RPG REVIEW

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Pirates and Swashbucklers Double Issue

Mark Pettigrew Interview ... Pirates of Middle Earth ... Many Pirate RPG Reviews ... Belly of the Beast Adventure ... The Ivory Tower Adventure ... Pirates for Multiple Systems... Pirate Encounters for Gulliver's Trading Company ... Nautical Races for D&D 5th Ed ... Shab i Hiri Roach ... City of Freiburg ... The Pirates Band of Misfits and Noah Movie Reviews

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ADMINISTRIVIA

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to a double issue of pirates and swashbuckling adventures for RPG Review, an unexpected double issue which started short, had some large articles provided and then followed up with another two months or so struggling to get the page count up. The horrible result is that this big issue is epically late, leaving less than a month for the deadline for the next issue. This is what happens when one tries to be old fashioned in the production style and provide a consistent page count. Gaming 'bloggers can just put the material up and to hell with the word count! Which is, of course, *a very tempting* path to take. As it is, this is a shorter issue than usual for a double – it is supposed to be a massive 128 pages [EDIT No, we made it!]. Well we made the tonne as they say in the old language, but we've still fallen a little short.

But on topic there is a great deal that fascinates contemporary people about the "age of piracy and swashbuckling". In part it is the escapism and danger of the high seas, free (more or less) from the constraints of civilisation. In part it is the sense of adventure and danger, not to mention a fair bit of fantastic superstition that characterised the times.

Doubtless there are many others who are excited by the cinematic portrayal of the fashions of the time, or almost certainly the swordplay. Whether it the classic pirate or musketeer films of the past to contemporary viewing such as

the successful Pirates of the Caribbean series, the combination of adventure, romance and flourish is something that excites and involves.

This is all a very far cry from real piracy which, for the purposes of consideration, also includes privateers. It is reasonable to assume that ever since since water-borne vessels were used for commerce that there were those who took to the sea (or even river and lake) to raid such vessels. The first historical records refer to the 'Sea Peoples', a nebulous term for raiders in the east Mediterranean, who were first mentioned in Egyptian records dating back to 1275 BCE. Indeed there were a multitude of sea-borne raiders who were given this collective name by more contemporary writers, of which the Lukka of south-western Anatolia and the Sherden, of whose origins are still under fascinating dispute.

In the Hellenic age, it seems that everyone – Greeks, Romans, Illyrians Tyrrhenians, Phoenicians, Goths - all engaged in piracy. Indeed, piracy was so common that major cities were built slightly inland to provide protection against coastal raiders (who depended on speed rather than numbers) with paired harbour-side fortifications (e.g., Rome and Ostia, Athens and Piraeus). Piracy was so profitable that by the 1st century BCE that small pirate states were being established along the Anatolian coast, with Julius Caesar captured and held prisoner for a time. Even on the other side of the Roman Empire, hundreds of years later, as it well known St Patrick was captured by Irish pirates – but that's certainly another story in its own right.

Into the medieval period, the Vikings were the most well-known piracy group, ranging from the well-known coastlines of northern Europe but less well-known even raiding the north African and Italian shoreline and, in the other direction, along the rivers of Eastern Europe into the Black Sea. During the same time, Moorish pirates established themselves along the coastline of southern France and the Baleric Islands, even sacking Rome and controlling the passes in the Alps - rather inland of them. Yes, there were conflicts between Moorish pirates and Viking pirates. On the other side of Rome, the Narentines established themselves on the Illyrian coast and engaged in significant piracy in the Adriatic Sea, even invading southern Italy for a time but mostly causing great suffering among the Venetians.

The other side of the world has had its share of piracy as well, with the Yellow Sea between China and Korea being particularly subject to such preditations in the ninth century, eventually leading to an enormous garrison being established known as the Cheonghae Garrison. Some time later, the Wokou established themselves in Japan and outlying islands and for the next three hundred years (yes, that's right) would raid the coast of China. There is enormous dispute of the ethnicity of these pirates inevitably tied to national pride. Contemporary accounts suggest that they were multi-ethnic, rather like early modern pirates of the west. Further south it is a surprise to nobody that piracy in the Indian ocean and Malay archipelago has been common with the Buginese sailors of South Sulawesi and the Moro pirates of the southern Philippines being particularly notable. Among the Chinese Zheng Yi Sao formed a pirate coalition in the early 19th century that consisted of over ten thousand individuals, a serious challenge to the Qing navy.

