



The *Illuminata*

Delving Deep Into The Worlds of Science Fiction and Fantasy

3-D Characters (3 of 4): Adding Fat To The Fire

By Bret Funk

While Length – the creation of an individual past, present and future – is a key ingredient (and arguably the most important) in creating three-dimensional characters, it is not the only one. A timeline alone is not enough to draw readers in or make them care about a character's fate. Every object from apples to castles has some form of Length, either directly stated or implied, but whether or not an apple gets eaten should not cause a reader undue concern, and it is generally not the fall of a castle but the fate of its occupants that keeps readers turning the pages. Therefore, for characters to come alive, it stands to reason that some other factor must exist.

And so enters Width. If Length is the series of events in a character's life, then Width is the sum of that series. Width adds flesh and blood to a character, and characters with greater Width stand out over those not so well endowed. Width manifests as a character's likes and dislikes; his hobbies, aversions, fears and goals; and ultimately, as his personality. Without Length there can be no Width (How can one

have likes and dislikes if one has no experiences?), but as a character grows wider, Width begins to determine Length too, directing a character down a certain path or keeping him away from another one.

Invariably, a character with Width is more exciting, and often more beloved, than one without. Numerous examples exist in and out of popular SF. In *Star Wars*, both Luke Skywalker and Han Solo have detailed histories, but Han, with his roguish outlook and questionable morals, is who one first thinks of when the series comes to mind. Luke, sheltered on his uncle's farm,

has only one desire: to get off his uncle's farm. Han, on the other hand, has led a more varied life, and the sum of his experiences has created a character with more interests and opinions. His Width makes him popular.

In the comics, Superman and Batman both have strong followings, but Superman is a bit one-sided in his construction for many readers. Since his powers were a gift of creative physics and his upbringing blandly moral, he is single-mindedly focused on doing good. He has few interests outside of stopping villains, few physical and spiritual weaknesses, and not much of a social life. He even chose his job as a reporter to better learn about crimes and stop them.

Compared to the Dark Knight, Superman is boring. Batman's years of training make for a more interesting character, and his struggle to turn himself into the ultimate fighting machine led to interests in a number of different fields, from the martial arts to acrobatics to criminology. The tragedy that created him added even more facets to his character (his hatred of guns and his weakness for similarly orphaned children, for example) and spurred the development of his character. Furthermore, while he is driven, sometimes to the brink of insanity, by the memory of his parents' deaths, he does not shun the world completely. Wayne Enterprises could certainly operate without Bruce behind the helm, but in addition to keeping a hand in the business end of things, he can often be found hobnobbing with the rich and famous of Gotham City. His social life rarely seems to interfere with his crime-fighting, but it certainly adds a little extra dimension to his character.

D.C. Comic's dynamic duo are not the only superheroes effected by Width. Of all the X-Men, Wolverine stands out among his co-heroes because of his more-detailed history and greater range of interests. Peter Parker's interest in photography and science are external to his being Spider-Man; they existed prior to the spider bite, and while they aid the wall-crawler, they are not a result of his becoming a superhero. Add to that Parker's love for Mary Jane (the woman), his devotion to Aunt May, and his ongoing ethical and moral wars and you have the

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This is it. This is the last column that I had planned in the discussion of how to create a Role-Playing Game from scratch. We've covered everything from how to make the actual physical land that the game is based in and how to populate it, how to make a rich and detailed history, and how to create the characters that your player will play. The last segment addressed combat in role-playing games, and the only other thing that I want to take a look at is usually one of the more popular aspects of fantasy role-playing: magic. You can relax, however, because I don't intend to discuss another system method for using magic, you've seen three systems detailed (history generation, character generation and combat) so I think most of you out there begin to see how systems work, and I'm sure you could whip up your own without too much trouble.

Instead of a system, I'd like to take a look at the various types of magic systems that can be available to use and discuss a bit about the levels of magic that can exist in a game, and how that can affect the overall flavor of the world that your player will explore and interact with.

Types of Magic

In the more classic role-playing games, magic is clearly divided into two camps, secular and clerical. Secular magic is what we commonly think of when someone mentions wizards and warlocks, and is based on a "spell" or incantation that must be recited precisely, and will create the same effect time and time again. The secular wizard must collect his spells somehow, either on scrolls or in massive books, and must spend a great deal of time studying them and memorizing them so that when called upon he can recite them without error.

Clerical magic is different in two main ways, the source of the magic and the method by which it is acquired. Clerical magicians often pray to deities or gods, and in exchange for their worship (and perhaps by behaving as the deity sees fit as well) they are gifted with spells directly from their deity. Unlike secular magic, which rarely identifies a source for the mystic powers at the wizards command, clerical magic points to the sky and says "he gave this to me." In order to receive the magic from the heavens, the clerical wizard must spend as much time in prayer and meditation as the secular wizard spends in study and memorization.

Often, limits are imposed that will limit the amount of magic that characters can use. The most popular

method is to equip the characters with a statistic such as Magic Points (MP) or Will Points, which function just as do Hit Points in combat. Each spell requires a certain number of MP to be cast, and once a character's MP is exhausted, no spells can be uttered until the magician has had time to rest.

Magics are often stratified as well, most commonly by "level." There can be as many levels as the GameMaster desires, and the higher the level the more impressive the magic, and the higher the MP cost. Some GameMasters may choose to limit the spells available to characters to their level of experience, meaning no wizard of level two can possibly command a spell of level three or greater, no matter the amount of MP he may have. Other ways to limit the use of magic are to increase the MP cost for spells to prohibitively high amounts or to make spells exceedingly rare. More on this topic will be discussed in the second part of this column, **The Place of Magic**.

A different type of magic is medicinal magic, where herbs and roots and bark and anything the GameMaster wishes to use can be combined to create effects similar to magic. These most commonly manifest as potions and simples. The magician must spend time learning the properties of the different ingredients, and how to combine them to achieve the desired effect. There are two main limiting factors for this type of magic. The first is that the vast amount of ingredients must be stored somewhere, and will certainly not be mobile enough for the magician to lug around with him. Second, previously prepared potions and simples will run out, and all that the character has available to him is what he brought along on the adventure. Potion bottles are also very fragile. The plus side of this is that assuming the character and GameMaster can agree on the ingredients and their effects when combined with one another in different ways, the magician could conceivably create an infinite variety of potions, by mixing and recombining the materials that he collects. This magic system would require a lot of preparation on the part of the GameMaster, as he would need to create ingredients and effects, but it can be very rewarding.

Building on the idea of having the player-characters develop their own spells as they go, the magic system that I am currently tinkering with is a Rune-based system of magic. Rune magic works like a puzzle, with different types of runes accomplishing different things. The Magician must spend a great deal of time creating

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KeyCOMmentary: Ten Archetypes of Fantasy (8 of 10)

by garrie keyman

A Darkening Precedith the Dawn

This month let's move away from some of the archetypes of character that we have been examining to take a look at an archetype of plot. It will be refreshing, don't you think? Specifically, I would like to direct your attention to what I'll be dubbing the *Darkening*.

Within the ebb and flow of dramatic structuring, there are certain touchpoints for which we, as readers, will be subconsciously watching. These are archetypes of plot: certain familiar elements of dramatic unfolding formed at the crux of human consciousness and played out on the screen and on the written page in a way that helps us achieve emotional catharsis. We know these structures for they are ours. We have lived them to one degree or another as they were made manifest in the various walks of our lives.

One such familiar plot line centers on the near abandonment of the righteous path. The heroine, sorely tried in her quest and teetering toward the edge of being vanquished, very nearly surrenders to the enemy camp. Perhaps she questions her current affiliations or succumbs to employing the same dishonorable tactics against which she has railed so long without success. In any event, a character's coming dangerously close to the point of no return is a rousing and recurrent theme that always leaves us rooting for the heroine's salvation and her subsequent return to the sanctity of personal integrity.

