Ubiquitous Obliquity

#6

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Boilerplate

Robert Knop
1233 Elm St.
El Cerrito, CA 94530

rknop@sonic.net

http://www.sonic.net/~rknop
http://www.sonic.net/~rknop/Omar

(Gratuitous Narcissism)

Forewarned

My life has been quite busy since I sent in my last submission. The biggest news is that I'm engaged. My fiancee and I will be getting married at the end of next July, in Minnesota where her folks live.

Since January, my life has been completely taken over by the theatre, much as it was last year at this time. I'm directing a production of Tom Stoppard's *The Real Inspector Hound* at a the local community theater. The performances are the first two weekends in March, and will all probably be over by the time you read this. The play one which is near and dear to me; I've been invoved in two productions of it previous, one of which I directed when I was a student at Harvey Mudd College. It is no mere coincidence that this play includes the line "Faced as we are with such ubiquitous obliquity...."

This past week, I've been completely consumed by audtions for our production of *Fiddler on the Roof*, which will be opening in mid-April. I foolishly agreed to produce this musical, not having learned my lesson after producing *Gypsy* last spring. This week we had auditions; some 110 or so people auditioned for the show. This has generally contributed to a lack of sleep and a lack of writing my AotA submission. In addition to producing, I will be playing the role of the Fiddler (what with me being a violinist as well as a producer and an actor).

I've finally gotten involved in some regular face-to-face gaming in the last few months. The gaming group I mentioned in my previous submission has indeed gotten off the ground, and we've been meeting monthly. It's been a blast. Other than the long running, meet-once-a-year solo game I've had going since I was 14, all the gaming I've done in the last 15 years has been in the PBEM format. I love PBEM games, but they're no substitute for face to face gaming. (The inverse is also true, actually; you can do some things very easily in a PBEM which don't work very well in a face to face game. I should probably write an article about it sometime.)

Most of the players in this group will want to GM eventually. I hope to run a *GURPS Planescape* game at some point. The game we're currently playing is an AD&D conversion, being GM'ed by one of the other players. We're using the GURPS rules, but it's a high fantasy world with a lot of the genre conventions (and monsters) familiar to all of us from our gaming days of yore. Our second meeting, however, the GM sent us all E-mail late the night before we met, saying that he wasn't going to be ready, and wanting to cancel the gaming session. I knew that some people– in particular the one who commutes from San Jose (an hour drive)– weren't going to get the message in time. I'd just written for AotA a one-shot adventure not two months before, so I volunteered to run it. So I have now played *Sleepers Awake* once. It went reasonably well. I was very rusty GMing, and I fear it may have shown a bit. The adventure, as predicted, was shockingly hack &

slash. None of the zombies or mummies really presented any danger to the PCs, as they were all suited up in powered combat armor. Next time around, I might juice them a bit, or trying bringing the chipwraiths in a bit earlier. The liches proved to be a bigger challenge; it was the mind control spells the liches used to almost defeat the PCs. However, the PCs ended up winning on a missed blaster shot down a long narrow hallway which managed to hit the lich standing behind on the 9-or-less roll. In between, we had some good computer hacking, a lot of mayhem, a few pressure doors cut open with a monowire knife, and a huge zombie-blasting explosion from a space helmet full of grenades.

The game reinforced my suspicion that all hack & slash games can be mapped onto the AD&D archetype. Of our space marines, one was the combat heardened officer (figher or paladin), one was the excessively armed thug (fighter), one was the engineer/hacker (magic user), one was the medic (cleric). (Well, OK, the medic was really the medic/grenadier.) Having the medic was key; there are some nifty TL10 drugs that let you get through a one-shot hack&slash even after you've lost all your hit points.

After meeting the first zombie, one of the players said, "Now I know what game we're playing: Doom!"

This submission is a mixed one. The two characters were originally written for AotA #37, but didn't make it in due to a mixup. Ieric the Sage is from my TL3 high fantasy world, the Silent Runelands, which I've mentioned once or twice in past issues of *Ubiquitous Obliquity*. Ty Stonewall was perversely inspired by a very minor character in a J.A. Jance novel who is absolutely nothing like Ty. The map of the stars nearest the sun was made for in *Space/3e*, and indeed half of it made it into that book on page 146. The Mars Planetary Record Sheet was also created for *Space/3e*, but it didn't make it in.

Errata

From *Sleepers Awake* in UO #5, Captain Jameson was overpriced. I priced his attributes as if he were buying them from scratch, when in fact some of them had already come from the Lich racial template. Given that the racial template was given as a straight 100-point advantage, the costs instead should have been:

ST	10/20	[22]
DX	13	[10]
IQ	19	[150]
HT	13/16	[25]

This corresponds to a 78 point reduction in Jameson's character point value. This reduces him to a 492 point character. If you're in the mood, add a couple of levels of Strong Will (or another 8 points in spells), and you've got an even 500 point character... assuming I haven't made another mistake somewhere.

TL12 Hoverbike

Subassemblies: Body (no streamlining); GEV Skirt.

Propulsion Systems: Fusion Air-Ram Jet Engine (thrust 520 lbs); Ducted Fan (Hoverfan, thrust 200lbs, lift with GEV skirts 1000lbs).

Weaponry: UltraLight Compact Charged Particle Beam (Damage 6dx15, 1/2D 600yd, Max 1200 yd, Acc 15, SS 12, Weight 4.8lbs, power 5,508 kW, Full Stablization).

Instruments and Electronics: Gravitic Communicator (Long Range 100,000mi, Scrambler); Neutrino Communicator (Short Range 2,000mi, Scrambler); Radio Communicator (Long Range 50,000mi, Scrambler); AESA (Range 10mi, Scan 17, forward facing); AESA (Range 3mi, Scan 14, backward facing); PESA (Range 4.5mi, Scan 15, forward facing); PESA (Range 2mi, Scan 13, backward facing); Multiscanner (Range 5mi, Scan 15); Laser/Radar Detector.

