Arutha and the young thief-made-Squire, Jimmy the Hand. *Silverthorn* is, at its heart, a simple Quest fantasy. Prince Arutha is twice saved from an assassin's crossbow bolt by the actions of Jimmy, but the second attempt occurs during the wedding of Arutha to Princess Anita, and Anita is the one struck by the poisoned bolt. The rest of the book follows Arutha, Jimmy and their companions from city sewers to sacred monastery to elven forest to accursed lake as they search for the cure to the poison and learn more about the ancient evil behind the attempted murders.

Magical displays and supernatural terrors are much more in evidence here than in Feist's first two fantasies. And the first time one of the villains rises from the dead as an unkillable zombie is a truly horrific scene, heightened by the outrage of a Priestess of the death-god over the usurping of her master's province by the motivating evil entity. The second animation, this time of a whole gang of dead assassins, is also a gripping moment. (However, by the third, fourth and subsequent times, the revivification is getting old quickly.)

Feist's handling of other, even more spectacular acts of magic is not nearly so effective. A powerful spell sent against the monastery where our heroes have taken refuge is described as:



" twelve glowing spheres . . . hanging silently and motionless over the courtyard. Then, with a deep snapping, buzzing sound painful to the ears, lines of energy shot across the gap between each pair and six lines joined the sphere. Then a line formed around the periphery so that now the spheres formed a dodecagon. "

Not the sort of description to excite my 'sense of wonder', but at least you can visualize the spell, while flaming creatures that later on attack messengers to the recently-formed School of Magic are still enigmas to me. Throughout, in attempting to show how powerful and evil the force opposing Arutha is Feist fails with the fire and brimstone but succeeds with the more understated touches, like the animation of a corpse.

Perhaps the best, most chilling touch is where the unknown enemy reaches out from a clairvoyant's future vision to mentally attack the oracle.

Maybe as a result of the author's deliberate concentration on the Wonder and Mystery of it all, the characterizations in Silverthorn suffer somewhat. The flashes of humor are still there, but the dialogue sometimes descends to the level of Dungeons & Dragons™ player-to-player banter. The heroes are painted in much broader strokes this time around, almost stereotypes (the honor-bound Hadati Tribesman, the reluctant King, the benevolent Prince, the super-cool Thief) - with flaws so jarringly added (the super-cool thief is badly injured, not by the enemy, but during a rope climb banging against a knife that he had stolen and slipped inside his tunic) as to seem tacked on for the sole purpose of making the characters more human. Silverthorn is still a good read for lovers of swords and sorcery, but it is the weakest of Feist's Riftwar books.

In A Darkness At Sethanon the War of Wonders escalates, particularly at the climax, but with the practice Feist's ability to handle world-shattering events has improved. Although some of the Zombies /Insane Dark Brothers /Dragons /Valheru Dragon Lords /Dreadmasters /Dreadlords /Floating Gardens/Lost Elven Races /Alien Oracles /Ancient Fortresses could easily have been cut, this time out Feist manages to not lose his mere mortals in the ethereal traffic jam.

The story continues from the events of Silverthorn (after a short intermission), although each book can be read more-or-less separately. Now Arutha and much of the same band from the first of the two books is off to confront the charismatic evil magician that is gathering the Dark Brothers (elves who have turned to the Dark Path) together under one banner to invade the human Kingdom. Arutha has been foretold as the bane of this evil, and cunningly figures that an expedition into the heart of the enemy's forces is the best way to go about this. Right. Meanwhile, a parallel plotline follows the main characters from the MAGICIAN books, the Magician Pug and the Valheru-reincarnate Tomas, as they fly off on dragonback to other worlds in search of the secret of the enemy's power. There are romances to be made (and lost) along the way, traps to solve (one by sheer magical power, not a very satisfying escape for the reader), well-portrayed battles to be fought, and interesting bits and pieces of the world's history to be uncovered.

The mystical resolution of the magical invasion at the climax left me somewhat dissatisfied (both reader and character are puzzled by the behavior of an ancient artifact), but the mundane lives of the characters are nicely wrapped up. A Darkness At Sethanon is a fine heroic fantasy that is available **now** (from Bantam, \$3.95 in paperback as is Silverthorn), and if Feist's ability to handle fantastic elements continues to grow without overshadowing his deft characterizations again, I'm certain that there will be

even better examples of the genre from Feist in the future. 66



THE POSTMAN/DAVID BRIN
EARTH ABIDES/GEORGE R. STEWART

Reviews by **Jack McHugh**

Both of these stories take a similar subject matter, however their assumptions are radically different. Stewart assumes a natural disease wipes out most of humanity. Brin assumes it is a series of man-made catastrophes. Both are realistic, Stewart going out of his way to point out the potential for his scenario to make you believe that it could happen. Brin also does a nice job of setting up his scenario. I found Brin's to be the more plausible, but both were well done.