Why is this dramatic structure so common? So compelling? It is the story of redemption, and redemption is an archetypal theme beyond mere bardic tradition. Redemption is *the* primary theme at the heart of the human experience. It is the foundation of every religion and the hope of every man. Life is, in itself, a journey of loss, surrender, and redemption, so certainly the penultimate and most universally appealing dramatic structures will mirror this cycle.

Without question we can see that the *Star Wars* saga encompasses this theme. And while I confess that I have yet to read *Sword of Honor*, Book II of the Boundary's Fall series, I should be very surprised (and disappointed) if at some point author Bret Funk fails to push the rather high-minded Jeran Odara to the brink of moral collapse.

Perhaps part of the popularity of *Darkening* lies in the truth that no one likes an impenetrably perfect character,

nor can they effectively relate to one. Who among us is without flaw? Who among us stands invulnerable against the assaults of life and the challenges we face along the way? If characters do not stumble, they remain impervious to the care of others and therefore soon lose the devotion of readers as well.

Darkening is not to be confused with personal shortcomings or vulnerabilities an author lends his characters. We are not speaking here of Achilles' heel nor Superman's aversion to Kryptonite. To reiterate, we are looking at an archetype of plot. *Darkening* is a *point in the story* in which we genuinely wonder if the hero will be able to extract himself from the lure of the darker path.

From time to time we will encounter a hero who will not. More often he will be a hero forced to watch a companion fail to navigate safely past the siren's song and be utterly dashed upon the rocks of moral decay. In any event, the reader or audience is affected the same way: they will hope for redemption and mourn when its promise is extinguished.

This month's assignment is likely clear, now that we are nearing the end of our exploration of archetypes. Readers, using the selections you have already been analyzing, please identify at least one instance of *Darkening*. Describe the setup leading to the moment, as well as the circumstances that (hopefully) provide the character's salvation from the fall. Writers, if you've already established a spell of heroic *Darkening*, please write an outline or paragraph describing it. If, on the other hand, the concept is new to you, perhaps you want to consider how adding a moment or moments of *Darkening* might strengthen the bond you hope to have your readers establish with the characters in your tale.

Thank you once again for joining us. As usual, your thoughts and comments are welcome and can be sent to me at: Jsolus@hotmail.com. If you are new to the *Illuminata*, be sure to download back issues today at www.TyrannosaurusPress.com so you can catch up on our discussion. So long, and till next month, may all your *own* moments be especially bright.

"As I've suggested in quite a few essays, with a very high intelligence would also go higher moral values because, without these, intelligence is self-destructive."

– Arthur C. Clarke

Degrees in Science Fiction Studies (Syllabus Unavailable)

by Terry Crotinger/montanasings

Fandom. Where did that word come from? Who are these fans? What kind of people are we talking about? I had so many questions when I first became interested in science fiction, but 'fandom' hadn't been invented. I knew that the Star Trek books had pretty much been a demand of 'fans' of the show (original series) since they had written them, along with scripts and even early role-playing games, and sent them into Paramount. To my knowledge, few of the 'fan' offerings sent in were used, but the response sent producers and advertisers a message: We Want More!

So, is that a fan? When I was a kid watching Spock and 'Bones' and Kirk, I thought I was a fan: someone who watched religiously every week, though my parents were concerned their little baby was getting into some kind of cult. In a sense, I was. Isolated by my gender and youth in the great cultural desert that Houston was at the time, 'fans' were the older boys who read boring paperbacks by some guy named Heinlein. They gathered together like chickens at feeding time, off in a corner of my high school cafeteria talking about the Enterprise or phasers. I liked that, and tried to sit next to this exclusive group just so I could hear what they said. I also sat next to them because they were boys, not jocks, not dope-heads, boys—totally ignoring girls, like me, who tried to enjoy both the boyness and the Star Trek-ness. At least, that worked for about ten minutes. By the time milk was being slurped and held up in the air for that last precious drop and those waxy cartons aimed at the trashcan in the corner for a quick game of hoops, the topic turned to authors, chess, comic books and Saturday morning cartoons, so I tuned that part out and found my girlfriends' table. It was even more boring. If I tried to bring up the latest episode of Star Trek they looked at me like I had just been endowed with geekness and voted least likely to go to the Prom (Fooled them, I did!). I was a follower without a clear-cut niche, and on my own.

Move ahead, ahem, several years, and I find I have a plethora of niches to explore as a 'fan': Fan clubs, discussion boards, roll-playing and LARP groups, conventions, book discussion groups, anime night groups, writer's workshops... I found fandom. I found fandom and it was overwhelming! What happened in those, ahem, several years between that first Star Trek 'Creation' Convention and the general science fiction one that runs annually (for over twenty years) that is less than a mile from my house? Add to the mix, specific science fiction interests: horror, fantasy, tech,

military, that all-inclusive, 'speculative fiction' genre and fandom has become impossible to keep up with.

For example, a friend of mine lent me his fantasy role playing bible to read as I was about to embark on a new adventure, literally, into roll playing games. (Doug >!< Roper, you'd be proud of me!) Reading this gave me wonderful insight, though basic, into how RPG companies developed. Armed with a slight familiarity of company/house names, I ramble over to the RPG online discussion board this same friend introduced me to. Now, I've not only gotten from fandom to a *specific* fandom (RPGs have their own followers, loyal and willing to slap you silly if you disagree), it is now a political forum as well with topics like who is better, which RPG is better, what a good Game Master should do/be, who should and should not play (with a section on social skills; bathing is required—gender unspecified). It gets honest, and brutal. My favorite topic, no surprise, is what women want when role playing. Responses are everything from serious to sexist; what you would expect from a discussion board. But as a neophyte fan, I realized that was only one slice of the sci-fi pie. Add in anime, theatre groups and conventions, and fandom is an industry unto itself. Did I mention comics? Movies? Books?

If it sounds like I'm whining, I am. I feel like a little, lost fan in a great grove of genres and with no fairy godmother to guide me. There's too much. I can talk about Star Trek until the cows go mad, but I can't keep up with all the authors, the newest manga and anime; the latest comic book illustrator. I'm barely keeping up with what happened when I paid attention to that sci-fi-y goodness when my kids were young; teaching them how to tie their shoes (shoelaces were still standard equipment in those days) and about the prime directive. Now, I don't have the time. I don't have the money. I have the interest, but it's grown far too big to keep up with on an occasional or even part-time basis. That, ahem, span of time between high school and now has generated a Smithsonian Institute sized building of its own. Did I mention action figures and miniatures yet? Card games and dice?

I attend a weekly science fiction group and a science fiction book/media discussion group that meets monthly. I cruise discussion boards, websites and book stores. I literally bug my mentors and friends with questions. I take *notes*, damn it. And still, I wander about in a fog trying to puzzle where it all

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The Writer's Block: Problem Words I

by Charles Gramlich & Y Du Bois Williams

The English language is lyrical, diverse, flexible, and often beautiful. At times it's also irritatingly complex and outright mystifying – a challenge to all would-be writers who attempt to use it. Unfortunately, this article probably won't completely eliminate your confusion. It will discuss some commonly misused words and terms that, because of their difficult spellings and meanings, particularly plague writers. These words are arranged alphabetically below.

Affect / Effect: Confusion between affect and effect is so frequent that even careful writers sometimes misuse them. Their pronunciations and spellings are only slightly different, but the meanings are extremely dissimilar. (Such words are called homonyms.) Affect is almost always a verb -- except in psychology where it is sometimes a noun. Effect can be a noun or verb with equal ease.

Outside of its special use in psychology, affect means "to influence" or "cause a response." For example, "*A Princess of Mars*" by Edgar Rice Burroughs had a profound affect on the development of fantastic literature." Affect also means "to pretend" or "to assume." "He affected the attitudes of a best selling author." In psychology, affect also refers to behaviors such as facial expressions, pitch and volume of voice, and body and hand movements that show how a person feels. "The writer's affect did not change when told he'd just sold his first book."