Crew and Passengers: 1 Cycle Crew Station; Electronic Controls.

Power Systems: TL12 NPU (output 55kW, 10 year endurance); TL12 Rechargable Battery (100,000 kWs battery, enough for ~20 rounds of fire of the particle beam).

Surface and Structure: Body Volume 3.0cf, Area 12.6sf; GEV Skirt Volume 1.8cf, Area 8.9sf; Total and Structural Surface Area 21.5sf. Structure: Medium Weight, Expensive Materials; Expensive Metal Armor (DR150).

Statistics: Empty Mass 316lbs; Loaded Mass 516lbs (assuming 1 crew @ 200lbs). Total Volume 4.8 cf; Size Modifier +0. Cost $44,600. Structural HT 12; Body HP 19. Lift Height (@ 1g) 1.9ft. Motive Thrust 520.0 lbs; Aerodynamic Drag 36.5 lbs; Top Speed 327mph; aAccel 20.1 mph/s; hMR 6.5; hSR 4; hDecel 26.0 mph/s.

A sidebar-filling gratuitous vehicle from my TL12 *Ashes of the Phoenix* campaign in David Pulver's Phoenix Sector.

Albert Doringer [73 points]

    ST: 10 [0]
    DX: 10 [0]
    IQ: 12 [20]
    HT: 10 [0]
    Advantages: Filty Rich [50], Mathematical Ability [10], Status/3 [10]
    Disadvantages: Delusion ("I am a great violinist") [-5], Greed [-15], Overweight [-5], Shyness [-5], Stubbornness [-5]
    Quirks: Would rather be a musician if it could pay enough; Quietly whistles much of the time; Listens to a lot of Classical music; Usually works during the night
    Skills: Musical Instrument (Violin)-11 [2]; Accounting-16 [2]; Law-11 [2]; Economics-15 [10]; Gambling-13 [4]; Savoir-Faire (rich financial world)-12 [2]

    Albert Doringer is a rich stock broker in his mid forties. He started out as an accountant, quickly figured out he had an aptitude for tracking and making great profit from investments, and went that route. He is also vaguely dissatisfied with his life. While he loves having the money, he really wishes he were a professional musician. Indeed, he knows his way around the violin, but he's not as good at it as he thinks he is. His wealth and status allows him to give enough money to community music organizations that he sometimes performs with groups over his head. Because he's got the money and power, he can play in a string quartet with three musicians who are clearly out of his league... and he gets to play first violin.
    When the Chimera process came along, Doringer was one of those contacted because of his wealth. It didn't take him much thought to realize that what he needed to make his life complete was... Mozart.

Past Lives, Present Tense

Book Review/*GURPS Who's Who* Campaign Seed

Past Lives, Present Tense is an entertaining anthology of science fiction short stories edited by Elizabeth Ann Scarborough (ACE Books, 1999). In it are 14 stories, all in a common universe and sharing a common premise. The premise is that a pair of scientists have figured out how to "download" everything about a deceased person from their DNA- nature *and* nurture. So, not only are the genetic characteristics encoded in the DNA, but indeed the very personalities and memories of those people are encoded within the ubiquitous "junk" DNA. Scientifically, this is perhaps a bit suspect; we believe that we understand that memory is stored in the connection strengths between neurons in the brain, and not at all in DNA or "memory RNA" or any some such. However, the writers of this book go good places with the premise, so I'm willing to cede them the point. ("Junk DNA" is a fertile ground for science fiction. *Star Trek: The Next Generation* has used it (poorly). Robert J. Sawyer used it to good effect in *Frameshift*, and indeed Greg Bear used it for racial memory in *Blood Music*.)

In the opening story of the book, a couple of scientists develop a process whereby the downloaded personality and memories of a dead person may be imprinted upon another, living person, via their optic nerve. After the memories have been downloaded, the host goes into a long slumber (for as long as 36 hours) as he assimilates the new information. Full long-term assimilation takes a few weeks; before that is complete, the process may be reversed, but not afterwards.

Because the scientists want to experiment this without being caught up in the same sort of political mess that cloning is getting caught up in, they don't publicly announce their process. Rather, they privately contact several of the most wealthy people in the world, and ask for investors... in exchange for the opportunity to have a famous person of their choice downloaded into them. (Some of the stories are not quite consistent on the background, but implicitly assume that the process has eventually been widely recognized and known.) Each of the stories is about a modern person who's had some well known historical figure downloaded into them. Historical personalities who make an appearance include Leonardo da Vinci, Jeb Stuart, Edgar Allen Poe, Anne Boleyn, Doc Holliday, and Babe Ruth. Two different people try to get their hands on DNA from Jesus Christ in order to download his memories and personality.

In most cases, the resulting person who comes out of the process is more than the sum of the parts. The people find that they gain new perspectives without losing their original perspective. They find themselves more capable, more stable, more well rounded, and even smarter than they had

been previously. Usually, if the historical personality had any "character flaws" (e.g. addictions), the joined person has the strength to overcome them. In the best of cases, the new person is an integrated whole. In some cases, the two personalities each have a distinct "voice" in the host's mind. In a couple of cases, there is conflict between the original and downloaded personalities.