The most famous pirate period - and the one where almost all the film and gaming periods are set - is the "golden age" from around 1600 to 1750. The Barbary corsairs must receive first mention here for being active from the crusader period onwards, launching their attacks on shipping in the western Mediterranean Sea, raiding coastal regions of Italy and Spain in particular and even reaching as far ast Iceland. It is estimated that over a million Europeans were captured by Barbary corsairs and sold as slaves 16th and 19th centuries. Among the European powers it wasn't a very far step from official imperialism to unofficial piracy, many finding their home in places as far away as Madgascar, site of the "probably fictional" pirate utopia "Libertatia" which receives an interesting coverage by William S. Burroughs' novel "Cities of the Red Night".

But it is the Caribbean where the historical pirates are most famous. As France, England, and the United Provinces sought to acquire land and possessions there was a great deal of opportunity for blatant robbery even under the guide of official legitimacy from one power to another. Indeed it was this offical recruitment that brought the period of piracy to its peak, especially through recruitment by the English and French of those based at Port Royal. As the Spanish power declined and Franch and England returned to conflict, piracy shifted from the Caribbean to the Indian ocean and further afield into the Atlantic, especially the "triangular trade" of Europe (export manufactured good, import raw materials),

Africa (import manufactured goods, export slaves) and the Caribbean and American coast (import slaves, export raw materials).

In contemporary times there is still impressive levels of piracy, with estimated worldwide losses of US\$16 billion per year especially in the Red Sea, off the Somali coast, and in the South China Sea. As merchant navies have a convention against carrying heavy weapons in peacetime, there is an increasing practise of using private security guards with light arms as a means to deter the typical small pirate vessels. One of the more interesting challenges relates to international law; an appeal to universal jurisdiction is made, so that governments may intervene outside their territory on the basis that piracy is a threat to all shipping. It is something that would also find its way into the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Regardless of whether historical or fictional, here we have a great collection of the pirate and swashbuckler themed RPG articles which, to be honest, has never been a particularly huge part of the roleplaying world but sufficiently popular to generate a couple of very notable games, even from the earliest of days (e.g., En Garde!) to some rather impressive sellers (7th Sea). We start however with an interview with Mark Pettigrew who designed a game in the early 80s called Flashing Blades', a game sufficiently impressive that it still retains an active fan and playing base. One cannot help but think when reading Mark's words how he is still a little surprised and humbled by the continuing popularity of his effort.

Following the gaming reviews, Karl Brown offers a series of pirate and swashbuckling styled characters for a variety of game systems and with some notable quirks. Further on in the issue is a set of pirate encounters by the same author for Gulliver's Trading Company and Nautical Races for D&D 5th edition.

This is a scenario heavy issue as well; Nicholas Moll kicks off with a spacefaring pirate adventure, 'Belly of the Beast' and Michael Cole follows wih a discussion of pirates in Middle-Earth along with a scenario for that setting. Yours truly also contributes with a pirate variant of Shab-i-Hiri Roach, a RuneQuest Pirates adventure where all is not quite what it seems, and a review and elaboration of 7th Sea's Freiburg. For those who prefer a dash too much realism and grit, "Jake the Peg" (possible a nom-du-plume) offers Life As Pyrate in an entertaining manner.

From our regular contributor Andrew Moshos offers trilogy of movie reviews, the Pirates Band of Misfits, Noah, and Jupiter Ascending. At least two count as nautical; not sure whether Jupiter Asceding counts for *anything*. Mingshi's impressively large gossip column, I mean industry news, has managed to introduce a number of appropriate examples for the setting and style for this issue along with her usual compilation of what's new in the hobby. Finally, as a example of how all articles in each issue are not directly related to the chosen subject matter, Brendan Davies offers some designer's notes for Gamandria, especially with regard to Thai influences and, in a genre-fiction review, Nick Langdon provides his thoughts on "The Wheel of Time".