Effect, when used as a noun, typically means "result." For example, "The effect of a drug depends on the dosage." In plural form the word can also mean "property" or "goods." "I have willed my effects to the family dog." Used as a verb, effect means "to cause." "The invention of antigravity will effect sweeping changes in people's daily lives."

Among / Between: Among is usually used when discussing relationships that involve more than two people or things. "The four wicked sisters did not get along among themselves." Between is used when relationships involve only two things. "Just between you and me, she doesn't get along with her sisters." The "tween" part of between actually means "two."

Compare / Contrast: Many teachers are fond of telling students to compare and contrast various theories. The words do have similar meanings, but there are enough differences to cause confusion. When you compare

two things you tend to focus on how they are similar. When you contrast them you focus on how they are different. We might compare chimps to gorillas by talking about their physical characteristics and genetic similarities. Many people would prefer, however, to look at the contrast between chimps and ourselves, focusing on the differences in culture, technology, and intelligence. (I won't say in which direction.)

Confidant / Confident / Confidential: An agent often becomes a "confidant" for his clients, but the writers have to be "confident" in their own abilities in order to get an agent. An agent should also keep a client's affairs "confidential," or secret. A confidant establishes rapport and earns the trust of a client. He becomes someone that the client can feel comfortable "confiding" in. (We use "he" here because a female confidant is called a confidante.) Confusion can occur because when you confide (trust) in people you expect them to keep the information confidential, meaning "they won't tell anyone else."

The most commonly heard of these terms is confident. In previous articles for the Writer's Block I've talked about the need to be confident in your ability to express yourself in writing. This means being "assured" of your skills, or "certain" of success.

Council / Counsel: Counsel is a term most commonly heard among psychologists. It can be a noun that means "advice," or a verb that means "to advise." Examples would be: "Thanks for your counsel; I'm getting along better with my mom now," or "Can you counsel me on what courses to take to graduate?" Council refers to a group of people who are charged with a certain task. "The ruling council will decide who lives and who dies."

Confusion also occurs between councilor and counselor. A councilor is simply a member of a council. A counselor is someone who "counsels," meaning that they give advice or help. Clinical psychologists are sometimes referred to as counselors, though that term is more commonly attached to lawyers.

Covert / Overt: These words are opposites. One way to remember them is to think of covert with a "c" as being under the "covers," and overt with an "o" as being out in the "open." Covert means "hidden" or "concealed." It's something "secret." "It was a covert operation; no one but the president and her first husband knew

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Reviews

The Burning Land Victoria Strauss



Eos, Feb 2004
\$24.95, Hardcover, 496 pp.
ISBN 0380978911
Review by Harriet Klausner

When the heretics rose up and threw out the rightful King and his followers, and dismantled the religious worship of Alta, the government in exile fought to reclaim what was theirs. State and church working together

finally overthrew the heretics and the worship of Alta was more than just returned; it was mandated. Shapers (sorcerers) take vows of celibacy and using a drug that weakens their powers, lead the followers of the church in their religious rites.

The Dreamers of Arsace, those people who can visit other places in their dreams, sense a disturbance in the Burning Lands. The church believes apostate shapers are using unfettered magic in that place and mount an expedition to find out who is causing the disturbances. Gyalo, a very religious shaper, leads the expedition and after much hardship crosses the desert to find the cave city of Refuge, a place where Arsacian exiles fled persecution. Gyalo also sees the Cavern of Blood a jewel chamber with an outline of a man pictured on the land.

Gyalo believes that the god Alta has awakened from his slumber to usher in a new age and the people of Refuge believe he is the First messenger. Upon his return to the Kingdom of Arsace, the Brethren (the church hierarchy) believe he is an apostate and heretic because while he was in The Burning Lands he stopped using the drug that limited his powers. Knowing he will be punished when he returns home, he still intends to tell the whole truth. His two companions who believe he is the First Messenger vow to stand with him as does Axane, the daughter of the ruler of Refuge. She travels with Gyalo because she wants the freedom that Arsace offers to Dreamer women but what she finds is a self-righteous, bigoted religious council who will not tolerate any deviation from their religious rites. Gyalo and Axane, using different methods to escape from their captors, find that love has blossomed between them, forged in tragedy and strengthened by the true essence of their religion. Yet, there will not be a peaceful life for a false Lost Messiah has come into the world, determined to destroy it.

There are so few fantasies that can mirror Earth's history but Victoria Strauss does it well enough to make it seem like Arsace is actually a real place. Arsace seems much like France and Russia after the "first" revolutions have failed and the new regimes are trying to mend all the broken pieces of their homeland

Magic is strong in Refuge because the residents do not believe in tethering power. Gyalo, who knows about the shapers, feels tethering is needed to keep rogues from misusing their full powers for their own gain or from harming anyone. When Gyalo stops taking the manta, his powers and senses come alive and he begins to question all that he was taught.

The Burning Land is a work that will appeal to fans of Tolkien and Brooks as it plays out on that epic of a scope. It will be interesting to see what happens to these characters in future books. Victoria Strauss is a great world builder who makes her audiences believe in the lands she is writing about, almost as if she has been there.

Talon of the Silver Hawk Raymond E. Feist



Eos, Apr. 2003
Hardcover, \$24.95, 400 pp.
ISBN: 0380977087
Review by Scott Andrews

After several disappointing computer game novelizations and collaborations, Raymond E. Feist returns to the saga format of his fantasy classics with "Talon of the Silver Hawk."

The Riftwar Saga ("Magician," etc.) introduced his main characters and the world of Midkemia, and the Serpentwar Saga ("Shadow of a Dark Queen," etc.) added new characters to bring the epic struggle against diverging foes to a raging climax. Feist then wrote three novels set after the Riftwar, two as book versions of computer game plots created by the game developers, and three collaborations set during the Riftwar that were not published in the U.S.. Perhaps due to the non-linear nature of game plots and the different narrative voices of the collaborations, none of these novels had the storytelling spark of Feist's previous work.

"Talon of the Silver Hawk" starts a new saga with a new main character, Talon, and as such draws

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comparison to Feist's other saga-founding books, "Magician" and "Shadow of a Dark Queen." The boy Talon survives the massacre of his isolated tribe, and he is raised by strangers in a more developed society that he must learn to understand. This takes the entire first part of the novel, well told from Talon's point of view, but the narrative plods along as this boy learns the standard lessons of childhood crushes, respect, and social status. This part of story is set in a previously unused far eastern area of Feist's world, a chance for the author to develop and describe something completely new, but the region comes off as an ordinary, quasi-medieval fantasy kingdom.

The second half of the novel focuses on Talon's integration into the Conclave of Shadows, the evil-fighting group founded by Feist's heroes at the end of the Serpentwar Saga. The view from Talon's eyes of previous Feist heroes like Pug and Nakor shows a different side of these long-time characters, and they are unfortunately but appropriately relegated to minor roles. Talon's coming of age traces predictably through trials of combat and adolescent love. His few friends are thinly drawn characters present only for brief sections of the novel, too short to establish any meaningful relationship and further develop Talon's character.

Finally, Talon is sent out into the world on a mission, taking up residence in Roldem to fight in a dueling tournament. As with the far Eastern kingdoms, Feist misses the chance to make this second new locale unique from the stock medieval city. The action continues as Talon returns to his homeland to exact revenge, in a typical fantasy hero way, upon the mercenaries who massacred his people. The duels and skirmishes are classic Feist combat narrative, exciting and skillfully written, especially the long finish to the final battle. However, these clashes ultimately don't go anywhere or stir the reader to the Conclave's larger cause.

"Talon of the Silver Hawk" falls flat in starting this new saga compared to "Shadow of a Dark Queen" starting the previous one. In "Shadow," the new characters Erik and Roo were more thoroughly drawn, their motivations more concisely developed, and their coming of age / training phase didn't have the monotony of Talon's Tarzan-like integration into society. In addition, after this growing phase, the places and tasks Erik and Roo went off to were more exciting and better detailed than Talon's rather simple and brief missions. Also, the greater purpose behind

the actions in "Shadow" was clear to the reader and the characters. "Talon" only sets up a minor villain, with virtually nothing on the major villain who was trumpeted as such a dire threat when the Conclave was founded. This vague coverage of the ultimate reasons for the Conclave's existence, and therefore Talon's actions, leaves all his struggles feeling poorly justified.