As I was reading these stories, it occurred to me that the background in this book gives the excellent basis for, yes, a *GURPS Who's Who* campaign. This is a mechanism whereby historical figures from all different eras might be brought together into a common endeavor. To create a character, start with a modern 100 (or even 75 or 50) point "normal" character. Then, choose a historical personality you wish to download. Add that historical personalities advantages, quirks, and skills to the original character sheet. Ignore physical advantages and disadvantages, and treat advantages that are ambiguously physical on a case-by-case basis. IQ should be increased; the simplest way to do it is to add the historical personality's (IQ-10) to the character's IQ, but in many cases this is probably too much, and something more moderate should be improvised. If the downloaded person's DX is greater than the host's DX, add a fraction of the downloaded person's DX to the combined DX. Because the strength of the combined personality is frequently enough to overcome the historical personalities character flaws, at the player's option any or all of the historical mental disadvantages may be reduced to Quirk level. If the player wishes to play a character where the process didn't work perfectly well, optionally add one or more additional advantages or disadvantages to reflect this. Particularly appropriate might be Split Personality, Voices, Flashbacks, or even a modified version of Mindlink that doesn't require Telepathy.

Of course, my "campaign seed" is only a general idea for character creation. I'm leaving as an exercise for the alert reader the work of figuring out what the campaign actually is. Why are these people with downloaded historical personalities being brought together to participate in a common story or adventure? One obvious possibility is a *Time Travel* campaign, where some "local perspective" might be wanted. However, this somewhat negates the fun of having historical personalities from all eras brought together.

Mozart/Doringer

[198 points]
ST: 10 [0]
DX: 12 [20]
IQ: 14 [45]
HT: 10 [0]

Advantages: Absolute Timing (Only with musical activities: -50%) [3], Fihtly Rich [50], Status/3 [10], Mathematical Ability [10], Eidetic Memory [30], Musical Ability +5 [5]

Disadvantages: Overweight[-5], Selfish [-5], Stubbornness [-5]

Quirks: Greedy; Spendthrift; Likes vulgar jokes; Works at night; Likes delicacies; likes to dress well

Skills: Accounting-17 [1], Area Knowledge (Europe)-14 [1/2], Area Knowledge (Salzburg)-14 [1/2], Area Knowledge (Vienna)-14 [1/2], Billiards (Hobby)-14 [1], Conducting-19 [2], Diplomacy-14 [2], Economics-16 [5], Gambling-14 [2], Law-12 [1], Leadership-14 [1], Literature (through 18th century)-14 [3], Merchant-13 [1/2], Musical Instrument (Piano)-22 [3], Musical Instrument (Harpsichord)-21 [5], Musical Instrument (Viola)-18 [1], Musical Instrument (Violin)-18 [1], Musical Notation-17 [3], Savoir-Faire (rich financial world)-14 [1], Writing-15 [1]

Languages: English (native)-19 [2 1/2], German (native)-19 [2 1/2], French-16 [3], Italian-17 [4], Latin-13 [1/2]

As with many cases in the Chimera process, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. The joined Mozart/Doringer is able to get past some (though not all) of the personality flaws of each individual. After being merged, he promptly retired from his career as a stock broker, and began to indulge his musical aspirations with his great newfound musical skills. He started conducting with and writing some new compositions for symphony orchestras, but now Doringer/Mozart is trying to put together a rock band....
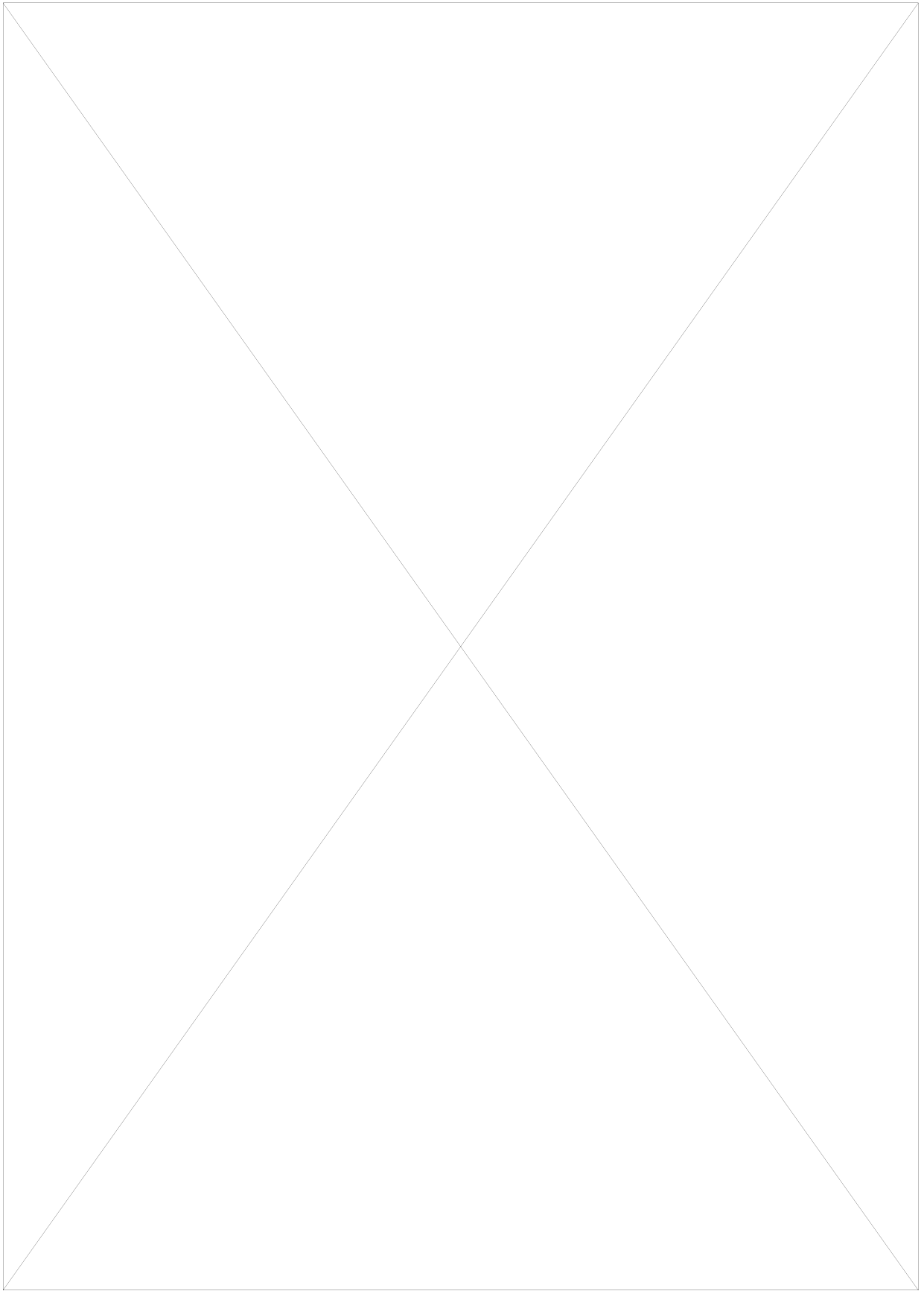
The Stars Within 5pc of the Sun