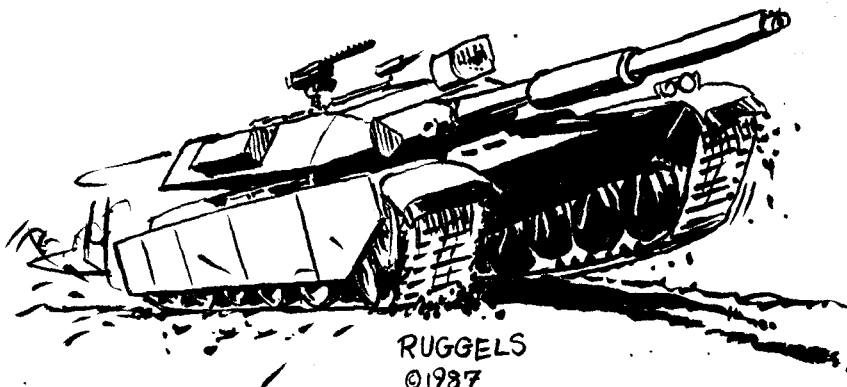
The Postman is set in an anarchic area that was the state of Washington up until about seventeen years ago. The book centers around the travels of the main character. Brin's novel is essentially about the reaction of people to the new conditions brought about by the downfall of society. The most interesting part of the book is the reaction of the people to the main character's re-creation of the US government and its authority in the form of The Postman. Although the people are ignorant, no better than medieval peasants in most places, and oppressed by tyrannical governments in many communities, they believe the myth. They believe because they want to believe that the US government is back and their old lives can, perhaps, be rebuilt. Despite their ignorance and oppression, these people know what they have lost and are resilient enough to actually want to work for it if given half a chance.

The climax of the book is weird but believable. The book is exciting and adventurous. The style is similar to Brin's other books although this is set in a completely different environment. If you are a fan of Brin's, as I am, than you'll love this book (assuming you can accept the background).

Earth Abides centers around a small community of couples, led by a former geology graduate student, which attempts to survive in the now deserted city of San Francisco. The book travels the ups and downs of this community, as well as the ups and downs of the world at large around them, through the life of Isherwood Williams, the former grad student.

Earth Abides is more of a micro study of man, as opposed to The Postman's macro study, of man's (and woman's) attempt to survive in a largely undamaged world with a much smaller population. Although Stewart doesn't mention any numbers, it cannot be more than a few million world-wide. Earth Abides is less of a good story than an intriguing character study and a fascinating scenario.

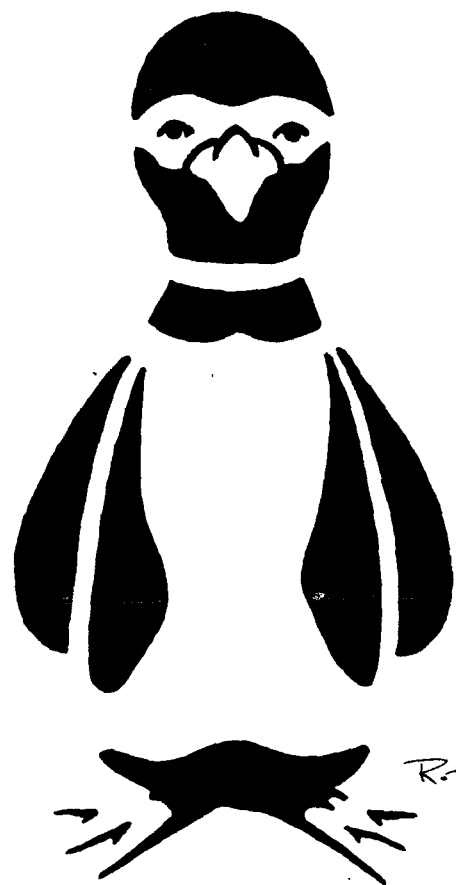
Overall, I enjoyed both books tremendously and would recommend both. The only thing that I would tell you is that for plot, read The Postman. For background and characters, read Earth Abides. If you are just looking to be entertained by good, well-written stories, read both.