There is another matter which this editorial must address and alas, it is the less pleasant side of the hobby which has really only touched the more narrow focus that one finds with tabletop RPGs, but has affected the industry on a larger scale. I am talking, of course, of a general toxicity that has affected the community under the guise of "Gamergate" and more recently the kerfuffle over the Hugo Awards.

As an aside, I can't stand the tendency for any sort of real or imagined conspiracy or scandal to utilise the -gate suffix. Sure, it made sense with Watergate, because that was the name of the hotel where the events happened. The others (and there are lots: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List of scandals with %22-gate%22 suffix) are nonsense and should die in a fire. Mind you, I do chuckle a little at the irony of the gamergate which, in entomology, represents reproductively viable female worker ants in colonies which do not have a queen. If this was intentional from those who coined the term, kudos to them. If not, you've just added to a long list of a ignorant cultural phenomenon.

But back to the subject at hand, if you are unaware of these issues, some congratulations are due. You've managed to avoid the better part of two years of an awful culture war, primarily carried out over the Internet but with some very

serious real-world implications. The summary version of "Gamergate" is as follows: Game developer Zoe Quinn released *Depression Quest*, a text-based interactive fiction game which resulted in several positive reviews. A number of gamers felt that the game was receiving undue attention with criticism often centred on the fact it was (a) text-based and (b) about 'boring' subject, rather than killing bug-eyed aliens or orcs. However what really kicked the debate off was a near-ten thousand word post from a former partner of Zoe's accused her of having a relationship with a gaming journalist with the implication that this relationship led to favourable reviews.

This wasn't actually true of course; the journalist never reviewed Quinn's game and the only connection was a news article written before their relationship. Still, it didn't stop the beginning of what can only be defined as a misogynistic harassment campaign, which included rape and death threats. These were also used against Anita Sarkeesian, a feminist cultural critic of the gaming industry, which included Utah State University having to cancel a speaking event due to mass shooting threat. Game developer Brianna Wu was also subject to rape and death threats. From the other side of the story, there have been similar accusations, and even a bomb threat against supporters of Gamergate. And so it goes on: one can review the entire sordid affair at their leisure.

With regard to the Hugo Awards there is certainly a continuation. Two groups, calling themselves "Sad Puppies" or "Rapid Puppies" respectively indicating their own orientation on the issue, have reacted against what they consider an over-emphasis in the Hugos in giving awards to authors from groups that have been traditionally marginalised science fiction. Rather than seeing this diversification as progress, they've interpreted it as a whittling away at their cultural identity. The chief spokesperson of the Rapid Puppies, Theodore Beale (aka Vox Day) has bluntly stated: "I consider women's rights to be a disease that should be eradicated". Certainly this position would be rejected by the "Sad Puppies", but a general opposition to a perceived "pro-minority group bias" exists in both camps. Because the Hugos are a "people's award" a campaign has been orchestrated to purchase supporting members and vote for a slate of authors for the various awards. All very much in accordance to the rules, albeit a gaming of the system.

Among the Gamergate advocates and Hugo Puppies there are some people who claim a degree of innocence. Their interest, we are told, is that they want high quality games and publications. They are concerned that reviews, awards, etc have become dominated by "social justice warriors" (as Dave Cake quipped, "I prefer to think of myself as a 'Social Justice Wizard'), with a left-wing political agenda, and corrupt processes. They just want play games and write fiction in a free and creative spirit, without having to worry about what group they might offend by their work. They don't want to be jumped on by others with the accusation that their publications, their games, and so forth, are racist, sexist, etc, especially when they are contextually appropriate. It is unfortunate, they will admit, that misogynistic and racist trolls have been attracted to the Gamergate and Puppy cause, and they want to distance themselves from this majority. Is there not some legitimacy to their complaints?

In a nutshell, not as much as is made out. The chief argument that somehow the gaming industry press is an elite left-wing clique that systemically excludes good games and publications that are contrary to their worldview is seriously lacking in evidence and more to the point, it is in a hobby area that is hardly monopolistic by any stretch of the imagination. It's a hugely competitive area, especially given the media involved which is pretty much web-based publications and software. There are some real and serious examples of revealed conflicts of interest; video game producer 3DO threatened to reduce their advertising expenditure in GamePro following a negative review in 2001. In 2007 an employee of Gamespot was sacked after giving a negative review to a game from a company that advertised heavily on the website. From a 2014 survey by Mike Rose in Gamasutra, approximately a quarter of high profile YouTube gaming channels receive pay from the game publishers or developers for their coverage.