Mapping Stars

This map shows all known within 5pc (16 light years) of the sun. The map is in the standard format of *GURPS Space*. Up on the map is the direction of the galactic center, and, unless I'm mistaken, the galaxy is rotating such that all the stars on this map are moving to the right. On the next page is a table which gives the spectral types of all of these stars.

There are 30 or 40 stars other than the Sun known to have planets. That includes two on this list. Gl 876 has a 2 M_{Jup} planet in a somewhat eccentric 60 day (0.21) AU orbit. Gl 411 probably has two planets, one about 1 M_{Jup} in a 5.8 year orbit, the other about 1.6 M_{Jup} in a ~30 year orbit. The websites to watch for extrasolar planets are:
http://cfa-www.harvard.edu/planets
http://cannon.sfsu.edu/~gmarcy/planetsearch/planetsearch.html

I created this map from the Gliese 3 catalog. I got the more interesting names here and sundry. Star names, if you aren't working with boring numbers from a single catalog, are actually a bit of an art. It was done all in C and Perl, using a plotting package I originally wrote for the figures that were in my PhD thesis.

The best star mapping site on the web is that of Winchell Chung (the original *Ogre* artist) at

http://www.clark.net/pub/
nyrath/starmap.html
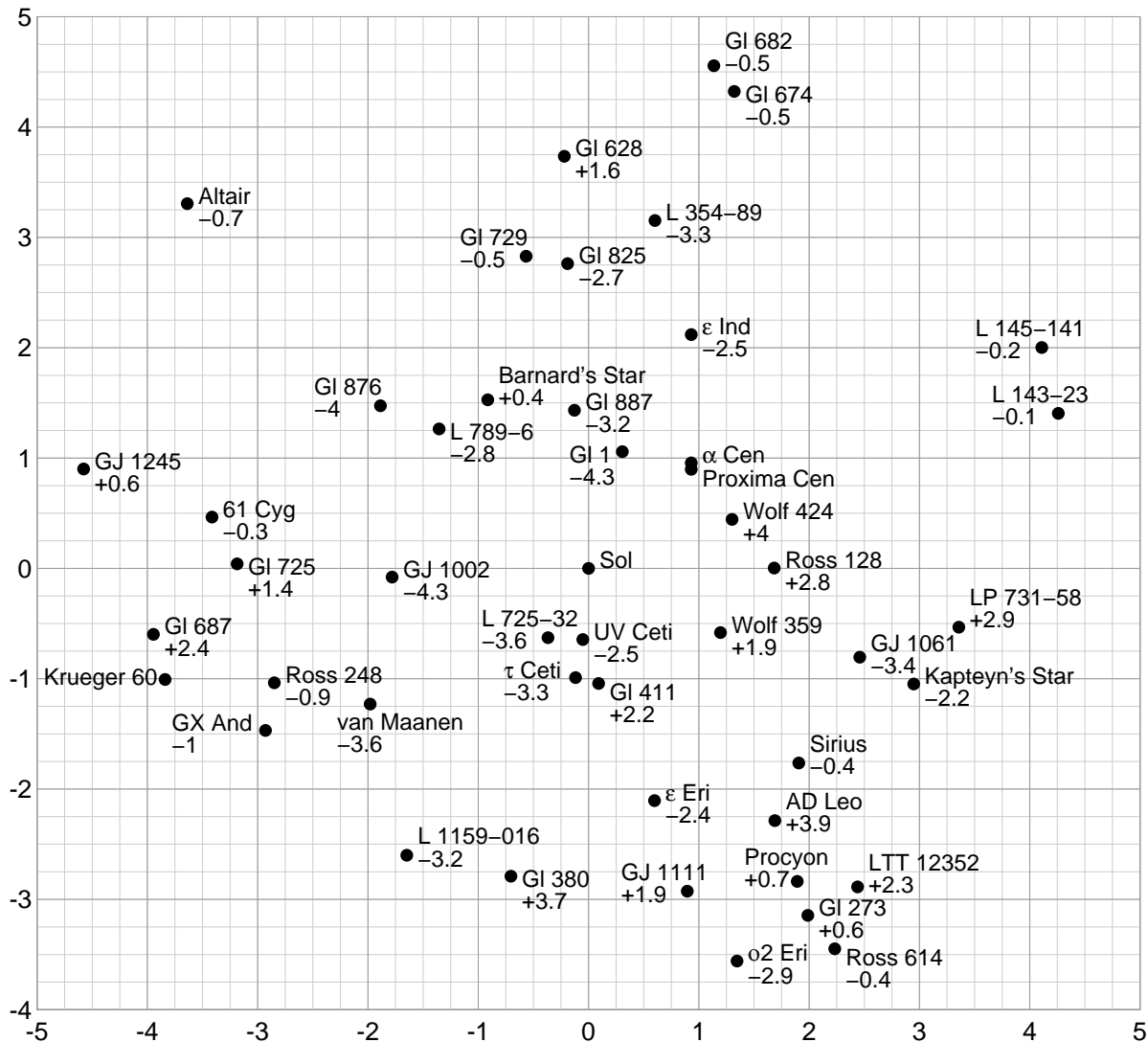
The Nearest Stars

