



THE LOG THAT FEELS

#5

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The following article was written for an amateur publication based in California (I haven't received a copy yet, and so can't give the details). Waste not, want not, say I—and in any case the subject of live roleplaying has not yet been covered to a great extent in IR. For those unfamiliar with the subject, it may prove a helpful (if perhaps a bit biased) introduction.



IT'S ALIVE!

A Brief Introduction to Live Roleplaying

by Peter Maranci

The first thing you need to know about live roleplaying is that it's big. Too big for anyone to properly describe in anything shorter than a book. With roots as varied as the Society for Creative Anachronism, the 'Method' style of acting, theater in general, and even children's

cops & robbers games, live roleplaying is actually far bigger than traditional table-top RPGs—and far older. At the same time, live roleplaying is actually the new kid on the horizon of the roleplaying scene! With all that in mind, here's a small introduction to live roleplaying.

Some people still can't decide what to call the person who runs a traditional roleplaying game. Dungeonmaster? Gamemaster? Referee? Moderator? It's a question that's been argued for years in some circles, and probably will be for years to come. Likewise, there are many different opinions as to what 'live roleplaying' should properly be called. After all, other kinds of roleplaying aren't 'dead', right?

The two most common names are "Live Roleplaying", which is abbreviated as "LRP", and "Live-Action Roleplaying", called "LARP". Since LARP is probably more accurate (and easier to pronounce), we'll stick with that for the sake of simplicity.

LARP games come in two basically different flavors: *Interactive Literature* and *Live Combat*. These two types are actually quite different from each other.

INTERACTIVE LITERATURE:

Interactive Literature games are usually one-shot events, run at hotels during science-fiction or gaming conventions. Players dress up and act out their roles, but all combat is handled by some non-physical system such as cards or

scissors-paper-rock—can't have people fighting in the halls and upsetting the regular guests, after all! But the focus of IL games is rarely combat. Instead, players must use special skills, abilities, knowledge and possessions to interact with the other players. Intrigue, conspiracy, backstabbing, wheeling & dealing, and coalition-building are the main elements of such games.

Though many of these games give players the opportunity to pre-register, it's also often possible to register at the game itself. Usually players are given a pre-written character, ready-made by the Gamemasters with goals, desires, and a personality already determined. While they may let you indicate what sort of character you'd like to play during pre-registration, there are no guarantees—more often than

not the character you receive has little or nothing to do with the personality and characteristics requested. Players receive a special badge with their character name on it, a packet of information about the rules and background of the game, a special character sheet with private information, and cards representing money or special items that the character possesses. Players then go out into the area of the game and mingle, working out their individual plots.

Characters in IL-type games can't be carried over from game to game—each is specifically written for that game alone, and is the property

of the Gamemasters. In other words, each new Interactive Literature game is a whole new story, and you can't bring in a character you've already played (with rare exceptions). It's possible that the new Vampire LARP (which appears to be a type of Interactive Literature game) may allow continuing characters, but as the author has no direct experience with Vampire he'll make no promises.



Games can last a few hours up to two or more days. The length of the game is generally pre-set, with a ceremony scheduled at the end of the event.

These games generally have anywhere from twenty to one hundred and fifty or more players. Often more than one gamemaster puts on the game; they operate out of a “control room” where players can

go to have special acts judged, resolve disputes, get information, buy items, or do any number of other special actions. Typically some of the gamemasters also spend time wandering around the area. In some games the GMs take specialized roles, such as “God of Thieves”, “Martian Trading Factor”, or “Fate”. In such games they handle only those things which pertain to their role, and players must find the proper GM for their needs.

An advantage to IL games is that they're far more flexible in setting. Since all the action takes place on a social and conversational level, the games can be set in any sort of background:

science fiction, fantasy, horror, even comedy. Sometimes such games use a specific setting. **Asimov's *Foundation***, **Baum's *The Wizard of Oz***, the **RuneQuest** RPG's world of *Glorantha*, and even the macabre world of **H. P. Lovecraft** have been made into Interactive Literature games. The atmosphere in such games can be tremendously fun, if they're handled right. If handled poorly they can be more disappointing than a game with a generic background. The failure of the *Foundation and Destiny* game run a few years ago in Boston, for example, was particularly disappointing to players who were fans of Isaac Asimov.

Interactive Literature games offer a chance to play a role within a large group. Success often depends on how well you can deal with (or manipulate) people. In that context, however, Interactive Literature can be a truly fun roleplaying experience.