Now even if this is but the tip of the iceberg, it's not too much of an iceberg especially when compared to other publications (hello music industry?). Notice that this is a fifteen year range of confirmed cases. But disclosure is incredibly important. Every game reviewer on the planet should make explicit what ties, if any, they have with particular publications down to the fact that they've received the product for free (kudos are given to rpg.net for insisting on this in their reviews). Those which do not do this simply are not worth the time of the day and, due to a competitive industry, can be avoided. More importantly are game producers; those which threaten solely on the basis of

negative reviews need to be called out and identified, because what they are doing is turning what should be genuine critical reviews into nothing more than free advertising. Sadly, this happens in the TRPG industry as well. I once asked someone for a review in this publication and this was their response:

"As well, I am not sure getting back into full-on reviews is wise for me.... Picking products and presenting them positively doesn't really risk much in the way of backlash, professionally; actual reviews, however, gets me into some sticky weeds."

I felt sorry for the person in question, because they indicated that they would be interested in provide "actual reviews" but they were worried by the backlash they might receive from such content. As a result, they provide a low-risk "positive" portrayal of select products. This is a microcosm example of a society without criticism, which means, one which cannot evolve.

Sure, there's always room for criticism and improvement, but certainly that is exactly what the gamer and science fiction community has done over the past decades. You want criticism and improvement to the industry? Fine, there's plenty of work that needs to be done, absolutely plenty. The process of cultural criticism improves the genre, rather than detracts from it. Certainly, such reflection does cause discomfort among many because they are forced to have a look as some of the problematic aspects of the escapist fantasies, and if there is any doubt about this Anna K's review of "corpse tits" (https://gomakemeasandwich.wordpress.com/tag/corpse-tits/) should be evidence enough. I know that there are *some* gamers and science fiction fans that would rather wish the entire world of cultural critics would simply go away and hadn't discovered them, but this is inevitable. They are *also* part of the community and have been since the very first days. Do anyone seriously think that you could engage in escapist literature and not have an exploration of social alternatives?



Our own hobby is far from excluded from all this. The following are examples of derogatory comments by one game designer in a gaming forum:

"Even I, for all my downright contempt of everything they stand for, will fuck a goth chick. To do anything less just wouldn't be wholesome. Oh, I'll mock the shit out of her right after, and wouldn't actually want to be in a relationship" and "One GM, one player. Isn't that really more than a little bit gay?"

This is an example of an attitude that is grossly disrespectful of young women of a particular fashion sense. It is this sort of exclusive objectification of others that constitutes sexism; it hearkens back to the days of "if I can have a +1 sword that talks, why can't I have a +3 female that doesn't?". The fact that the general slang for a sexual orientation is being used as a substitute for 'lame' demeans people of that orientation is oblivious to author. If they were genuinely concerned about sexism and homophobia, they would at least make the effort to admit that these prior statements were

wrong, hurtful to others, and make an apology for them. That would be a *big* thing to do and would garner a great deal of respect. Any damn fool can be a foul-mouthed keyboard warrior. What takes real strength of character is to be able to reflect on one's own actions and words, consider how they may have been inappropriate, acknowledge it directly, and step up and say that one was wrong, but they've learned from the experience.

There is, of course, some edgy material which can be confronting, even damaging, if not presented in a considered manner. Cthuthultech includes three adventures which have unavoidable rape scenes, two of them against player-characters. Yes, this is a game about cosmic horrors and amoral cultists derived from a mythos written by a person whose racism is notorious. One may expect that sexual violence could be part of the storyline. One can make a literary argument, as James Desborough has done (with the sensitively entitled "In Defense of Rape" blog post), that as a plot device, as a motivating characteristic, as a thematic element, and that absolutely nothing should be off limits in fiction. But I don't see too many voices being raised against such literary devices. The critical question is instead, "is your work promoting and encouraging such activity? Are you being gratuitous to the point of perverse titillation with its inclusion?". Really Cthulhutech, did you think you might have gone a little too far when you wrote "only around 2% of the published material even includes the word rape" as a defense for the content?