This table lists all of the stars plotted in the figure on the previous page. The first column is the name. As I mentioned in the sidebar on the previous page, star names are a bit of an art. The Gliese catalog frequently gives another name for a star, but it's not always the one I wanted to use; I ended up getting star names from many now-forgotten references. I preferred a real name (e.g. Sirius or Altair). Next I'd try to use the "constellation name" for the star (e.g. τ Ceti or 61 Cygni). After that, it was as whim dictated; I didn't want to have a whole bunch of stars labelled with just a Gliese number. I liked the Wolf names, if only because I'm a longtime enough *Next Generation* watcher to know that important things happened at Wolf 359.

The second, third, and fourth columns give the star's coordinates on the map on the preceeding page. Units are parsecs. The fifth column is the star's spectra type, as given in the Gliese catalog. Most of these designations should be familiar from the "Stars and Worlds" chapter of *GURPS Space*; some won't be, and I'm not even familiar with all of them myself. (Hey, I'm an ex-tragalactic astronomer, I don't keep all the sundry odd star spectral types in my head.) For double and triple systems, the types of each component in the system are separated by slashes (except for Proxima Centauri, which though listed seperately is in the α Centari system. What I was too lazy (or too out of time) to do was give the separation and orbital period for the multiple star systems.

The sixth column is the visual magnitude as observed from Earth. This is a backwards logarithmic scale, where a star with a magnitude higher by 5 is dimmer by a factor of 100. The final column gives the distance from Sol to this star, in parsecs. It is an exercise for the alert reader to calculate the distance between any other two stars; using the X, Y, Z coordinates, this should not be too difficult.

Name	X	Y	Z	Type	Magnitude	Dist
Sol	0.000	0.000	0.000	G2 V		
Proxima Cen	0.931	0.898	-0.044	dM5 e	15.49	1.30
α Cen	0.931	0.956	-0.017	G2 V / K0 V	4.38	1.33
Barnard's Star	-0.914	1.528	0.443	M5 V	13.23	1.83
Wolf 359	1.196	-0.582	1.985	M6	16.56	2.39
Gl 411	0.091	-1.043	2.290	M2 Ve	10.48	2.52
UV Ceti	-0.052	-0.645	-2.545	dM5.5e / dM5.5e	15.60	2.63
Sirius	1.906	-1.764	-0.406	A1 V / DA2	-1.47	2.63
Gl 729	-0.566	2.829	-0.523	dM4.5e	13.12	2.93
Ross 248	-2.849	-1.037	-0.922	dM6e	14.79	3.17
ε Eri	0.598	-2.105	-2.434	K2 V	6.16	3.27
Ross 128	1.683	0.003	2.865	dM4.5	13.51	3.32
L 789-6	-1.355	1.264	-2.849	M5e	15.00	3.40
GX/GQ And	-2.929	-1.469	-1.093	M2 V / M6 Ve	10.39	3.45
ε Ind	0.931	2.119	-2.572	K5 Ve	6.99	3.46
61 Cyg	-3.414	0.465	-0.351	K5 Ve / K7 Ve	7.51	3.46
Gl 725	-3.186	0.041	1.433	dM4 / dM5	11.18	3.50
τ Ceti	-0.118	-0.990	-3.352	G8 Vp	5.77	3.50
Procyon	1.892	-2.837	0.789	F5 IV-V / DA	2.66	3.50
Gl 887	-0.128	1.433	-3.211	M2 Ve	9.61	3.52
GJ 1111	0.895	-2.926	1.945	M6.5	17.01	3.63
L 725-32	-0.368	-0.628	-3.668	dM5e	14.19	3.74
Gl 273	1.988	-3.145	0.682	M3.5	11.96	3.78
Gl 825	-0.190	2.762	-2.702	M0 Ve	8.73	3.87
Kapteyn's Star	2.948	-1.048	-2.280	M0 V	10.91	3.87
Krueger 60	-3.839	-1.007	-0.000	M2 V / M6 V	13.30	3.97
Gl 628	-0.220	3.735	1.642	M3.5	12.02	4.09
Ross 614	2.232	-3.448	-0.445	M4.5 J / ?	13.05	4.13
GJ 1061	2.459	-0.805	-3.423	M4.5	14.90	4.29
Wolf 424	1.301	0.444	4.082	dM5.5eJ / M7	14.87	4.31
van Maanen	-1.980	-1.230	-3.651	DZ7	14.20	4.33
LTT 12352	2.439	-2.887	2.374	k	12.64	4.46
L 1159-016	-1.648	-2.600	-3.241	dM8e	14.03	4.47
L 143-23	4.259	1.405	-0.158	m	15.66	4.49
Gl 1	0.306	1.058	-4.373	M4 V	10.27	4.51
LP 731-58	3.357	-0.533	2.986	M6.5	17.32	4.52
Gl 674	1.321	4.323	-0.536	M3	11.08	4.55
L 145-141	4.109	2.002	-0.228	DQ6	13.20	4.58
L 354-89	0.602	3.153	-3.365	M1 V	10.33	4.65
Gl 380	-0.704	-2.790	3.704	K2 Ve	8.23	4.69
GJ 1002	-1.781	-0.079	-4.348	M5-5.5	15.39	4.70
Gl 687	-3.945	-0.598	2.489	M3.5 V	10.82	4.70
GJ 1245	-4.578	0.901	0.699	M5.5 Ve / m	15.04	4.72
Gl 682	1.136	4.556	-0.546	M3.5	12.58	4.73
Gl 876	-1.887	1.474	-4.083	dM5	11.79	4.73
o2 Eri	1.346	-3.559	-2.972	K1 Ve / DA4 / dM4.5e	6.01	4.83
AD Leo	1.689	-2.286	3.997	M4.5Ve	10.95	4.90
Altair	-3.638	3.306	-0.770	A7 IV-V	2.29	4.98