On the down side, IL games can be frustrating if run or written poorly. In many games not all the characters are equal—the Mayor of Marakesh is far more important than Hasim, the street beggar, for example. Sometimes the “better” roles are given to those who sign up first for the game, but often key roles are given to players that the GMs know and trust. This can result in favoritism if handled badly.

Some IL games become little more than “widget hunts”. In these, several pieces of something important to the game have been split up between a number of characters. The parts must be gathered and assembled correctly to accomplish the goal of the game. Such games are often characterized by lots of trading between characters. They can get boring unless the players work to put a lot of drama and intrigue into their roles.

There are a few things that any player in an Interactive Literature game can do to increase

the chance for enjoyment and success. Here are five:

1) Keep Your Secrets! Never let anyone see your character sheet. Keep at least some of your secrets for as long as you can. Once they're told, they'll soon become common knowledge. It's much more fun to be the only person who knows the one thing that everyone is wondering about, and it can give you power and leverage over the others as the game comes to a peak.



2) Know Your Associates! Most characters are written with goals that involve them in a smaller plot within the larger framework. These subplots are usually written to push several characters together. The character information sheet will indicate associates, friends, and enemies in this case. Meet them, talk to them, find out what you can—but,

3) Trust No One! Everyone has secrets, and unless the game is quite unusual they're all looking out for Number One. Alliances are possible, and even necessary—but remember that everyone has secret goals, and you don't *really*

know all their motivations. The Grand Backstab is a tradition that can never be forgotten.

4) Go For The Unusual Angle! If your character is a minor one with a limited role, it's often worthwhile to search for some way to throw a monkey wrench into the works of the game. Steal something valuable and hide it, or make up a false story and spread it around. There's nothing stopping you from making up a new organization or plot. A player with nothing left to do in one game amused himself by writing up incendiary pamphlets attacking the ruling class, and announcing a meeting of a secret group of revolutionaries. Nothing came of it, but he described the excitement of sneaking around and putting up his posters without being caught as the most fun he'd had in the entire game.

5) Mingle! This is perhaps the most important thing to do. These games are interaction-driven. A character who doesn't talk to people will have nothing to do. The more people you talk to, the greater the chance that you'll get involved in many different plots.

Two Interactive Literature groups are the **Society for Interactive Literature (SIL)**, perhaps the first IL group; and the **Interactive Literature Foundation (ILF)**, which split off from the SIL over regional and political differences. The ILF has more members overall, while membership in the SIL is by invitation only (you can subscribe to their magazine, though). It's not necessary to join either, however, as both put on games that are open to anyone. Most conventions will advertise if a IL game will be part of their activities, and games are often announced in the rec.games-

.frp.misc and alt.games.frp.live-action news-groups of the InterNet.

LIVE COMBAT:

Live Combat games are just that—live combat. Players fight with padded weapons (boffers), against NPCs or each other. Apart from that one common point, there's a great deal of variety in this category. And there are many organizations all around the country which run such games.

A few generalizations: most Live Combat games are set in a fantasy background. It's a lot easier to use a padded sword or club than a padded blaster! Likewise, most LC games are held outside, which can limit the playing season in some areas. Some LC groups run indoor non-combat games out of season.

Unlike IL games, it's usually necessary to join an organization to play in a Live Combat game; this is due to the fact that though such games are generally very safe, with safety checks of all boffers, nonetheless they must have insurance—and insurance companies prefer that all



participants sign a waiver and pay to join the group.

Most LC groups allow you to create your own character. The character may be played again and again, going from game to game. As time goes by, the character gains “experience”, adding abilities and powers which are often represented as “levels”. Characters may usually be taken in certain specialized classes, such as Thief, Wizard, Fighter, and others.

Does that sound familiar? In many ways most LC games strongly resemble Dungeons & Dragons™.



There are two basic types of game in the Live Combat school of roleplaying: the Line Course and the World Course. In the line course a small group of players (usually three to ten) travel along a set route, with a very specific goal in mind. They begin with a request for aid from a patron, who gives them information on the prize to be recovered or the enemy to be destroyed. Setting out, the party meets monsters, bandits, traps, friends, and other challenges along the way. Usually there are puzzles to be solved, and a final showdown with the forces of Evil—a Battle Royale. At the epilogue the reward is bestowed, and the loot gained in the adventure is divided amongst the party. And at least some groups have a pizza party at a member’s house after the game.