"Talon of the Silver Hawk" sees Feist returning to the epic fantasy saga, outclassing his mediocre recent work, but as an introductory novel it still cannot compare to the opening book of his last saga, or his classic "Magician."

The Destroyer Goddess: In Fire Forged Laura Resnick



Tor, Dec 2003

\$27.95, Hardback, 496 pp.

ISBN: 0765308754

Review by Harriet Klausner

The Waterlords are the most powerful caste in Sileria because they magically control the scarce commodity of water. With the Valdani conquerors defeated (see book one), the Waterlords see an opportunity to seize more power. They betray the trust of the rebel leader Firebringer and have him assassinated. Next they begin charging exorbitant prices for their valuable sustenance desperately needed by a parched populace.

Tansen the great warrior and Mirabar the fire wizard prophetess lead opponents against the water oligarchy that controls how much of the supply side will respond to the demand of the people. However Mirabar and Tansen differ on how to deal with the magical Waterlords. Mirabar had a vision that enables her to see that ridding the land of the magic elements of water cannot occur if Sileria and its people are to thrive. Somehow, the magic must remain yet Mirabar concludes they must defeat the Waterlords to break up their tyranny, but cannot commit total genocide. That is the easy part of what they must do. The difficult part is to persuade her partner Tansen, who detests with good reason the Waterlords, that they cannot eradicate the enemy of the people. Confrontation is coming, but the side of the common good must temper their efforts for the strategic long term effect, not an easy task within the chaos of war while the water oligopoly led

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by Lord Baran feels no reasons to pull the punches.

Though the tale contains the high level of action expected from a fantasy, *The Destroyer Goddess: In Fire Forged* also includes strong fabulous characters that interrelate in an intelligent, at times emotional, manner but appear reasonable. Tansen the hero tries to control his frustration as he would like nothing better than to kill the Waterlords, not just because of what they are doing now, but also because he has a past with them. On the other hand Mirabar the fire wizard would enjoy letting Tansen loose on the cruel gouging Waterlord caste, but in spite of knowing what needs to be done must rein in Tansen because total annihilation means the end of Sileria. However, the key to this powerful tale is the Waterlords. They seem so very like the OPEC-Western oil companies that control much of the energy policies in the world. Especially intriguing and perhaps the most interesting character in the novel is Lord Baran. At times he seems insane with a willingness to destroy Sileria at a cost to himself as much as anyone else; yet at other moments he is so lucidly clever plotting brilliant strategy to manipulate supply and demand. The audience is never sure what he will do next to increase his power.

The story line is fast-paced and filled with action that insures that Sileria seems real. New readers can peruse this novel as a stand alone, but would gain more pleasure and a greater appreciation of Laura Resnick's talent if they read book one first. Fantasy fans will highly value this compelling novel that proves how impressive an author Ms. Resnick is.

The Burning City

Larry Niven & Jerry Pournelle



'The Burning City'
Pocket Books, Copyright 2000
ISBN:
Review by D.L. Parker

I've picked up Larry Niven's books over the years with the expectation of getting a solid, well-written story (YOWL if you remember those orange tomcats in space, his "Man-Kzin" series!). Though I'm less familiar with Jerry Pournelle's works, the two have written more than ten books together. The partnership seems to work. "The Burning City" is the pre-history saga of Whandall Feathersnake, set in a time when the last Atlantean sorcerer and

arson-inducing gods are still real for humanity.

And humanity has *real* trouble in this saga. In this pre-history fantasy, the burning god Yagen-Atep periodically incites the inhabitants of Tep's Town to destructive orgies of burning and looting. Morth, the fugitive Atlantean wizard, fears a vengeful water-sprite (Atlantis here is humorously depicted not as the victim of a just retribution but of a do-good social experiment gone awry). Wild gold induces madness and power in those who touch it, a myth echoed in Teutonic folklore and Wagner's "Ring" cycle. The prankster god and storyteller Coyote makes a typically mischievous appearance. Plants and insects mellowed in our time through the passage of years still fight back – and kill – here. Humanity itself is divided into prey-predator classes, from the Lords and the Lordkins to the worker ants of the social pyramid, the kinless.

Whandall is born in the Placehold among the Lordkins of Tep's Town. It's not an easy birth. Like the gangs of our time, the Lordkins jostle for position and status among themselves while preying on the kinless. The boy Whandall, wandering too far from home turf, learns the painful cost of antagonizing both rival Lordkins and Lords.

It's fortunate Whandall learns from such hard knocks, for when the periodic god-incited Burning sweeps Tep's Town once again, the Placehold does not fare well. Whandall is one of the few men left alive to lead his kin. But he's learned guile and cunning in those weaker years, and enough pragmatism to work with the man who killed his father – Morth the Atlantean. Placehold *holds* until the Last Burning, when Whandall and Morth have no choice but to join with a group of fleeing kinless and leave Tep's Town for an unknown world outside...and a new life...until they return to Tep's Town one last time.

I enjoyed the first part of this story the most. There, Niven and Pournelle impart Whandall's strange environment and society deftly and with great originality. Later parts of this story, as Whandall marries, begets children, and rises to wealth and prominence among the wandering caravans and traders, have the feel of a "Saga of the Great Man". Nor is the depiction of the caravan society – very American Indian in its feel – as original or gripping as the depictions of Tep's Town and the rival Lords, Lordkins, and kinless. We start to see more intrusive references to "our time" – Coyote the trickster god, for example. In fact, mid-way through the story I began counting such "ah-ha!" references much the way my

Reviews

sister and I counted sightings of Volkswagon Beetles during long car trips.

But the story wraps up with a resounding finish for Morth and Whandall once more in Tep's Town, and I still managed to close the last page with a sense of time well spent. Whandell and I travelled a lot of pages together, but he was worth knowing. The old man did well with his life.

This book is the first I've read in the Niven/Pournelle "The Magic Goes Away" series, and has inspired me to look for others in this world. I'd be interested in recommendations from other readers. Happy reading to us all!

There and Back Again: A Reviewer's Tale "The Hobbit" Interactive Game



By Sherri Craig
Release: 14 November, 2003

Let me tell you a secret. Come closer. It is a little embarrassing, and if word got out, I would be ridiculed most of the people I know. IamnotabigTolkienfan. Okay, I know that is social suicide in this day and age. Now, do not get me wrong; I liked the movies and I like the

Lord of the Rings storyline itself. However, I am ever the literary critic, and there is just something about the writing style that I find a bit annoying, particularly in *The Hobbit*. Perhaps it is the songs, or it could be the Middle English feel, but something about the books makes them slightly difficult for me to devour in one sitting, as is my usual custom with books.

Now, all criticism aside, many years of rainy recess movie watching in grade school made me very familiar with the old Rankin/Bass cartoons, and they really grew on me. Also, once again, let me say that I do enjoy the movies. They are well cast and well produced, and I was somehow drawn into Middle Earth with the rest of the population. I found myself wishing, at one point, that they would do a live action version of *The Hobbit*, merely because I wanted to see more of Bilbo, and I figured that movie version of Smaug would be really good.

Now I'll let you in on another secret. I'm not an avid video game player either. Sure I played when I was younger. I was even hooked on Final Fantasy VII for a good two months. Unfortunately, having a son who

talks of nothing else but video games has broken me of the habit. Therefore, I was as surprised as anyone to find out that when *The Hobbit* video game was released I wanted it. I *really* wanted it. I could picture myself running through the Shire, traveling over the Misty Mountains, the works. My family was quite thrilled that I had a specific desire for Christmas instead of the usual "whatever, I'm not picky" they usually got, so I found myself unwrapping *The Hobbit* for our Nintendo GameCube on Christmas morning.