BLACK TIE AFFAIRS

Invited are:

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Michael Quirk 3830 Chester Drive, Glenview, IL 60025
Rick Kohman 13517 Agua Dulce, Castroville, CA 95012
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Vijit Sabnis 626 Heather Avenue, Placentia, CA 92670



ROCKHOPPER'S SOCKHOP SPRING 01 1987AU

Austria (**Howorth**): A Vie-Bud, A Bud-Ser, F Tri-Alb
England (**Hall**): A Lpl-Edi, F Edi-Nwg, F Lon-Nth
France (**Quirk**): A Mar-Spa, A Par-Gas, F Bre-Mid
Germany (**Kohman**): A Ber-Pru, A Mun-Sil, F Kie-Den
Italy (**Ozog**): A Ven-Pie, A Rom-Ven, F Nap-Ion
Russia (**Seaman**): A War-Ukr, A Mos-Sev, F Stp-Bot, F Sev-Rum
Turkey (**Nickel**): A Con-Bul, A Smy-Arm, F Ank-Bla
Underlined moves do not succeed. However, there are none here.

Thanks, and an issue's sub credit, to **Jack McHugh** for his unused standby moves. His standby press, however, is presented for your enjoyment.

SHOUTED OUT THE WINDOW (Press)

Standby Italy-Germany, France, & England: "If Cathy's a washout I promise to answer all of your letters, really!"

Italy-World: "Italy is alive and well! The post office must be against her."

Austria-Italy: "'Lost my letter in the mail?' That's an old story. I expected something a little more creative from a woman of your reputation."

Austria-Italy: "One woman against six men . . . who's going to have more fun, us or you?"

Italy-Russia: "Why don't you write?"

Austria-Russia & Turkey: "Come on now, one of you guys can write a long letter."

Standby Italy-Russia, Turkey, & Austria: "Hey youse guys, where's some correspondence? If you don't write I'll have the Pope ('A personal friend of mine', as they say in Vegas) ex-communicate you, even if you're not Catholic."

England-Russia: "Norway has extended an invitation to annex them as part of 'Her Majesty's' sovereign empire. We need to have a closer relationship with our Russian comrades."

Austria-Germany: "God! I love your attitude! Let's go kick some butt."

France-Italy: "Everyone says I can't trust you. I hope they were kidding me."

England-Turkey: "Long Live the Wicked Witch, but Which Witch?"

England-France: "I hear the weather's nice in Spain this time of year - Much better than the south coast of England. Aye Mate?"

Austria-Game: "Hey, if this is a 'Rockhopper's Sockhop' where do your musical interests lie? I listen to everything . . . Reggae, New Wave, Psychedelic, Rock & Roll and anything else done well."

Standby Italy-GM: "How's that for Gatecrashing?" [*Not bad, but Cathy was too quick for you and slammed the door in time. How's the song go, "It's my party and I'll die if I want to . . ."*]

THE MAGELLAN COTILLION FALL 01 1987AV

Austria (**Smith**): A Tri-Vie, A Ser SUPPORT F Alb-Gre, F Alb-Gre

England (**Rush**): A Yor-Lon, F Nwg-Nwy, F Nth-Den

France (**Oaklyn**): A Pic SUPPORTS F Eng-Bel, A Mar-Spa, F Eng-Bel, A Sil-Ber(NSU)

Germany (**Hauser**): A Kie-Den, A Mun-Bur, F Hol SUPPORTS F Nth-Bel(NSO)

Italy (**J. Sabol**): A Tyr-Mun, A Ven HOLD, F Ion-Tun

Russia (**Bowen**): A Sev-Rum, A Ukr-Gal, F Bot-Swe, F Rum-Bla

Turkey (**Carli**): A Bul-Gre, A Smy-Arm, F Con-Bul (sc)

Underlined moves do not succeed. Sorry.

AUSTRIA (VIE, BUD, TRI, SER, GRE) 5 BUILD 2

ENGLAND (LPL, EDI, LON, NWY) 4 BUILD 1

FRANCE (MAR, PAR, BRE, SPA, BEL) 5 BUILD 2

GERMANY (BER, KIE, HOL) 3 EVEN

ITALY (VEN, ROM, NAP, MUN, TUN) 5 BUILD 2

RUSSIA (WAR, MOS, STP, SEV, RUM, SWE) 6 BUILD 2

TURKEY (CON, SMY, ANK, BUL) 4 BUILD 1

NEUTRAL: (DEN, POR) 2

Winter Builds Only due for next turn, but if everybody also sends in Spring 1902 orders I'll combine the seasons to speed up play.