The line course is very much like an old-fashioned D&D™ dungeon, with a very limited number of options for the players—the difference being that the game is held outside, and combat is done physically rather than with dice. Though having such a limited choice of

action might sound frustrating, in most cases it isn’t—the physical challenge and excitement of not knowing what might be lurking behind a rock or within the bushes keeps players on their toes, much too busy to worry about what choices they can make. It’s fun, in the same way that even a clunky old D&D module can be fun once in a while.

A World Course is a much bigger proposition: an outdoor area is filled with NPCs, perhaps in the form of a fantasy village or town (much like a renaissance fair). Players may wander around the area, interacting with each other as they like—in some cases they even may be denizens of the village themselves. This takes a lot of people and resources, but allows many more people to play, too. Only the largest Live Combat groups are able to put on a world course game.

Such games often have a continuing background—the village and the people within it stay the same game after game, and there is a strict social hierarchy in power. These games can involve quite a bit of intrigue and strategy, with combat less common than in a line course game. 

After all, the town guards might arrest you for fighting! Incidentally, these games are often played overnight while players and NPCs camp out.



A problem which is common to all LC groups is the question of ranged attacks. How do players use archery to attack far-off enemies, or spells to fight from a distance?

There are many different ways that these problems have been handled. Some groups actually use real bows and arrows with padded tips to represent archery, but this is considered

unsafe by most insurance companies. As a result, most such groups are moving to the use of Nerf™-type weapons, which are expensive but very safe.

Other groups use beanbags to represent both arrows and spells. Apart from a high rate of loss (beanbags can be hard to find in a forest) this method works fairly well, though in combat it can be hard to know if you've been hit by a beanbag—and difficult to distinguish between “arrow” bags and “spell” bags.

Other groups use a calling system for ranged spells and archery. The player calls out the damage or effect, and the target—in such games the participants must each try to dress in a specific color, so as to allow an attacker to say “Arrow, four points, blue”. This system has drawbacks too, though it's probably the safest of all methods.

Live Combat packs a physical feeling of excitement that no other form of roleplaying can match. A pack of axe-wielding zombies can get your adrenaline pumping a lot quicker when they're real and coming at you than when they're described, or coming at you with index cards. A line course game has the advantage of allowing you to trust your comrades, and work together as a team—ideal for those who are tired of intrigue and backstabbing. World courses can be quite exotic—if everyone has costumed and decorated well, they can provide a more convincing simulation of another world than any other system.



Live Combat games have problems too, of course. The risk of injury is always made as small as possible, but nonetheless it *is* there. It's usually possible to take a role that less physically demanding than most, but everyone in a game is going to have a good chance of having to defend themselves with a weapon. Unlike IL-type games, a character death means a lot—months or years of playing effort and experience points can be lost in a swordstroke, though resurrection is a possibility in many games. Since the games are usually played outside, weather can become a problem—it's hard to roleplay at 18 degrees Fahrenheit!

A few tips for Live Combat games:

1) Choose your clothing carefully. It should be strong, appropriate to the weather, and safe. You may have to fall down or move quickly, and it could be disastrous to tangle your clothing at the wrong moment, or fall on something hard. Good shoes or boots are important in a line course, since they often involve a lot of hiking.

2) Pack everything you need for several hours—snacks, water, and any first aid or medical supplies you might need. Make sure to inform the gamemasters if you have any special medical requirements.

3) DO NOT TOUCH! Physical contact between players is forbidden by nearly all live combat groups, particularly in combat situations. No hand-to-hand is permitted, and all combat must be with padded weapons or ranged effects. 

4) NO REAL WEAPONS! Likewise, real weapons are generally banned from LC games, even summed dulled ones worn just for show. Insurance companies are particularly strict about that restriction.

Two Live Combat organizations are the **International Fantasy Gaming Society (IFGS)**, and **New England Roleplaying Organization (NERO)**. Both have a number of branches all over the US. NERO tends towards strong social hierarchies (nobility & commoners) and large world course “villages”, while the IFGS offers both world and line courses with a more open and casual social structure. There are *many* more Live Combat groups—check at your local game store or on the alt.games.frp.live-action newsgroup on the InterNet.

POINTS IN COMMON

Both Interactive Literature and Live Combat games share a few points in common. Appropriate costuming is always appreciated, though usually not mandatory. A fee is required for most games—this can range from a few dollars to fifty or more. Politeness out-of-game is a good idea. Alcohol and drugs are usually forbidden. Lastly, it’s wise not to offend or shock non-players—one large organization recently found itself banned by the town where their game site was located because of the actions of a few obnoxious members!