I waited patiently as my son played his new games, but once I had the system to myself, I put the disk in and sat back to enjoy the movie prelude. The graphics were smooth and pleasing to the eye. Once the game started, I was happy to find that the controls were easy to figure out, and stayed that way throughout the game. Some of the long jump moves are a little tricky for my small, stubby fingers, but I found even the tricky moves to be much easier to execute than other games I've played.

One of the features I like best about the game is the fact that the player has time to stop and talk to the characters and explore the Shire. There are amusing little side quests, perfect for the Hobbit-minded player, such as playing hide and seek with the village children and finding Gamma's knitting needle. Once Bilbo and the dwarves leave the Shire, the exploration continues. Though there is generally something to accomplish in each section of the game, and the dwarves will remind Bilbo of this every chance they get, play never feels rushed.

The battles that Bilbo has do not overpower the player either. Players are given enough time to figure out what needs to be done and how to do it, but the action is still intense. There is a good mix, in this game, of good old fashion butt-kicking fighting and challenging puzzle solving. Fans of the intense action always on games, might find this game a little tame and a little slow. But one must remember that, when dealing with Hobbits, the Shirefolk tend to take things slow and easy, even their battles.

I would definitely recommend this to Tolkien fans. The visuals are stunning and Middle Earth is beautifully rendered. It is a good game for the up and coming generation of fans as well. My kids were drawn to this game because of the magical music and the action. Another good feature of this game, from a parenting standpoint at least, is that kids will not get over stimulated by this game, unlike other fast-paced, bloody fighting games, which tend to leave them (well, my kids at least) vibrating around the house and attacking the furniture.

Reviews

The Hobbit is first and foremost an interactive retelling of the story, and that is something that I can really appreciate. I happen to like GameCube controls overall, but I know people who have the PC and Playstation versions and are just as happy with the game play and visual quality on those platforms. It is a good game to add to the collection of any Tolkien fan, or even just a fan of story based adventures, along the same lines as *Zelda* and *Final Fantasy*.

The Rise of the Phoenix

Dawn Rivers Baker



Brigid's Fire Books

ISBN: 0-9713278-1-5

Review by garrie keyman

Fine can describe a number of things. There are fine wines, fine chocolates and fine china, all treasures characterized by elegance and refinement. Fine constitutes a work of superior quality and skill: something free from impurities. An article of fine craftsmanship, then, is

one exhibiting a careful and delicate artistry: an end product rendered with both subtlety and precision.

Before I read *Rise of the Phoenix* by Dawn Rivers Baker, fine would not have been a term I readily assigned to literature. Oh, yes, indeed to Shakespeare, to Khalil Gibran, but never before to a modern work of fantasy.

To my mind, rising to the level of fine requires a work of literature to be a luxury: a work so delicious that I want to savor it alone in the quiet evening hours after the children have gone to bed. I crave the time, the space, the privacy to leisurely float through it as though swimming in a sea of liquid pearls ... naked. A fine work is one I could never settle for reading once. What's more, it is one that begs to be read aloud at times, just for the sheer pleasure of tasting the well-turned phrase as it lolls across the palate.

In this, and more, *Rise of the Phoenix* delivers.

But the satisfaction of Phoenix runs far deeper than its poetic constructs. It is an engaging tale of memorable characters struggling against the ultimate dark force of their world, an evil powerful enough to blind the mind and impel good people to heinous acts and indifference. In that, the dark force of Baker's universe is frighteningly real.

Meet Lady Dia of Shae, a young noble of intelligence, independence, culture and subtle rebel leanings, who embarks on her first journey to Ormaerand, seat of the Imperial Palace, in an attempt to re-establish her mind link with her twin brother, Daerus. It would

seem, since Daerus's own departure for the Imperial Palace, the link that Dia had enjoyed with him since birth has been inexplicably dimmed, shadowed over by something she cannot comprehend. He has called to her, and only by seeking him out and discerning his situation can she hope to set aright whatever it is that has come between her and her beloved twin.

It is a dangerous and vulnerable time in which Dia travels, a time between ages in a world where ages are marked by the rise and fall of the Phoenix. He is the keeper of time and central to a religion that has fallen from favor with most of the other Houses, save that of Shae. Until the Phoenix rises once again, time is practically at a stand still. Days have become years. A year of frigid darkness has ended as Dia makes her way through a new dawn toward Ormaerand. It is a dawn that will slowly yield to months of relentless sun that will bake the earth dry.

At the Palace, Dia encounters pivotal characters in the persons of Cealon of Aerandos and his parents, whose warm relationships and interplay are delightfully penned by Baker. But almost as soon as she arrives, Dia is besieged by the same darkness threatening to sweep her brother from reach. She discovers that only one grace tethers her to the ability to remain self-possessed: the touch of Cealon's hand.

Without understanding, Dia nevertheless clings to this realization and quickly forges a courtly arrangement with Cealon (replete with playful underpinnings) wherein he is to take her hand in greeting whenever they should meet. His comprehension no clearer than hers, he happily obliges. She does not immediately confide in him that, for some reason, his touch is imbued with the power to clear her mind of the evil fog that threatens to overtake her daily, and the more insistently so the longer she remains in the Palace.

The Rise of the Phoenix is the tale of this couple's coming to understand the roles they are playing in a larger arena: the stage upon which good and evil do ultimate battle. It is at once an adventure, a romance, and a work of high fantasy peopled with richly drawn characters and neatly packaged in the flourish of Dawn Rivers Baker's riveting voice.

The Rise of the Phoenix is a rare find, a work too good to place upon a shelf. Now that I have relished it, it remains by my desk where I sneak a tidbit whenever I hunger for something beyond the meat-and-potato realm of most reading. After all, Hershey's chocolate bars are unstintingly shared with the masses, but a Godiva Chocolate is a jealously guarded treat. So go ahead. Indulge yourself. Read *The Rise of the Phoenix* and taste the difference.

Original Fiction

A. Christopher Drown resides as a Yankee-in-exile in Cordova, Tennessee, just outside of Memphis. He's written several short stories, a collection of poetry, and is currently shopping his first book, a fantasy novel titled *The Heart of the Sisters*. His work has appeared in two literary anthologies, in regional periodicals both in the Southeast and New England, and has garnered attention and praise from such writers as Joel Rosenberg, author of *The Guardians of the Flame*

and *Keepers of the Hidden Ways* series, and Max McCoy, author of several best-selling Indiana Jones novels. A graphic designer by trade, he spends his time at home writing, telling his kids to quiet down, picking apart movies, telling his kids to quiet down or else, and preaching the gospels of Macintosh and widescreen to poor souls in need of enlightenment. He can be reached at adrown@mac.com

THEY CALLED

by A. Christopher Drown

They called. Again.

"Heya, Nubber. You ready like?"

And again, I hung up. I don't even know why I bother answering the phone anymore.

As far as I'm concerned, the whole aliens-taking-over-the-Earth thing has gotten old, a fad whose appeal came and went some time ago. Like plunging over Niagara Falls in barrels a few centuries back. Or flash mobs in the early twenty-first. Or more recently, the Antarean delicacy of regurgitated sushi.

Yeah, I know: Yuck. But it's really not that bad.

Now, granted, the first time was serious. The first invasion, I mean, not the sushi thing. October 4, 2135 -- yet another date to live in infamy and all that.

The Uppands (cleverly named by the media because they came from a planet circling Upsilon Andromedae, allowing such journalistic nuggets as *Uppands Coming!* during the early part of the conflict, and *Up, Uppands Away!* as the war drew to a close) took advantage of a flaw in the ozone layer patch over Antarctica. Their polar-axial approach made them invisible to the planetary defense systems of the day, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Millions dead. Paris; D.C.; Rome; Riverside, Iowa -- each nothing but burning rubble within the first hour and a half. Like I said, serious.

All the textbooks I remember from grade school agreed on the event's monumental importance to our race, even though the entire thing lasted less than a week.