As another example, consider the Babylon5 Earth Alliance Factbook. Fine, in the television character nationalities were stereotyped. Ivanova was a sombre pessimist, "that's a very Russian attitude", she said. Michael Garibaldi was often seen with Italian food. But these are harmless stereotypes which, whilst not true (there are some optimistic Russians and some Italians who prefer burgers and fries over cannelloni) are hardly offensive or denigrating. Many roleplayers put on foreign accents (usually badly) and ham well known harmless tropes associated with a culture. The sourcebook however, nationality after nationality, proposed *harmful* stereotypes; the Irish love fighting and drinking, the Scots are belligerent and barbaric, the Germans are described as "one of the most militaristic countries to ever march troops across a border", the people of Greece and the Balkans are "greedy and sanctimonious, seeking wealth in all its forms but rarely hanging onto it long once they achieve it." As for the French.. well, let's just cite the entry:

"They tend to see their way as the best and everyone else's way as unimportant or just plain wrong. They rarely admit they are mistaken about anything, and even when faced with undeniable proof that they made an error, their response is to shrug it off and change the subject."

The irony is palpable.

Further examples? How about 'Belle and Blade' a vendor at GenCon which provides various DVDs in the war genre. Somewhat more disconcerting is how they easily make light of Nazism, with t-shirts emblazoned with each of the SS

Anal Circumference Potential

Should any anus be stretched beyond the limit as determined by the table below, which differs from anus to anus, the orifice will rip to accommodate the incoming object. First, consider all relevant modifiers, then roll 1d100 and proceed to the following tables:

- 90
- 80
- 25
+ 10
+ 5
+ 5
+ 5
+ 11 to + 30 (1d20 + 10)
+ 1 to + 20 (1d20 if unsure)

Roll	Equivalent from Same Species	Anakim, Bugbear, and Troll (Inches Circumference)	Dwarf, Elf, Human, and Kobold (Inches Circumference)	Ogre (Inches Circumference)
<11	two fingers	5-6"	3-4"	6-7"
11-20	three fingers	6-7"	4-5"	7-9"
21-60	normal manhood	7-9"	5-6"	9-12"
61-90	thick manhood	9-12"	6-8"	12-15"
91-98	woman's fist	12-15"	8-10"	15-20"
>98	man's fist	15-20"	10-15"	21-30"

Division insignia, or entitled "Afrika Korps World Tour" and so forth. In 2013 however the Nazi-love joined up with rape "humour"; underwear emblazoned with the slogan "I Could Use A Little Sexual Harassment".

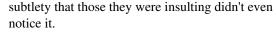
Or F.A.T.A.L. There, I named it.

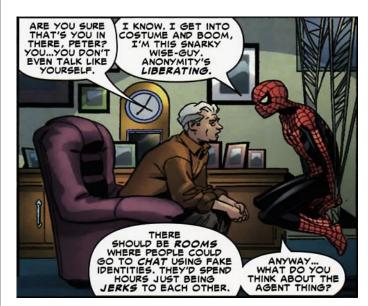
It is not some left-wing conspiracy to raise complaints against such sentiments; it is not an argument for or against a conservative or liberal approach to institutional reform, or a capitalistic or socialistic political economy. It is about being a decent human being who grants all people at a modicum of inherent respect

and dignity regardless of the ethnicity, nationality, religion, or political viewpoints. It is, a nutshell, a "no asshole" rule.

Least this seem flippant, there is a very good book by Stanford professor Robert I. Sutton with exactly that title (and the informative subtitle: "Building a Civilized Workplace and Surviving One That Isn't"). The basic argument of this book is that "asshole behaviour" in the workforce damages productivity. It is really a surprise to discover where workplaces where insults, threats, flames, etc are common are unpleasant places to be? But it's worse that just productivity; it increases absenteeism, lowers commitment, it costs time to manage the situation (not to mention potential settlement fees), and, to the victims, it leads to heightened rates of stress and depression.