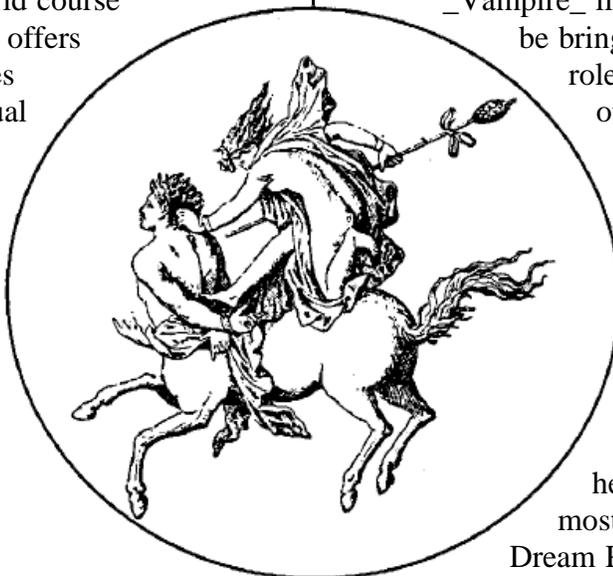
WHERE NEXT?

Live roleplaying has not been available in commercial form until comparatively recently.

Even now, there is no real large-scale push to commercialize the genre, as TSR popularized RPGs. But the signs are on the horizon. Live roleplaying is spreading fast, in the form of hundreds of small local LARP organizations. Some are commercial, some are not—but all of these organizations share a desire to spread the word about LARP. Major game companies, too, are getting into the act. Chaosium, the company which produces *_Call of Cthulhu_*, *_RuneQuest_*, and *_Stormbringer_* has recently published a live “freeform” game. White Wolf has published its *_Vampire_* live game, which seems to be bringing in some newcomers to roleplaying as well. From the other end, the Dream Park Corporation™ is inventing “special effect” systems (computer-sensing weapons and spell effects) which are used with the IFGS system to produce more lifelike fantasy worlds. Demos of these systems are being held at some conventions, most notably at GenCon.

Dream Park is also planning on building theme parks for live roleplaying, though such remain years or decades away. Finally, there are rumors that Disney and industrial giants as Sony may be negotiating with Dream Park Corporation to produce live roleplaying products, or may be developing such technology on their own.

It may not be long before we’re all spending hundreds of dollars to fight Evil in luxurious resorts...but until that day, LARP remains a fun and exciting way to spend a few hours or days living out another form of the roleplaying dream.



TOPIC #5:

HUMAN NATURE

I was inspired to chose Human Nature as the topic of IR #5 by a water balloon which sailed toward my open car window and exploded near my head as I was driving. Some kid out for kicks, probably.

A petty and spiteful act, not normally worth a second thought. In fact I'd come out of it pretty well; the balloon could have made a direct hit through the window, stunning me. Instead it struck the frame of the car, soaking me but doing no real harm. Still, I couldn't help but try to make a little sense of the event. What did this sort of thing mean?

Well, one thing it meant was that kids can be vicious little bastards—but I already knew that. ☺

Humans seem to be a mass of opposing qualities: good and evil, kindness and cruelty. In fact, human nature is a mess! Nothing but intermingled shades of gray. My study of the anthropologist Ernest Becker's investigation of human nature for my senior undergraduate thesis had turned up some interesting and at least partially valid ideas: he theorized that evil (or Evil) in human nature was the product of the essential neurosis caused by the fact that human beings (like all living things) wish to live forever, but being possessed of intelligence cannot help but know that they *will* die.

Becker developed that theme considerably, of course. His attempt to unify the social/anthropological and individual/psychological views was innovative, to say the least.

Be that as it may, the questions of human nature are not often dealt with in roleplaying games (at least in my experience). This seems a pity, since that subject is perhaps the most fruitful source of mature and meaningful art.

Think of Othello, torn between jealousy and trust. Hamlet, agonizing over the desire for revenge and the fear of action. Gilligan, torn between a love of coconuts and fear of the Skipper. ☺ Okay, Hamlet might be a silly example. But the core of most great literature is firmly set in the basic questions of human nature.

How can these elements be brought into roleplaying games?



Scenarios focusing on such problems could certainly be written. In fact, some have. However, they're vastly outnumbered by the majority of published material, much of which is action-adventure oriented. It may be that the market for mature roleplaying material is too small to be worthwhile, except (perhaps) in amateur media. On the other hand, the juvenile tenor of most roleplaying games may be what's responsible for the failure of the hobby to expand beyond its limited boundaries.