Invaders Get Their Come-Uppands! the media declared as, true to form, humanity set aside its differences, rallied, and handed the Uppands their collective purple-spotted fannies with a massive counter-attack.

If they have fannies; I couldn't say.

Also true to form, the day was made a global holiday in remembrance of those who perished. However, as our relations with the rest of the galaxy thawed following our admittance to the Sagittarian Confederation, Liberation Day somewhere along the lines became the extraterrestrial answer to Guy Fawkes Day -- something the textbooks don't mention.

So, for more than a hundred years now, every once in a while a handful of outworlders gets together, usually more than a little drunk, and announce their intention to take over the planet. Nothing ever comes of it, of course. Nothing more than a citation or two, or maybe a formal complaint to the appropriate consulate if there's enough of a ruckus -- like when that trio of Heraleans mistook Disneyworld for the planet's capital city and vaporized all those antique animatronic Presidents thinking they were the actual people.

And even that might not have made the world news cycle had the tourists in the theatre at the time not beaten one of the idiots to death with its own tentacles.

Which, speaking of idiots, brings me back to the phone calls.

Original Fiction

"Heya, Nubber. You ready like?"

Somewhere in the Pleiades is a world called Sharden, populated by a race of tall, jagged creatures resembling angry pencil scribbles. Shards, as they're known, rarely visit here -- gravity's too strong -- and have only tenuous diplomatic ties with Earth. But for some reason they feel the need to publicly decry humanity at every opportunity.

Maybe it's because we're shorter, rounder and pinker than they are. Nubby, as they prefer to think of us.

I know the slur is meant to be derogatory, but it's always sounded funny to me, and more than a little unintelligent. Which is par for the course -- while known for the prickliness of their frames and dispositions, their minds are generally far from being as sharp.

Take, for instance, this guy who keeps calling.

I assume he's made a contact here, a human who's agreed to help with whatever they're planning. Hopefully it's someone who simply realizes who they're dealing with, is looking to make some quick credit and will leave the Shards high and dry.

Because anyone stupid enough to use pub-info channels where your name, face and location are readily displayed -- whether you're across town or somewhere, say, near the Pleiades -- deserves to be taken for whatever they've got. My nephew shows more ingenuity making prank calls, and he's eight.

The phone rings. Yep, it's him.

I press the flashing green square on the panel, and a slow, melodic accent burbles from the speaker.

"Heya -- "

"Look, man," I say with a hard sigh, "I'm trying to tell you that you've made a mistake, and I'm just about -- "

"No, no, friend me. Not I -- "

"Yeah, you," I say, raising my voice, getting angry all over again. "So listen, because I want to get it through your thick, pointy head once and for all: You've got. The wrong. *Nubber!*"

Vampire Quiz

by Charles Gramlich

Vampires are so popular I decided to do a second quiz about them. But this time we're focusing solely on TV and Movie vamps, the celluloid breed. Can you match the fanged ones on the left with the TV show or movie on the right in which they have appeared? Zero to five correct is "good"--in my opinion--because it means you are probably reading instead of soaking up radiation from a TV or movie screen. Six to ten correct might explain why your skin has that couch-potato pallor. More than ten correct and you are definitely a creature of the night.

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Angel | Fright Night |
| 2. Santanico | Near Dark |
| 3. Manuwalde | Vampire in Brooklyn |
| 4. Jesse | The Munsters |
| 5. Barnabas Collins | Nosferatu |
| 6. Max | Once Bitten |
| 7. Jerry Dandrige | The Fearless Vampire Killers |
| 8. Maximillian | Buffy the Vampire Slayer |
| 9. Nicolas de Brabant | Fright Night II |
| 10. Louis de Pointe | From Dusk Till Dawn |
| 11. The Countess | Blacula |
| 12. Grampa | Interview with the Vampire |
| 13. Count Krolock | Dark Shadows |
| 14. Regine | The Lost Boys |
| 15. Count Orlok | Forever Knight |

Answers on page 16

Original Fiction

Regaining is a story by the Illuminata's own Sherri Craig. She has the following to say about it:

This story was born from many hours of religious philosophy, a pinch of Milton, and a dash of Gaiman's /Season of the Mist (especially the part about the beautiful days in Hell)/. If all things are predetermined, then it sounds like Satan got a raw deal. And what

about forgiveness being Divine? Would that apply to the Fallen as well? My guess would be no, because angels are not men, and angels, being Divine beings themselves, can never return once they are corrupt. That returns us to the problem with predetermination and the unfairness of it all. This story is only a glimpse into something much bigger.

Regaining

Chapter the First

By Sherri Craig

It was a warm, sunny day in hell. The crimson skies brightened for a moment into an intense, cornflower blue as wispy, white clouds traveled lazily across the horizon. Rays of sparkling sunshine danced along the murky lakes of slop and fields of mire. It was almost beautiful. Satan looked through his window, grumbling. He really hated these nice days that showed up without warning once every few centuries. This was the supreme torture of He Who Reigned on High. Put into effect so that all the shades of the damned should remember for one day what it was that they had lost.

"Sadistic Bastard," he said under his breath, looking up from his paperwork as Moloch entered the room.

"Sir."

"Yes, Moloch." Satan sighed, fiddling with a quill which resembled a gnarled human finger.

"Belial is conspiring to overthrow you at the next gathering" Moloch began, rolling his eyes in spite of himself.

"Again? How original," Satan said, pursing his lips into a thin smile. Belial was such a jackass, constantly flapping his jaw instead of thinking. Belial had been one of the lukewarm during the Heavenly battle, always running for the winning side. He was very surprised to find himself in Hell.

"Yeah, well." Moloch fidgeted. "I just thought that you'd want to know." The fallen angel's wings drooped slightly, as he looked past his boss and through the window. Satan felt a stab of pity for his friend. Moloch was nothing if not faithful. While he did not fight with Satan, Moloch, then known as Mizrael, knew of the rebellion, but stayed silent. He chose to fall with Satan's band, not only because he did not go to the Maker with the news of the rebellion, but also because he did not try harder to stop his friend. Moloch had adjusted well, but it hurt Satan deeply to see Moloch's beautiful onyx eyes without the Light reflecting in them.

"Thank you, Moloch, but you needn't worry. I'm stuck with this position, much as I'd like to be rid of it."

"Hey, Better to rule in hell, eh?" Moloch snickered. Satan threw his head back and laughed. They got all the good literature down there—all the good writers, too.

"Ah, me." Satan sighed, running his fingers through his tangled, blonde hair.

"What is it, Luc? You don't look too good...ah, I mean hot."

Satan looked up at the use of his old name. It had been such a long time since he had heard it. It was eons ago that he'd stood as the Left Hand of the Maker. Lucifer, the Morning Star, the most beautiful of the messengers he was, leader of the Seraphim and head of the greatest Order, the Virtues; the shining glory to his brother's dark stillness. His brother, Sabatron, the Right Hand, who, after the fall, was given the name of Michael, the most beloved of He Who Rules All. In the instant that the war came into existence, Lucifer was stripped of his light

Original Fiction

and became Sataniel, the adversary of Him. And when Michael stood above Sataniel on the final day, with sword blazing, the final remnants of the light of the Maker were ripped from Sataniel's being by his brother's hand. And Satan fell, leaving behind the "El," for it was decreed that not one of the fallen should ever carry the name of the Maker to the Lost Domain.

Oh, how he missed the light. He missed his brother and all that he'd lost. He mourned also what he'd caused his friends to lose. And here he sat, in an eternal dead end job, pushing paper, keeping inventory, and overseeing the souls of all who thought that they deserved punishment. He was ever so tired.

"Moloch, I need a vacation."

"Gonna go up and do some recruiting?" Moloch laughed. This was another old joke. As if the people on Earth needed help to get to Hell.

"I was thinking about going to Atlantic City..."

"Um, can you do that?"