Now whilst Sutton concentrates on workplace environments, it is my suspicion that the same sort of metrics apply in all communities. Assholes destroy communities; the destroy them by the exclusiveness, the destroy them by demeaning others, the destroy them by their lack of civility, their denigrating stereotypes, and their basic trolling. Most people when encountering such behaviour, as Sutton points out in workplaces, simply opt to quietly leave. Those who cannot, or are stubborn enough to stay have to be extremely careful. The studies that exist suggest that asshole behaviour is "contagious", insofar one such people take control of a workplace in order to participate effectively, others must lower themselves to the same level. Certainly one can think of online and real communities that have suffered the same fate. The inevitable trajectory is towards a group of thoughtless poo-flingers where the only competence of note is the ability to cut down another person without consideration of their actual argument. It isn't even up to the level of the old-hands on the usenet group alt.flame, who used to admire those who could respond to others in a critical manner but with such





To put simply, communities that actively encourage constructive debate, which do their utmost to be helpful and friendly, especially to newcomers, will be those that prosper. For this reason I do not mind those online communities that regulate the postings to this effect. This does not mean an avoidance of a "full and frank" discussions over particular topics, or indeed, any topic. But it does mean at least retaining a modicum of civility with one's interlocutor. So perhaps, dear roleplayers, we could conduct this experiment? Do you think it might help the hobby if we're a welcoming community?

Well, that depends. That is, it depends on which *particular* community one is talking about. If it is not already quite apparent, cultural critics and the social justice wizards are not advocating legal

censorship in most cases. There may be some exceptions that already exist (e.g., advocacy to commit a crime, false statements of fact, "fighting words" and threats, defamation etc) or should exist (e.g., group defamation). To put it bluntly there is no use crying "free speech" if you've been expelled from a forum's "no asshole" rule or your article has been refused publication, when there are plenty of opportunities for one to be published in other areas or start one's own forum where other like-minded individuals can meet. Or you could just stop being an asshole. Is it *really* that difficult to make your point in a civil manner?

I think the point, at least in the context of this publication, has been made. Game on. Don't feed the trolls. But do call them out - elsewhere.

Lev Lafayette (<u>lev@rpgreview.net</u>)

HOT GOSSIP: INDUSTRY NEWS

by Wu Mingshi

Hosei bo Mr. Lev

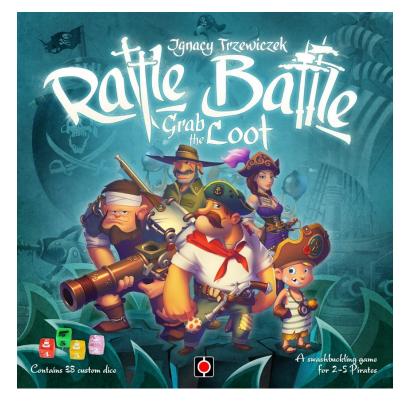
Double the pirate, lah? But no stop you being late already again. Poor Mingshi has to change article again again to make news not like stale bread.

But special gift for you, I have pirate news! Not much roleplay, but plenty much other game. Portal Games make team with Ignacy Trzewiczek to make pirate dice game, "Rattle, Battle, Grab the Loot", should be ready for GenCon. Where the dice land in the box also determine outcome. Strange game! Also pirate game, CoolMiniOrNot has combat miniature game "Rum & Bones" with many expansion sets. This game funded through Kickstarter last year with almost \$750K in pledges! Also pirate game, IDW Games release "Pirates of the 7 Seas" in August. In this game the box lid is the board and the dice are ships!

You want more pirate game? I give you pirate, Space pirate! Asmodee release the space pirate card game "Metal Adventures" in June, after you finish issue orredy, lah? Game based on Arnuad Cuidet's RPG universe, players are space pirates in war between Empire of Sol and the Galactic Empire. Pew! Pew!

Star Wars a bit like pirate game, ah? Well Fantasy Flight Games announce new supplements "Star Wars: Force and Destiny Core Rulebook" out soon, 448 pages, wa lao! Game books get very big, lah! Maybe too big to fit in my apartment, bookcase fall on Minshi head and then no more game for me?