Ty Stonewall

Ty Stonewall is a taxi driver in New York City. The inheritant of a small fortune from a deceased rich uncle, he doesn't actually need the income from the job. Rather, he does it because he loves it; it feeds his quirk-level driving addiction, and it gives him the opportunity to meet new and random people. In Ty's case, the people frequently tend to be *very* random. From bull sessions in the lounge with his cabbie friends, Ty has come to realize that for some reason, he attracts far more interesting and stranger fares than do most cabbies.

In demeanor, Ty tends to be very friendly and outgoing. He likes to think that a cabbie can serve the same social and emotional function as a bartender. He always tries to get his fares involved in a conversation, but if they really don't want to talk he will respect that. He loves learning, and when he's not driving and learning things from his passengers, his nose is buried in a book about one or another of any diverse topics. On more than one occasion, his arcane knowledge has come to his aid when a particularly interesting passenger gets him involved in an adventure.

Although he loves driving a cab, Ty is entertaining idle thoughts of becoming a PI.

Ty is a large (6' 2"), African-American man. His curly hair is cropped short, and has a prominent bald spot. His face is open and friendly, and he is just starting to show some laugh lines with age. He is overweight, but wears it fairly well. The imposing figure made by his size is often belied by the inquisitive smile on his face.

Ty is designed as a character for any sort of modern day campaign. He could fit into a fairly relistic detective sort of game, perhaps as a recurrent NPC. In this case, he just is one of those people who seem to coincidentally have interesting things happen to them. In a fully Illuminated or supernatural campaign, Ty can be a true Weirdness Magnet. In this sort of campaign, he could be a recurrent background NPC contact, a major NPC (the Weirdness Magnet causing him to keep running into the weird PCs), or even a PC.

Ty Stonewall

Avocational Taxi Driver and Weirdness Magnet

Human Male, 42 years old

100 points

ST:	10 [0]
DX:	11 [10]
IQ:	13 [30]
HT:	11 [10]
Speed:	5.5
Move:	5

Advantages: Absolute Direction [5], Intuition [15], Wealthy [20]

Disadvantages: Chummy [-5], Curious [-5], Overweight [-5], Self-Defense Pacifism [-15], Undiscriminating [-1], Weirdness Magnet [-15]

Quirks: loves driving; toys with the idea of becoming a PI; loves learning; has a Darth Maul figure hanging from his rear-view mirror; keeps a very irregular schedule

Skills: Bard/14 [4], Running/10 [2], Chess/14 [1], First Aid/13 [1], Accounting/13 [4], Computer Operation/TL7/13 [1], Law/11 [1], Anthropology/11 [1], Archaeology/11 [1], Criminology/13 [2], Economics/11 [1], Forensics/12 [4], History/11 [1], Literature/11 [1], Occultism/12 [1], Psychology/12 [2], Area Knowledge (New York)/18 [10], Fast-Talk/12 [1], Detect Lies/12 [4], Streetwise/12 [2], Driving (stock car)/14 [16]

Ieric

Sage; 150/180 points

ST:	8	[-20/-10]
DX:	9	[-10/0]
IQ:	14	[45/80]
HT:	14	[45]
Speed: 6.25		
Move: 6		

Advantages: Eidetic Memory [30]; Literacy [0]; Magery/1 [15]

Disadvantages: Age (60) [0/-30]; Curious (extremely) [-10]; No Depth Perception [-10]; Oblivious [-3]; Truthfulness [-5]

Quirks: likes to lecture; collects books and scrolls; generally kindhearted; avoids physical exertion; unfazeable

Skills[*1]: Bard-13 [½]; Writing-14 [1]; Languages: Elf-13 [½], Dwarf-13 [½], Gnome-13 [½], Orc-13 [½], Goblin-13 [½], Green Dragon-13 [½]; Diagnosis-13 [1]; Area Knowledge (Runelands)-18 [4]; Law-12 [½]; Alchemy-12 [1]; Anthropology-14 [2]; Archaeology-14 [2]; Astronomy-13 [1]; Cartography-14 [1]; History-20 (Opt. spec: Forest Island, History of Magic) [8]; Literature-14 [2]; Occultism-16 [4]; Philosophy-13 [1]; Resarch-17 [4]; Thaumatology-16 [6][*2]; Theology-13 [1]; Weird Magic-14 [4]; Zoology-13 [1]; Teaching-14 [1]

Spells[*3]: Analyze Magic-15 [1]; Ancient History-17 [4]; Conceal Magic-15 [1]; Continual Light-15 [1]; Counterspell-16 [2]; Detect Magic-18 [6]; Dispel Magic-15 [1]; History-16 [2]; Identify Spell-15 [1]; Light-15 [1]; Memorize-16 [2]; Seeker-15 [1]; Seek Fire-15 [1]; Seek Magic-15 [1]; Seek Water-15 [1]; Sound-15 [1]; Tell Time-15 [1]; Trace-15 [1]

Notes:
[*1] Includes Eidetic Memory
[*2] Magery added to Thaumatology
[*3] Magery and Eidetic Memory (+2) added to Spells

Ieric

Ieric (pronounced ee-YARE-ick) was born and raised in a small village outside the city of Quenak in the country of Paredam, in the Silent Runelands. Although he was from a farming family, Ieric managed to avoid spending a lot of time working the family land. Indeed, he never played much with the other children of the village, for they considered him a little odd. Instead, Ieric spent much of his time with the sage of the village, a man that most people ignored as a crazy old man. In fact, the old sage was quite intelligent, and a wizard of considerable power. He did nothing to counteract his image as a crazy old man because he found that it made people leave him alone, and he hated being pestered with incessant stupid questions and trivial requests.