"Of course I can. There isn't any rule that says I cannot—and if there was, I'm sure He'd expect me to break it anyway. It is settled. I shall be gone two weeks. Moloch, you're in charge."

"Oh, Belial is gonna love this..." sighed Moloch.

Luc Morningstar checked into the Atlantic City's "W" hotel. The young girl at the desk made goo goo eyes with him the whole time.

"So are you, like, from Maryland. My roommate's boyfriend is a Morningstar, and he's from, like, Baltimore or something."

"No. I'm from the south." Lucifer deadpanned.

"Oh, okay. You know, your first name is odd, too. Luc...is that, like French for Luke or something?"

"It is a soft "c", like the "s" sound." Lucifer sighed. The girl noticed his agitation and quickly gave him his keycard. "Have a nice stay in A-C, sir. Just call me if you need anything." the receptionist gave him a wink. Luc rubbed his temples. Some vacation, this was as bad as being back home.

Luc spent his first night on Earth lounging on a delightfully comfortable bed and watching people have sex on the television. He found the bed much more enjoyable than the scenes on the television.

The next day, Luc sat out on the beach and let the sun bake him. Oh, how he missed the sun. He slid down and rolled over to let the rays hit his back. He opened his eyes to the sight of ten small toes.

"Hello." said a small girl.

"Hi." Luc said, closing his eyes. And cursing himself for not simply ignoring the child.

"Are you a angel?" the girl asked.

"What? Why ever would you ask that?"

"Your wings is dirty." Luc sighed. He imagined that small children must be immune to illusions. Wonderful.

Original Fiction

"Didn't your Mommy ever tell you not to talk to strangers?" Luc grumbled.

"Uh-huh, but she didn't say nothing about angels."

"Well, I'm not an angel, so go away. Please."

"Are you the debble, then?" Brilliant child, Luc thought with a cringe.

"Um, yes. Now run along little girl."

"Did you get in trouble because you got your wings dirty? Why don't you got no horns. The debble supposed to have horns."

"I've never had horns, only demons have horns. And yes, I got in trouble because I got my wings dirty...sort of. Now, why don't you go build a sand fortress or something like those other children over there?" Luc bit the inside of his cheek and suppressed the grateful thought that there were no children in Hell. It seemed like just the thing He would do to add to his torment. Best not to give Him any ideas.

"Why doncha just 'pologize?"

"What?" Luc said, his head jerking up to stare at her.

"Momma says that if you do something bad and are really sorry, all you gotta do is tell God you're sorry and he'll say its okay." The child looked at him with innocent, moss colored eyes and nonchalantly scratched her bottom, adjusting her suit from where it had ridden up.

"Um, okay. Well, thanks for the suggestion." Lucifer said.

"Uh-oh. There's my Momma. I gotta go. Bye!" The little girl ran off, leaving Luc at a bit of a loss for words.

Could he, Satan, evil incarnate, be forgiven? Was he sorry? Of course he was. Could it be that simple? Is that really all He'd wanted? It was worth a shot, was it not?

Illuminations Writing Contest

Contest Deadline: August 1, 2004

The Illuminata is happy to announce its second speculative fiction writing contest. In addition to having their stories featured in *The Illuminata*, winning entries will be included in an anthology published by Tyrannosaurus Press. This is an excellent opportunity for budding authors and seasoned writers alike!

A one-time fee of \$5.00 (per entry) is required to submit a story; multiple entries are allowed. This fee will be used to help finance this and similar future projects. Once the anthology is published, copies will be made available to all entrants at a discounted price. Our goal is to help talented but unknown authors gain some exposure for their work.

A hardcopy and digital copy of each entry should be submitted to the address below. Digital copies may be mailed on floppy or CD, or they may be e-mailed to Illuminations@TyrannosaurusPress.com, but please que-

ry first (without attachments) to ensure that your file is not automatically deleted. Illuminations supports the following digital file formats: Adobe (.pdf), Word (.doc), Wordperfect (.wpd), or Rich Text (.rtf) formats.

Entry fees may be paid online or by mail. To pay by mail, send a check or money order to:

Illuminations Writing Contest

Tyrannosaurus Press

PO Box 8337

New Orleans, LA 70182-8337

For full contest guidelines and details, please visit <http://www.tyrannosauruspress.com> or e-mail us at Illuminations@TyrannosaurusPress.com

RPG Corner (con't)

each rune that he wishes to add to his collection, with the first and most precious rune being what I call the Ego Rune[®]. This rune represents the wizard himself, and will be at the heart of every spell he casts. It will be the most valuable thing that the wizard possesses, because without it he will be unable to work magic, and the destruction of the Ego Rune could be a deathblow to the wizard who lost it. Each rune created can only have a singular meaning by itself, such as fire or water, life or death or ground. He must also create runes meaning things like manipulate, draw forth, suppress and so on. By combining the runes in different ways, the wizard can create different effects, leading to a wildly diverse magical environment for the wizard. The main limitations on this type of magic are the time and complexity involved in learning how to make a rune, then attempting to make one one's self. Additionally, the casting of the spell takes time, as the runes must be laid out and the wizard's will and magical power must be channeled and filtered by the runes to accomplish the desired goal.

Runes can exist in any way that the GameMaster desires. They can exist as scribed stones, or a deck of cards, or even tattoos on the wizard's body. Imagine a wizard who has taken a swath of land, built a tower then laid out his runes of power as a massive hedge maze surrounding the spire at its center. Obviously, the runes should be durable, portable (assuming your wizard will be on the move a lot) and easy to conceal and keep track of.

The last kind of magic to discuss is at the opposite end of the spectrum from the memorization and identical outcomes of the classic secular magic. What I call free-form magic is magic without restriction. It comes from somewhere, either inside the wizard himself or from the life force of living things or from an alternate place of pure magical energy, or whatever, that the wizard learns how to tap, and can be applied in any way that the wizard sees fit. An example of this would be the ways the Jedi use the Force. If they want something, it floats over to them; if they need to run really fast or jump super high, they just do it. The point is that there is no preparation, no incantation or spell to preface the exercising of the "magic." It's just a natural extension of the wizard's will. Obviously this kind of power is not for player characters without some heavy restrictions, and in my opinion, should not be used unless everyone in the game has the capacity to work their will in comparable ways,

because it would create a large imbalance in the game, and make for some boring sessions as the characters can just snap their fingers and overcome any challenge placed before them by the GameMaster. On the other hand, if the players did have access to that kind of magic, and suddenly lost it for reasons that they did not understand...it could make for an interesting adventure.

In the second half of the article next month, I'll examine the place of magic in Role-Playing games, from it's overall dispersion into the fabric of the game, to it's availability and what it can be used to accomplish, as well as why too much magic is not necessarily a good thing.

SF Studies (con't)

fits. I'm a fan, not a historian; to keep up, do I need to be both? The people in these groups banter about authors and titles and plots and timelines as if they read them yesterday instead of last month, a year ago, 'back in the day' or, ahem, in high school. How do they remember it all? How did they find the time? Where do they get the cash to give little Johnny music lessons or put him through college and still afford all the cool conventions and accoutrements?

Fandom. If they ever offer a degree in 'science fiction studies', I would still be hard pressed to finish all the coursework. What kind of job would I be qualified for? And, yet, I continue seeking out wisdom and enjoyment from my fandom friends, my fan-ish heart beating with each new piece of information and secret—like how to overcome that horrid seventh level... Did I mention video, computer and online games? I'm still trying to get *Myst* to make sense and find all the... whatever. I even have the cheater's book! See, I'm a fan, a goner, a geek, a dork, a freak; and I'm totally hooked-book, online, and miniature. If I get lost in the Black Forest of speculative fiction, I'll either be eaten by zombies or some kind soul will help me find a path through it and gently explain it all to me. At least, I hope so. I'm a fan, utterly lost in fandom. If you hear the far-away sound of a sobbing sister, come looking for me. But, come armed; I'll question you to death.