Also maybe pirate too, Paizo Publishing announce "Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Races" for release, all about the races of the Inner Sea region of Golarion, include new character options including racial details and heritages, and new magic items, weapons and armor. Also, probably



not pirate, Paizo Publishing launch new organized play for hobby game stores through Pathfinder Society, lots of adventures all tied to new Pathfinder books, only available to retail stores.

Paizo have distribution deal with French company Gob In Tux Publishing and will release science fiction game Polaris where people live under the sea. This one does have pirate and sea monster! Yes, Mingshi announce new pirate RPG, you read here first, ah? Other Polaris RPG books include a Game Master's Screen, Bestiary, Technology Guide, Hegemony, Pirates (see!), Surface, Coral Republic, Polar Alliance, Mediterranean Union, Amazonia, and Secrets.

Next news not so good; two years ago a documentary planned for Dungeons and Dragons inventors, Gary Gygax and

Dave Arneson, and the legal war that follow. Now legal battle exist over documentary. Is this irony? Or curse?! Anthony Savini was director of film, Andrew Pascal producer, and James Sprattley, camera man. Big creative differences mean that Savini keep direction of film and others half owner. But then Savini with new partner, Cecily Tyler, discover that his former partners were making their own film! So they sue, saying new movie undermine original film. So drama!

Better news, on little movie in square box with TableTop spinoff RPG show: "Titansgrave: The Ashes of Valkana", use Green Ronin's forthcoming Fantasy AGE system in Wheaton's setting. The Green Ronin is very busy, because plan also new books for "Dragon Age", "A Song of Ice and Fire Roleplaying", "Mutants & Masterminds", and another "Freeport" setting book (see, more pirate, ah?)

All Dragon Age material all gather to for new Dragon Age Core Rulebook, with 400 pages, and "Freeport: The City of Adventure" for Pathfinder with 544 pages! Also game system book based call "Adventure Game Engine" also be release from Dragon Age RPG. Also my ninja among the Ronin say that 15th anniversarry edition of first RPG "Ork!" come out soon too, but maybe not 1000 page, I think my ninja being all cartoon.

BOOM! Studios announce second edition of the award-winning "Mouse Guard Roleplaying Game" by David Peterson and Luke Crane release, so much squeaks of happiness, include hardcover book and a box set edition. Last game in 2009 win Origins Award for Best Roleplaying Game. Will new mouse roar too?

Monte Cook Games have new roleplaying game for children, age 5 and up. "No Thank You, Evil!" funded through Kickstatrer and will be release in 2016. It use simple version of Cypher System like "Numenara" but can more complex as children grow up and up, and older children can take over as gamemaster! Just like old D&D, lah, but even younger still. Also, game especially designed for children who learn not so good.

This game follow Eden Studies release "Adventure Maximus!" for same age group, maybe a bit older. "Adventure Maximus!" set in the post-apocalyptic fantasy world of Ex-Machina. So "Gamma World" for children? Mana eh sai! Where is Patricia Pulling now?



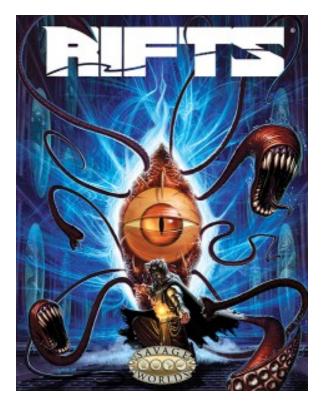
Our friends at Cubicle 7 (near Cubicle 6 and 8) have new game and supplement release. For "Doctor Who: Adventures in Time and Space", The Eight Doctor Sourcebook. Travelling stun in TARDIS, Mingshi overhear that some material from Paul McGann audio drama stories not included because of license, lagi jialat. For "The One Ring" new supplement with six adventure in region of Eriador, all around Rivendell. Also, new RPG call "Keltia", core rulebook full-colour 256 pages all about King Arthur but more Welsh stories so more dark ages, less knights and castles. Also, Cubicle 7 doing new Call of Cthulhu boxed set. Cthulhu in a box! Nyarlathotep in a mask! Shoggoth in the dish washer, I'd better do something about that, lah.