Come to think of it, the action-adventure orientation of most RPGs might also explain why there are so few women who play—it may be sexist to say so, but my experience is that most women tend to prefer relationship-oriented stories to action-adventure.

SCENARIO HOOKS II

The Watchers of Nereyon is a ‘serious’ campaign that I’ve been running for about seven years now. It’s unusual in that the players possess considerably more freedom of action than in most games I’ve known; the world has been mapped out in my head, and as the players wander about I have to make up encounters on the spot. Time after time the players have missed or deliberately ignored potential scenarios. Nearly as often they pursue what I’d thought of as a fairly unimportant encounter with determination.

A certain amount of realism is important to me. Both important and trivial encounters are a natural part of life; not every beggar on the street can be the King in disguise. I therefore often create encounters which are relatively unimportant (though it’s worth noting that in most game worlds any creature is going to think of itself as important, at least to itself).

All this is to explain why not all the scenario hooks below are of cosmic significance.

1) Snake crossing. The road ahead is crossed by a row of non-poisonous snakes, slithering in single file. The snakes are brown and harmless,

each about a foot long. They crawl out of the brush on the left of the road, and into the brush on the right. Investigation shows that they are coming out of a hole thirty meters to the right of the road and crawling into another two kilometers to the left. If their way is blocked, they go around or over the obstruction. They finish crossing the road after ten minutes.

One out of every 100 snakes has swallowed some unusual item.

2) Big frog. A very large (about basketball size) green frog is sitting next to the road. It is a handsome frog, and seems to be dying of thirst; unfortunately the nearest stream is a mile back on the road. The frog seems unafraid of the party, but that may be due to dehydration.

If the frog is kissed, absolutely nothing happens unless the PC is romantically inclined towards amphibians. If so, please don’t write and let me know what happens ☺.

3) Priest and peasants. A priest of a local pantheon and several peasants are hunting for healing plants nearby: there is a wasting disease in their village. They will accept help if it is offered.



HIS FACE A MASK OF SHAME

In keeping with IR’s tradition of reporting the very latest news (a tradition I just invented a minute ago ☺), here’s a three word review of **The Mask**, the new weird superhero movie starring Jim Carrey: “Sucked big time.”

That's Lois' take on the movie. I agree, but am of course more loquacious in my opinion; the movie is an abysmal failure. Jim Carrey is a uniquely gifted comic actor, a real talent; the special effects range from good to excellent. The concept and images offered great potential. Unfortunately the writing was apparently subcontracted to trolls—AD&D™ trolls, that is, not RuneQuest ones.

Not a cliché was left out of this dog. The beautiful blonde nightclub singer, the wild and evil younger gangster pushing against the rule of the older crime boss, the dark city in decay, the exasperated cops who never solve the case...not ONE SINGLE MOMENT of this film was anything other than what you'd expect if it was written by the worst hack soap-opera wordsmiths on TV. The lines were leaden, though Carrey did his best with them; the romantic relationship was simply lame, a waste of time. In fact, the movie wasted far too much time *not* looking at *The Mask*.

A movie like this has the potential to make a truly wonderful flight of fantasy; reality can break down and create something magical. In

this case, however, the reverse was done: they took something that could have been great, and made it intensely boring. *The Mask* was a truly bizarre phenomenon, yet somehow everyone simply accepted it without question—I mean, we're talking about an insane *living cartoon* here, and all the characters treated it as if it were nothing very much out of the ordinary! If the rest of the world had also had insane qualities that might have made sense, but it didn't. The world was just the usual boring "crime-ridden decaying city" setting.

It's worth noting that Jim Carrey did seem to have a problem keeping his face still. Even when he was playing the "Dr. Jekyll" half of his role his facial muscles were visibly straining not to move, and failing in little ways.

To sum up, this film just doesn't work. We seriously considered walking out after about half an hour, but kept hoping that it would get better; unfortunately it didn't. Avoid this turkey like the plague!