The old sage of the village took Ieric under his wing, and taught Ieric a love of knowledge. Determining that Ieric was a mage, he also taught the youth the basics of magic. The old sage died before Ieric was 18; when Ieric reached that age, he left his home village, and went to the city of Quenak in search of adventure. A little bit out of his element at first, Ieric eventually figured out how to cope with life in the city, and before long had attached himself to a party of young, eager adventurers out to secure a fortune and/or a name for themselves.

Ieric learned over the next few years that he was simply not cut out to be an adventurer. Part of the problem was that he didn't have the right abilities. Other than having the constitution of an ox, he didn't really have the physical makeup and endurance to keep up with the adventuring lifestyle. Although his companions tried to teach him several times, Ieric just wouldn't learn any weapon or combat skills; he never motivated himself to practice. However, the bigger problem was that Ieric didn't have quite the right attitude for the sort of adventuring party he'd associated himself with. When a noble lord had hired the party as mercenaries to do scouting and "special ops" sorts of missions in a squabble with another local lord, Ieric would not pay any attention to the tasks he was supposed to be supporting. He would instead become almost obsessively interested in the history of the local culture, and the historical roots of the conflict. Where his companions were looking for glory and loot, Ieric was looking for knowledge. Where his companions wanted him to learn the magic to be a combat mage, Ieric was more interested in playing with magic for magic's sake.

Eventually, Ieric admitted that he would be better off studying in a university than he would be traipsing around the countryside carrying on as if he were a ranger. He parted ways with those who had been his companions, and settled into the sedentary life of a scholar. He spent his time studying magic, and the history of magic in the Silent Runelands. Eventually,

years later, he became a patron himself, hiring eager young adventurers to travel across the land and seek out some arcane scroll, ancient text, or anthropological clue.

Some ten or fifteen years ago, Ieric moved to the small town of Masom on the north coast of the Runelands. From there, he began his researches into the history of Forest Island, the large island off the north of the main continent of the Runelands. It was his expertise in this topic that brought him into contact with the warrior Erindor and his companions, and made Ieric a major (if unheralded and behind-the-scenes) player in the War of 4844. Ieric barely escaped the destruction of Masom by green dragons, and later the sacking of the city Sunigar, by armies of orcs. For much of 4844, he lived in the city of Rivermeet, until that city itself was destroyed in the latter throes of the War of 4844. Today, Ieric is camping with Erindor and his followers, away from the main human culture of the Runelands, in a wilderness location on the far coast of Forest Island. There, with Ieric's help, Erindor seeks to found a new community independent of the Empire that has recently triumphed over the Runelands.

Ieric does his very best to maintain the stereotypical appearance of a sage. His hair is white, a little bit too long, and slightly stringy and unkempt. He has the obligatory scholar's long beard, and he typically wears robes and cloaks. His white skin is wrinkled, and his eyes are light blue. He's friendly and cheerful in temperament, but he tends to ignore the concerns, fears, and boredom of those around him as he gets interested in one or another academic topic.


A Note on Age

Ieric's "original" attributes were (ST: 9, DX: 10, IQ: 16, HT: 14). I then made the 44 necessary aging rolls (on a computer, to avoid carpal tunnel), and lowered his scores accordingly. Two point costs are listed; 150 is the "current value" of Ieric as a character (i.e. don't count the points from the Age disadvantage, and count the attributes at their current level). 180 is the number of points it would take to create Ieric as a beginning character. After I've done this a few hundred other times with a wide range of characters, I may make some comment on whether or not the Age disadvantage is underpriced or overpriced.

(You will probably point out that I am using Eidetic Memory, out of which I get a lot of mileage, given that all of Ieric's skills are mental skills. The more I play GURPS, the more I become convinced that the system works better if you don't let yourself get too hung up over the specific details of point costs at all times.)

Although I used the standard rules for aging, I do want to propose a house rule, to see what people think. Unless you end up with Alzheimers disease or some such, it's not clear to me that one decays mentally as fast as one does physically as one gets older. Thus, I would propose that one loses a point of IQ on aging rolls only on a critical failure. Perhaps you could introduce a new "Alzheimer Susceptible" disadvantage that requires you to use the original aging rules.

(It may be my own fragile sense of pride that makes me propose this rule. I have resigned myself to the fact that I will fall apart physically as I get old, but the thought of losing my mental faculties scares the willies out of me.)

Feedback
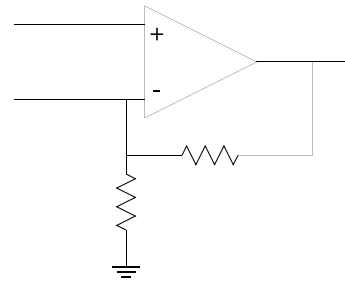
Lisa J. Steele

Re: your using undead for specific purposes in a campaign, I meant no disrespect for the (un)dead with my dungeon crawl :)

The Angrak sounds more like a ghost to me than a lich– though that's really for mechanical reasons. I suppose a better definition might be that a lich results from a conscious effort and will on the part of a mage, in which case the Angrak would be a lich. I like the idea that they're judged at the time of their death, meaning that the Angrak's have good reason to be simply amoral. This almost makes them more potentially scary than the downright evil liches, simply because they're perhaps a little harder to predict.