Answers to quiz on page 12

Answers: 1. Buffy, 2. Dusk till Dawn, 3. Blacula, 4. Near Dark, 5. Dark Shadows, 6. The Lost Boys, 7. Fright Night, 8. Vampire in Brooklyn, 9. Forever Knight, 10. Interview with the Vampire, 11. Once Bitten, 12. The Munsters, 13. Fearless Vampire Killers, 14. Fright Night II, 15. Nosferatu

Problem Words (con't)

about it." Overt means "open to view." It's made "public" rather than kept secret. "Sex is more overt in romance novels today than it was twenty years ago."

Delusion / Hallucination / Illusion: The terms delusion and illusion may sound alike but there is a clear distinction worth noting. A delusion is a false belief about external reality that is held so tenaciously that the person won't accept any proof of the belief being wrong. Delusions are common symptoms of such severe mental disorders as schizophrenia. A person who believes himself to be William Shakespeare would be characterized as having a delusion.

An illusion is when someone misinterprets a real external stimulus. An example would be when the real sound of rustling leaves makes you think that you heard someone calling your name. Illusions are very common and seldom reflect any sign of a mental disorder. They're simply a mistake by our perceptual systems.

In contrast to delusion and illusion, a hallucination is a false sensory experience. This usually means hearing or seeing something that is not real and which is not triggered by any observable stimulus in the environment. For example, a man who "hears" the voice of his dead mother would be experiencing a hallucination. Although it is possible for anyone to have a hallucination, this, too, is a common symptom of schizophrenia.

Discreet / Discrete: This is another pair of easily confused homonyms. They are pronounced exactly alike, and though they have different meanings they are both fairly widely used. Discrete means "separate," "apart," "detached," or "distinct." "Science fiction, fantasy, and horror are discrete literary genres."

In contrast, the word "discreet" is part of the vocabulary that parents use in child-rearing. "You should be discreet when talking about politics to Grandpa." Being discreet means to be "prudent," "careful," "somewhat circumspect"--to use a "walk on eggshells" or "velvet gloves" approach.

Disinterested / Uninterested: If you were on trial for a crime that you didn't commit, would you rather have a judge who was disinterested in your case, or uninterested in your case? Maybe it will help to know that disinterested means "impartial" or "unbiased," while uninterested means "not caring." Choose the disinterested judge every time.

3-D Characters (con't)

makings of a character with a great deal of Width. Even the popularity of Transformers and G.I. Joe can be attributed to the fact that these creations all were given pasts and personalities with which young fans could identify. One didn't just want *a* Transformer, one wanted Optimus Prime or StarScream or Ratchet, because *he was the best one*. This fact holds true even outside the realm of SF; the success of Barbie (a toy with more interests than any five people!) can be directly attributed to her Width.

Giving characters in feature length films Width is relatively easy, and in television, it's almost impossible not to have it. Not only do the actors provide their own interpretation of personality, but the duration – especially of a TV series – makes sparing a few minutes here and there to delve into a character's less relevant hobbies practical. In literary works, where page count is often a consideration and relevance to the overall story should factor in to every editing decision, balancing the demands of Length and Width is far more difficult.

In practice, major players all have Length, but not as many are given Width. In many novels, the main character is single-minded in purpose, and their obsession tends to wash out their personality. While this may be appropriate in episodic works – if the whole novel covers a time frame of only a few days, like most mysteries do, the protagonist should stay focused – in epic fiction, which often spans months or years, one should expect to see other aspects of a character's personality slip into the narrative from time to time. Saving the world, rescuing the princess, or returning the stolen object while simultaneously evading capture by the bad guys are all noble endeavors, but it stands to reason that there would be a moment or two of peace where characters could reminisce about all the fun they had working as a blacksmith or pontificate about their life-long desire to be a fighter pilot for the Rebellion. And it should be noted that in the more famous episodic mysteries, the authors (i.e. Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett) provide numerous insights into the protagonists, and those characters' personalities are by and large what make the stories memorable.

Most wildly successful works of speculative fiction pass the test for Width. In Middle Earth, a pressing problem keeps the Fellowship rather harried, but Tolkien still takes the time to show varying aspects of his characters. Aragorn's tragic love for Arwen, Gimli's poignant and heartfelt speeches about the

3-D Characters (con't)

Mines of Moria and the caves beneath Helm's Deep, Merry and Pippin's love of life's simpler pleasures, and Sam's undying loyalty to both friend and Shire are all worked into the story, giving *Lord of the Rings* that little something extra needed to make it a classic. Robert Jordan's characters in the *Wheel of Time* each have their own strengths and weaknesses, their own interests, and their own personalities; they do not mimic each other, they accentuate. Other successful authors like George R. R. Martin, Frank Herbert, Margaret Weis & Tracey Hickman, and Anne McCaffrey have created worlds peopled with memorable and, for want of a better term, *wide* characters.

Secondary characters are rarely given Width, and tertiary characters almost never, but by adding just a subtle hint of personality to each player, a writer can infuse his world with an extra level of realism. As an example, imagine an innkeeper encountered by the hero while on his adventure. To make this innkeeper more than just a placeholder, the character is given a little Length. He is a man, early thirties, who inherited the inn when his father died nearly a decade ago. To provide Width, questions must be asked. Did he want to be an innkeeper, or was there another calling that he aspired to? If he did want to run the inn, did he want it enough to murder his father? If not, did his father die because our innkeeper was off pursuing his dream, and could the death have been prevented by his presence? Did he return to support his mother and sisters, and is now frustrated because he will never become the famous haberdasher he always wanted to be? Is the innkeeper content? ...bitter? ...resigned?

The number of questions asked and the level of detail in the answers are up to the author, but the answers themselves should depend on more than just the author's whim. Setting, tone, and numerous other factors will help determine the appropriate responses; in fact, with enough practice, the answers begin to appear on their own and the characters take shape without the need for an exhaustive internal question and answer session. Once a character's personality is established in the author's mind, his attitudes, prejudices and interests will be subtly incorporated into the prose, and the character will begin to come alive.

As with Length, there are dangers inherent to adding Width, and it cannot be stressed enough that these exercises are meant more for the author's benefit than the reader's. Once a character is real to the author, once he has personality and dimension, the author

will subconsciously impart that personality into the writing. There is no need to share details of each and every one of the character's passions and dreams.

For example, imagine a reluctant young woman forced into the role of heroine. In creating this character, it is very important for the writer to know that, more than anything else, the young lady in question wanted to marry her childhood sweetheart, have three children, and operate a respectable vineyard. Hints of this regret can be worked into the story without wasting pages daydreaming about how life with young Master Thom – *Oh, how he loved me! He lays fresh flowers upon my pillow each morning before he goes to the fields* – would have been so much better than slogging through the swamps of Morkesi; and how Ivan, Mieshae, and Somalia, the loves of her life and the most precious gifts the Gods could have given her, brought a smile to her lips as they hid among the vines, dodging nimbly around her as she examined the grapes, trying to decide whether that curmudgeonly innkeeper – *He did murder his father! I know he did it, no matter what the others say!* – would prefer a shipment of white or red... I'm bored already, and I haven't even finished the first sentence!

In the end, stories with multi-faceted characters will better stand the test of time than those without. A character with only one interest is not only tedious, he is hard to relate to, and it is through connections with characters that readers come to love a story. By adding Length, a writer creates the events that forge a character; through Width, the effects of those experiences are evaluated, and the character's personality is developed, leaving only Depth, the interweaving of every character's personality to create an adaptive, dynamic, and ultimately unique world.

T-Press News and World Report

garrie keyman's *Carlos Inside Out* will be a featured reading at the InterAct Theatre Company. Sansom St., Philadelphia, PA. (Curtain time 7:00 on Monday February 23; \$12.00). www.InterActTheatre.org.

Bret Funk will be an author Guest at CoastCon XXVII in Biloxi, MS. April 2-4.

Sales of both Boundary's Fall books are steady, contest entries have started to trickle in, and we have some interesting submissions on the shelves. Keep your eye on our website for new release information.