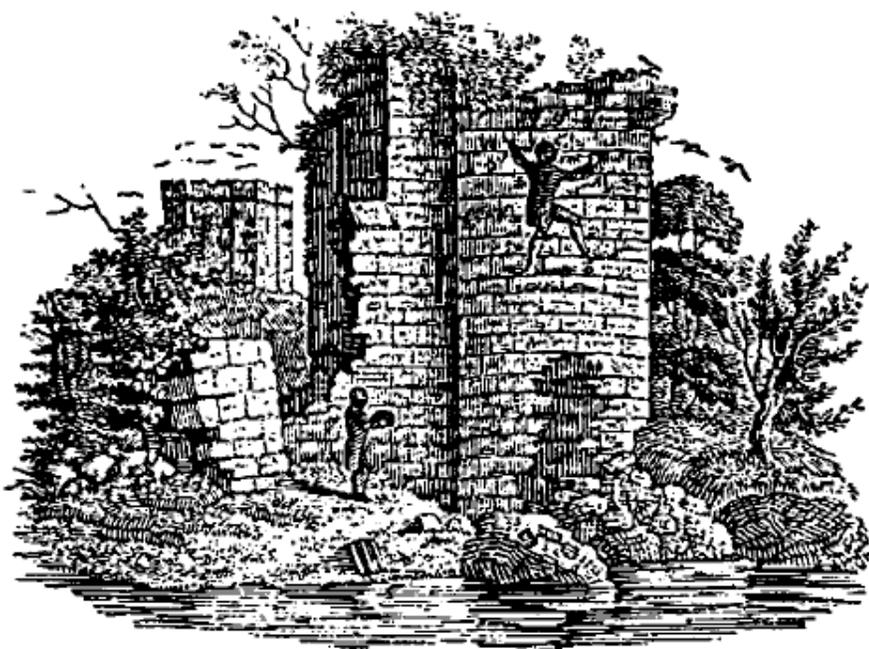
Rating: D-

COMMENTS #4

Curtis Taylor: Good heavens, Curtis. If you'd searched for a thousand years you might never have found a subject that I'm *less* qualified to comment on than **Magic: The Gathering!** Given the obsessive way the players I know act, I've avoided it like the plague. I only hope that I have some natural resistance, since I'm so absolutely bad at wargames of all sorts. ☺

On the other hand, I wouldn't be surprised at all if your zine was the reason that promotional copies of *Interregnum* #4 went off the shelves so quickly.

☞ Since I've stopped reading the **RuneQuest Daily Digest** (though I still log it daily), your zine has



become my main source for information on what's going on in the world of RQ. Thanks for the updates.

David Hoberman: Fiction about your science-fiction world of the Hegemony seems to turn up pretty often in IR, David. Perhaps I should write something about my old character the Prince in your game. Though of course I never found out the secret of his world. Is it still a part of the 'canon', I wonder?

⌘ Your discussion of alien societies was very well done; it's true that all too often GMs and writers either base them on some exaggerated quality of a known human society or make them totally incomprehensible.

The crux of the problem may be that we simply don't know what alien life could be *like*. To what extent does the basic structure of DNA common to all forms of life on this planet make us inherently different from some form of life using an alternate method of genetic coding? Is "genetic coding" itself necessary for all potential forms of life? We might assume that even alien forms of life will possess the basic qualities of life on Earth, including ingestion, reproduction, growth—but we really don't know.

That's what makes it fun to play with the possibilities, of course. It's a pity that so many GMs and writers limit themselves in that regard.

⌘ Regarding the "quality" of the people of the Internet as a source for roleplayers: It's true that high intelligence is no guarantee of maturity or sensibility. In fact, the reverse might be true. But are maturity or sensibility the hallmarks of roleplayers? ☺

It seems to me that *imagination* is what makes a roleplayer—and that people of high intelligence are more likely to possess that quality. Since most of the people on the Internet possess above-average intelligence, it seems logical that there should be a higher percentage of potential roleplayers among them.

Doug Jorenby: Regarding Magic: The Gathering, you might be interested to hear that a local chain of record/comic stores—a terminally "cool" place—is now carrying M:TG. I nearly screamed (with laughter?) when I saw the cards on the shelf. It's the kind of place where teens with pierced noses walk around wearing black, their mohawks dyed in bizarre colors...that such a store would carry M:TG seems incongruous, though I couldn't say exactly why.

I'm sorry to hear that some gamers are purchasing Magic cards instead of roleplaying material. But perhaps

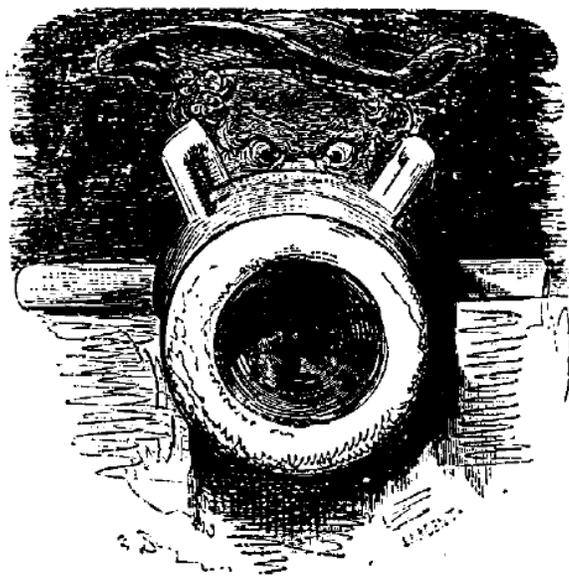
the gamers who do that weren't that interested in roleplaying to begin with. In any case, Magic is almost certainly a fad; when it peaks and declines dedicated gamers will probably come back.