WHISPERED IN THE HALLS (Press):

Dateline Russia: "Tsar 'Slim' Bowen today ordered spittoons for the royal digs. 'Get me my chew. I'll make sure that no furriners want this supply center. They'll spend enuf time cleaning it out.'"

Moscow-London: "You'll have to send dispatches to St. Petersburg, not Moscow. The royal residence, and our capitol, are there. P.S. I'm glad the letter was very informative."

London Times: "With the French in the Channel, and the Germans and Russians not writing, the Prime Minister announced today that foreign language classes in all three tongues will be offered this Spring."

Mmmmax Headroom (via Russia) to Board: "I am a Rrrussianologist. White bbblocks are in. Cccatch the wave. Even if it is frozen in Ssssiberia."

Mmmmax Headroom to Penguin: "I am glad you like mmme."

England-France: "After your Spring 01 moves, and my knowledge that you are a 'Greenpeace' supporter, I decided to go out and buy a 'Nuke The Whales' T-shirt. If you think that's bad, wait till I say something about the baby seals."

Dateline France: "(Wissembourg, Near Badbergzabern, Somewhere in Bas-Rhin) The French surveyed the situation in Burgundy after the long battle of Spring 1901. Grape vines were down everywhere. Grapes were squashed, bleeding over the ground. Worms had turned their heads downward and wriggled themselves deep into the mud in the wake of the German goosestep.

Wondering when it all would end, the French Field Commander hung his head low in shame for losing entry into Burgundy.

Then a voice rang out, 'Sssir! Sssssir! Dddon'ttt dddissspaaaair. Wwe will commmme to yourrrr rrrrresscuuuue and gggivvvvve you the wwwwherrrrre-with-alllllll to hooold yourrrr hhhhead hhhhiigh once againnnn.'

The French Field Commander jumped to his feet, grabbed his tunic, grabbed his boots, grabbed his . . . (watch it, Bernie!), grabbed his sword, grabbed his horse, and rode off into the night. A small plane was heard overhead."

London-Berlin: "Sorry about Denmark, but Bernie was talking sense while you weren't talking at all"

Tsar Bowen to Board: "Magellan Cotillion. Sounds like someone is talking about a Spanish girls' bosoms. Wierd, huh."

THE EMPEROR'S BALL WINTER 01 1987AK

Austria (Ours?): **NBR!** Will play 1 short, Has A Tri, A Ser, F Alb

England (Plachta): **BUILD F LON**, Has A Nwy, F Nth S, F Eng C, F Lon

France (Sargent): **BUILD F BREST**, Has A Pic, A Mar, F Bre, F Por

Germany (Schenck): **BUILD A MUN, F KIE, F BER**, Has A Hol, A Bel, A Mun, F Den, F Kie, F Ber

Italy (F. Anderson): **BUILD F NAP**, Has A Pie, A Ven, F Nap, F Tun

Russia (Holley): **BUILD A MOS**, Has A Rum, A Ukr, A Mos, F Bot, F Sev

Turkey (E. Anderson): **BUILD F SMY**, Has A Bul, A Con, F Aeg, F Smy

Would **Kathy Caruso**, 29-10 164th St., Flushing, NY 11358 please stand by for Austria? Come back, Mike!

OVERHEARD AT THE BALL (Press)

England-Germany: "Thanks for the stab!"

France-England: "Docking fees in Brussels a bit steep for the Grand Fleet?"

England-France: "Congrats on your new alliance!"

England-Italy: "I am amazed at your ability to stand by and wait for elimination by the Krautfrogs!"

England-Russia: "Do you hear krautsteps? Frogsteps?"

England-Austria/Turkey: "Hi! How are things out East?"

Dateline Côte de Azur: "Long columns of Territorials streamed somewhat shame-faced back to Marseilles today, having forgotten (in their haste to depart) the Coppertone and pith helmets."

German Press Abstracts: "THE JACKEL FLEES! (from a Wall Poster in German-Occupied Belgium, November 13, 1901): The JACKEL RAOUL has left the country, running to the safety of his English masters. This so-called 'Crown Prince' (in reality the illegitimate offspring of a petty Spanish noble) was installed by English machination some three years ago. In that time he and his English 'friends' have single-mindedly run the Belgian economy into the ground, set Wallonia against Flanders, and agitated against the close relations which Germany and Belgium, given their proximity and shared cultural heritage, should naturally share.