Re: "sanctioned" heroes, the term is a little bit troubling. On the one side, it sounds like you need a license from the State in order to perform risk acts of good. On the perhaps more disturbing flip side, it implies that those who *are* licensed may potentially be able to perform with impunity acts of violence that would be considered bad amongst anybody else. (Cf. the LAPD.) In a roleplaying game, I think the only reason it's more acceptable to have wandering parties of freelance troubleshooters in a fantasy world than a modern world is that it's more obviously fiction– the world is *fantasy* after all, and doesn't even have the vague semblance of a guise of being something of a model of the real world. (Perhaps more to the point, centralized governments with a really long reach are a lot harder at TL3 than TL7.)

Tom Cron

Re: Eisenhower, you refer to the conquered peoples of this unhappy timeline. One potential outcome of what you mention is that their 2010 is very much like our 1960. I guess what is unspoken is that while they didn't conquer America, the imperial Germans did in fact conquer the rest of Europe using their nukes. Does America have nukes in this timeline?

Michael David Jr.

The QUIET agency sounds like fun, a good blending of the genres you mention. Reading it, I can't help but wonder if Mr. Smith is like the Jefferson Carter we've read so much about on *Pyramid*. :) 4-color supers is actually a genre that for reasons unfathomable to me doesn't interest me much, but your background sounds interesting. In particular, I think that the weirdness/conspiracy aspect of it makes it sound more fun to me than the typical 4-color world might. (I should say that I've never read many comic books, and so am probably ignorant of what a typical supers game might really entail.)

Scott Paul Maykrantz

I'd be interested to see how you duplicated the format of the *Space Atlas* books. As you can see from the Mars planetary record sheet in this issue, I've done this too. I started with a spherical wrap of Mars downloaded from the web (there are several sites which have these things; they're great for 3D rendering programs). I mapped that into the icosahedron, which actually was pretty easy. I was then dumb and drew all the hexagons in my DTP program. (Well, I drew a few, and then started copying.) That took forever. The time might have better been spent writing a program to generate the hexagons in Postscript. On the other hand, I can always just cut and paste the hexagons now from the one time I've actually done it.

I also look forward to your planets because you're amazingly creative and more planets are fun to have! (It's probably clear from my collection of submissions to AotA that Space is one of my favorite genres.)

The collection of Vampire advantages is good. As I found when looking for just the right shapeshifting advantage for my AD&D dragon conversion, advantages and disadvantages useful for any given project are scattered throughout *Compendium I...* and are frequently partially overlapping, contradictory, or otherwise obviously collected from different worldbooks that were written separately. When it comes to wanting to build an individual creature, it's a fair amount of work to go through and find all the bits that might be relevant. You've done that for us for Vampires! The flowchart/steps for building vampires looks particularly useful.

"Flying Fists of Fury" looks like a good martial arts system which is rules light, but yet is able to retain some flavor, and enough tactical choices to make it fun. I am reminded of some of the microgame wargames (e.g. "Warpwar" from Metagaming, a conceptually simple game that yet gave has a similar level of tactical and outguessing choices to your system here).

I hope you finish the TL7 car extraction from *Vehicles*. That would be useful for a lot of things.

Andrew Dawson

Twelve hour days on software manuals doesn't sound all that exciting.

I like the blood zombies; I may well use them at some point in a TL3 fantasy game. They fit in very well with your dreamland landscape in *Strange Days*.

Fugue sounds like an interesting psionic power. I worry that it might be a bit underpriced, being able to create one duplicate for each level. The fatigue cost does balance it, however. It might be interesting if on a critical failure of the use of the Fuguing skill, a duplicate hostile to the psionic appeared. This would also be a psionic skill that would be interesting in the case when it could only be used unconsciously in times of great stress, and indeed when the character was unaware that he had it.

Craig Roth

I'm glad you made the issue, even if it only was for the comments! Always good to keep the comments close to up to date....

Brett Slocum

Read your three columns of skills, spells, and equipment, I couldn't help but wonder if there's a better way to present all of this. This is not a criticism of you, of course! I did exactly the same thing with (at least) Captain Jameson in AotA #38, and it's the standard way of doing it in GURPS books. It's fine for somebody with a relatively small skill list. But, when there're a lot of them, it's really hard to decide at a glance whether or not there's an appropriate skill, what skills a character might use, and which skills are best to consider in any given circumstance.

One thing we could probably do is organize skills by type (Combat, Scientific, Language, Social, etc.), rather than alphabetically. Similarly, for spells, by college. We'll still be faced with the problem that lists rendered in prose-like paragraphs are hard to parse. Robert Gilson's character sheets are much easier to parse, but of course they take up a lot more space for the same amount of information. It seems that there's no good solution.

Caron was great. As I was reading the first half of his history, I was thinking that he might make either a good "grey patron" or "grey villain". That is, either a patron you're not sure you trust and you really want to be working for, or a villain who turns out not to be the evil sort you expected him to be all along. Of course, given his choice of profession, and particular the long lost scary deity he got associated with, it's not surprising that he ended up going more or less whole hog down the villain path. It might still be an interesting character twist to give him enough of a conscience that he suffers occasional bouts of guilt and self-loathing. Indeed, his "conquer the world" quirk (and perhaps even his Megalomania) may have been imposed on him by Siith-Haz, if one

were trying to interpret him as other than a villain.

Caron might make a good submission to *GURPS Villains*; did you send him in?

Robert N. Gilson Jr.

Good writeup of Space 1999. I fear I can't comment much on it, because I haven't seen that show since I lived in Connecticut, and I haven't lived in Connecticut for some 22 years now. It's amusing to see that even in the mid-late 1970' s, people were still hugely optimistic about how far the USA space program was going to go in the next 20-30 years. (A fair amount of science fiction written in the late 60' s took the moon landings, propgated them forward, and had a base on Mars well before the year 2000.)