On the other hand, **Wizards of the Coast** could do a great service to the roleplaying hobby by publishing a roleplaying game based on M:TG before the fad crests. Given that they seem to have penetrated even more markets than AD&D did at its height, they could introduce huge numbers of new people to roleplaying. I've heard no more about that project, though.

⌘ Why do I publish IR, Doug? Hmm. I'll have to get back to you on that. 8^>}

George Phillies: What sort of typeface are you using, George? If you're using TrueType or PostScript I have access to thousands of them, and will be glad to send you a sampler. Not that your current font is bad, but it's true that the photocopying process (I don't use the term "xerox" for professional reasons) treats different fonts in different ways.

⌘ It's true that one of the last episodes of **Star Trek: The Next Generation** featured a massive threat to the ecology of the Galaxy caused by warp drive. Their solution was to stop using the higher warp factors, except possibly in emergencies. This fundamental change to the Star Trek universe was completely ignored in the following episodes, of course. Continuity was never their strong point.



That makes me wonder what a science fiction series would be like if it were to follow the "Hill Street Blues" pattern of interconnected plotlines that thread from episode

to episode. It may be that **Babylon 5** is doing that in some way, but at this point it's not obvious.

Though I enjoy and respect the works of **Tolkien** and (to a lesser degree) **Heinlein**, I suspect that Star Trek has reached many millions more than the works of either author. Too many people are unwilling to read these days...or only read trashy romantic novels and potboiling best-sellers.

Collie Collier: Wow. Political Science professors have become a lot more permissive since I was in college eight years ago. My profs would never have allowed me to write a paper on a roleplaying universe! On the other hand a Sociology professor ran a class in which our final grade was based on the design of a boardgame by pairs of students (I got an A, of course), and also ran a class in which my main project was to create a roleplaying organization on campus.

In any case I thought your article was extremely interesting—I zoomed right through it. Though I may not be the most unobjective reader, since I actually played in that world.

I have to ask—did you receive a grade yet?

Eric Robinson: Yikes! My parents will no doubt have some searching questions for me after reading your zine, Eric. let me say for the record that your portrayal of them was not based on reality! 8^>}

In a way I'm a bit constrained in making comments on your piece, since it's about me. Shucks. In any case, I'm pleased to welcome you as the first non-gamer to write for IR.

I enjoyed *Afflatus* a great deal. What images! "...the excess of his tiresome weight" and "...his sparse red hair lay pasted to his temple..." both had me...um, yelping with shock. The pen is indeed mightier than the sword. And that speech...do I really talk like that?

I'd certainly like to see the second half of the story, if you ever feel like writing it out.

Virgil Greene: An interesting discussion of technology and Magic, Virgil. Your description of magic as resembling a mathematical formula provoked a chain of thought; the whole question of "flavor" is the key, I think. In RuneQuest and most other roleplaying games magic is very mechanistic, quite similar to technology; contrariwise magic in fantasy fiction tends to be mystical, more of an "Art". When opening the door to Moria Gandalf did nothing so mundane as using spell points or slots.

⌘ Your analysis of the underlying Highlander/Immortal concept was very interesting indeed—I haven't seen anything like it elsewhere.

⌘ I like your characterization of the authors of the live roleplaying game Nexus, by the way. Well put. 8^>}

Gil Pili: My sympathies on your landlord trouble, Gil. There's nothing I hate more than a nosy landlord. When Scott and I lived in Roslindale our crusty old landlord (a real character) lived in the upper half of the two-family house; he'd sneak down and peek at us through an intermediate window while we watched TV. Bizarre.