The war plots of the English weapons-makers finally came to fruition when Raoul 'requested English assistance in collecting customs tariffs' in the Channel ports and Antwerp. At this wholesale abrogation of their nationality, the Belgian people rose as one and chased the JACKEL RAOUL from their shores. Small numbers of German troops subsequently entered the country to help Belgian police maintain law and order.

We ask for patience and good-will from the populace; the German Army is here to help you. The 24-hour 'Shoot On Sight' curfew is for your protection, and will be lifted when we are good and ready. Citizens failing to observe the following prohibitions will be punished by death or dismemberment or both. (There follows a list of 26 items, ranging from 'No Singing' to 'Don't Resist Confiscation of Household Pets') Signed, Schtunkt, Military Governor of Belgium.

SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN CHRISTENED (Wilhemshavener Navalische Rekord, December 24, 1901): The *S.M.S. Schleswig-Holstein*, mighty product of Teuton genius and answer to a generation of insults and provocation from perfidious Albion, today slid gently into the receptive waters of Wilhelmshaven Harbor. The Kaiserin smashed a bottle of sparkling Moselle wine across the prow of the sleek battleship, bidding her 'Godspeed and Death to the English Schweinhund!'

The *Schleswig-Holstein* is the most recent addition to the Allied North Sea Fleet, a polyglot force consisting of the sea-going ships of the Dutch and Belgian navies, as well as some German units of varying quality. A similar 'Emergency Service Squadron' is being assembled in the Empire's Baltic ports, from remnants of the Danish and Swedish Navies. It is hoped these mobilizations will enable the Alliance to hold the forces of the English King at bay.

The ceremonies were briefly marred when a FREIDAN terrorist, yelling 'Schleswig and Holstein are Danish and shall always remain Danish!' slipped through the police line and ran toward the official party. He was cut down by masses gunfire from the guards, but 50 or 60 spectators were killed and hundreds wounded in the crossfire. The dead and wounded were all from the working class, however, and as the VIPs were unhurt the ceremony was able to continue with but a slight delay.

KAISERS SAY THE DARNDDEST THINGS! (Ich Bin Ein Berliner, January 22, 1902): The youthful Kaiser Schtupidshitz, already renowned for his blunders and slips of the tongue, let fly with another embarrassing error while at the commissioning of a torpedo boat destroyer in Königsberg, East Prussia. In the presence of Danish Naval officers, on hand to view the newest addition to the 'Emergency Service Squadron,' Schtupidshitz told his familiar joke about the Danish soldier, the Polish damsel, the Swedish goat, and the bottle of German wine.

The Danes were tremendously insulted and stalked off, vowing to break the Alliance, take their ships, and sail for home. They were dissuaded from doing so by virtue of an apology from the Kaiser ('let me express my deepest regrets for your lack of a sense of humor') coupled with a delicately veiled threat ('if you attempt to raise steam on your washtubs, guns from the Königsberg Fortress and the German Baltic Flotilla will completely and utterly destroy you').

In an attempt to minimize the public's knowledge of this event, Schtupidshitz swore all witnesses to secrecy. It is only from a highly confidential source that we were able to print this information.

FRITZ SCHTRUEDEL, KAISER'S PRESS SEC'Y, MISSING, PRESUMED DEAD (Hamburger-Schlemmer Zeitung, January 24, 1902): Herr Schtruedel, lately the Kaiser's press secretary, has mysteriously vanished. Observers at the capital say his disappearance is apparently unrelated to yesterday's seven alarm fire that completely destroyed the editorial offices and printing presses of the popular capital tabloid Ich Bin Ein Berliner."

FLASH! NEW GAMESTART!!

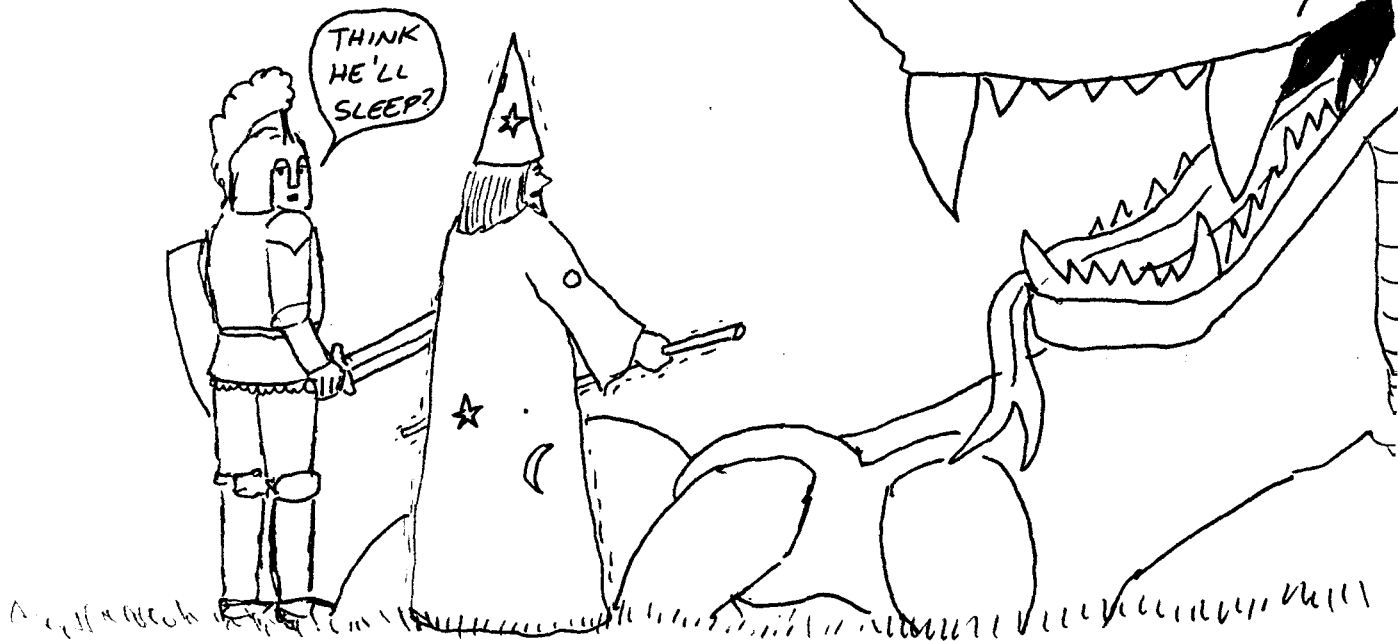
KING BASH

WINTER 00

BN87??

Austria (**Bob Addison**): A Vie, A Bud, F Tri
England (**John Schlosser**): A Liv, F Edi, F Lon
France (**John Rigley**): A Mar, A Par, F Bre
Germany (**Steve Sabol**): A Ber, A Mun, F Kie
Italy (**Kirk Carroll**): A Ven, A Rom, F Nap
Russia (**Vincent Lutterbie**): A War, A Mos, F Stp(sc), F Sev
Turkey (**Vijit Sabnis**): A Con, A Smy, F Ank
Okay all you King Bashers, have at it.

Deadline for all games is **June 27.**



GATECRASHERS (Pete Gaughan, Ernie Hakey, Michael Gonsalves, Jack McHugh*). Remember, a standby pays no game fees, receives an issue's sub credit for submitting moves when called upon, and gains 2 issues sub credit upon playing a position to completion. So let me know that you want on (or off) the list! (Sorry, **MeIinda**, current players can't also be standbys until further notice.) Gatecrashers always welcome at these parties!

Stephen H. Dorneman
95 Federal Street #2
Lynn, MA 01905-2230



Rod Walker
1273 Crest Dr.
Encinitas, CA 92024

Sub Ends #: 13

THE BACK PAGE *o*

I got a little angry while donating blood this past week, but since my anger was directed at the Red Cross nurse who was literally controlling the flow of my life's blood at the time, I kept it inside, let the matter pass, forgot about it. Well, not really forgot about it. That's why I'm writing this today.

No, the nurse was not incompetent in finding my vein, nor did she treat me rudely in any way. We were having a friendly conversation, the procedure was going well, when, while talking about the weather (of all the innocent things to talk about!), she said . . . it.

She said that the reason we'd been having such an unusually wet Spring in Massachusetts was 'all the gases and things that we've been sending up in space along with those satellites and shuttles'. This statement stopped my end of the conversation dead. She said it so matter-of-fact. And this from a worker in the medical profession! The mind boggles -- where did she first hear such nonsense, so as to come to accept it as fact?

And who should I really be angry at here? Myself, for not speaking out and trying to correct her misapprehension? The public education system? The nurse? TV meteorologists? Or am I getting all worked up over nothing, just one misinterpretation of an article about aerosol's effect on the ozone layer?

I'm still a little angry, though. I hope next time the speaker won't have a needle in my vein, and I'll feel free to have my say.