Our landlady now lives in California, which is certainly a comfortable distance. 8^>}

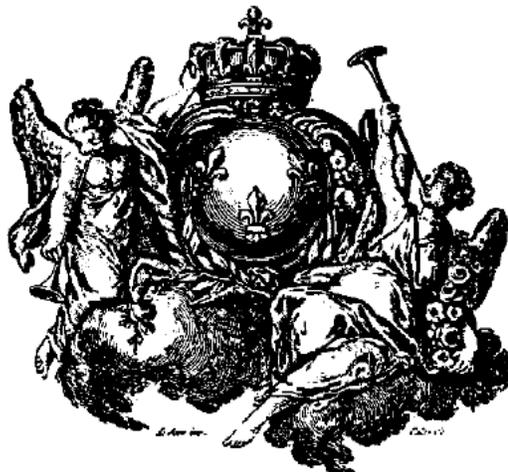
⌘ I agree entirely with your assessment of the RuneQuest Daily Digest. It's completely out of touch with the needs of RuneQuest players, as opposed to Gloranthan minutiae wonks.

⌘ The *Guardian Spirit* scenario is very impressive! Congratulations to you and Dan both. I only hope that Greg doesn't shoot it down at the last minute—Gloranthan orthodoxy seems to have actually strengthened in the last few years, despite the ostensible "subjectivization" of the world.

Bob Butler:

Welcome to IR, Bob! I was wondering if we'd ever get any zines with photos in them. ☺

⌘ I must admit that I never thought I'd see a zine in IR about combat aircraft. Stretching our horizons, eh? Just the sort of thing I like to see.



⊘ I notice that three of the four participants were named Bob. Must have been kind of confusing over the radio...

⊘ The dialogue between the Stomach and brain was highly amusing, and rather reminiscent of at least one of Fredric Brown's "Gallagher" stories—they're virtually impossible to find now, but if you get the chance I'd highly recommend them.

David Dunham: Welcome aboard, David! I'm glad to have another RuneQuest writer in IR, despite my present dissatisfaction with the way the system is being handled. The hillfort art was very well done indeed. Did you draw it yourself? If not, I'd like to know your source for such great material...

⊘ I'll agree that it's not a great idea to have violently opposed characters in the same party. However, a certain degree of diversity often lends piquancy to a campaign, I've found; if all the characters are from very similar backgrounds there is less for them to talk about. True, good roleplayers will find ways to interact anyway. But I like to give them the opportunity to take a diverse group and weld it into a real party.

I should make it clear that I don't think that this is *always* the preferred thing to do. Sometimes the PCs should be homogenous. But I like to run both sorts of campaigns, and scenarios such as *The Grey Company* let me do just that.

SPECIAL BONUS OFFER!

For some time I've been searching my mind for a way to induce readers of the promotional issues to subscribe to IR. Finally I've come up with an answer: subscribers to Interregnum will occasionally receive bonus zines along with their regular copy of IR. I have a large number of zines which were published in The Wild Hunt APA; as a matter of policy I've never duplicated material from TWH in IR. Yet the zines contain material which is still of interest, I think: reviews, comedy, writeups, etc., and most readers of IR have not read TWH.

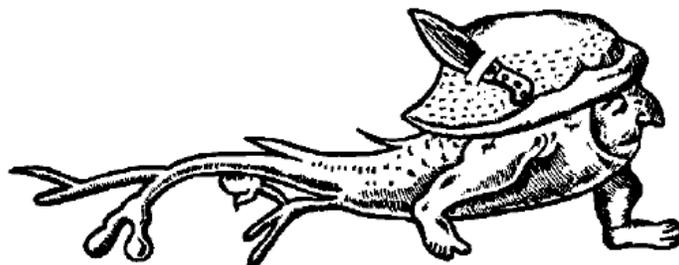
I'll mail copies of the old zines (not attached to IR) only when the additional weight doesn't increase the cost of postage, of course.

I realize that subscribers to TWH already have those zines, of course. I won't burden them with a second copy. However, there is an inducement I can offer to TWHers as well. The traffic on the IR Internet mailing list can be printed up and included on an irregular basis, as traffic warrants.

Any comments or suggestions on this topic will be most welcome.

Until next time,

->Pete



COLOPHON

The Log That Flies #5 was gestated in a *P. Maranci 30.4 brain*. Much of the text was then written with *PC-Write 2.5*, an ancient but serviceable ~~villain~~ word processor.

The text was formatted for desktop publication using *Publish-It 4.0 for Windows*, a cranky but cheap DTP program.

The DTPed document was printed at a ruinous cost at a laser printing service, on a 300 dpi laser printer.

Most of the art in *TLTF* is taken from books of copyright-free clipart published by the **Dover Publishing Co.** of Mineola, NY. Reviews of various Dover books may be printed in future issues.

The art was copied on a **Kodak 2110** high-speed duplicator.

Help! I'm a prisoner in a Colophon-writing factory! ©