The Evil Hat do a hat trick with three supplements for their very popular FATE system; "Save Game", "The Aether Sea", and "Romance in the Air". "Save Game" is adventure set in an 8-bit computer game world, a little bit before Mingshi time, but I know what it is like, hooray DOS-box! "The Aether Sea" is just that, a setting where there is only

an aether sea. Sound strange setting. Finaly, "Romance in the Air" is romantic steampunk world with political intrigue and lots of airships.

Pinnacle Entertainment now have license to use Rift's setting for "Savage Worlds". Mingshi think this is better, corright? If it work proper then all the cartoon things from Rifts can be in new system that works. Robots with lasers versus dinosaurs versus wizards! All in the one place! Most blur at Rifts because of bad system, most people laugh at

setting. So good system and cartoon setting and everyone happy, lah.



Mingshi announce for you nominations for Origins 2015. For 'Best Role Playing Game' there is "Atomic Robo" from Evil Hat, "Dungeons & Dragons Players Handbook" from Wizards of the Coast (but that not entire game? Should go in best supplement? Mingshi confused), "Firefly Role-playing Game" by Margaret Weiss Productions, "ICONS: Superpowered Roleplaying" by Green Ronin and "The Strange" from Monte Cook Games. For 'Best Role Playing Supplement' there is "Dungeons & Dragons Monster Manual" (see, Mingshi right and very very confuse), "Emerald City: Mutants & Masterminds", "Hobbit Tales: From The Green Dragon Inn" and "The One Ring: Darkening of Mirkwood" from Cubicle 7, "Mummy The Curse: Book of the Deceived" from Onyx Path and and "The Strange: Bestiary" from Monte Cook Games.

What big game this quartering? ICv2 say for end of 2014

- 1 "Dungeons & Dragons" Wizards of the Coast
- 2 "Pathfinder" Paizo Publishing
- 3 "Star Wars" Fantasy Flight Games
- 4 "Numenera" Monte Cook Games

5 "Fate Evil" Hat Games

Market grow 15% in 2014, six years of growth and now more than twice as big as 2008, when last time decline.

Cara Hebat untuk Terbang!

That's all from me this double quartering!

Mingshi! (mingshi@rpgreview.net)

MARK PETTIGREW INTERVIEW

with Mark Pettigrew

Hi Mark, welcome to RPG Review. Let us start with a common question, how did become involved in roleplaying games? What were the first games you played and what did you think of them? How much gaming, if any, do you do now?

I started role-playing when I was 12. I had a cousin who was crazy about those massive Avalon Hill war games. (He eventually refought every major battle of WWII in his basement.) He gave me the beautiful boxed set of M.A.R. Barker's Empire of the Petal Throne for my birthday, which was probably the nicest thing anyone ever gave me. I had never heard of role-playing, not even D&D. Barker's world of Tekumel amazed me. The idea of living an imaginary life in that lush, exotic world was mind-blowing.

EPT introduced me to the concept, but what really attracted me to role-playing was a set of close friends in High School. With the right group of people, table-top role-play feels like a very primal kind of storytelling. I can imagine neolithic geeks gathering around a campfire at night and telling similar stories. My friends and I tried a lot of games available in the early 80s—Chaosium's Call of Cthulhu and Worlds of Wonder were particular favorites—but it was more about the friendly dynamics of group than the game system. Many of the gamers I knew then remain close friends.

I haven't had time to return to role-playing since college, though I have kept up with a lot of the developments. I own around two dozen GURPS supplements, for instance, though I've never played the game. I think Evil Hat's FATE system is really elegant and clever.

Lately, I've been increasingly interested in table-top role-playing as a form of collective narrative and oral performance. I suspect that most role-players are conscious of this on some level, that they're creating stories that resemble written fiction, drama, cinema, traditional folk-tales, and so on, but that there is also something unique about role-playing. It is a genre or medium of its own, with its own tropes and conventions. I have a background in literary study, and I've considered bringing some of that style of inquiry to role-playing. That's just a fuzzy idea for the time being.

According to legend, you were but sixteen when you were writing the rules for Flashing Blades - and yet you generated a game which still has a loyal following and whose design and density received favourable reviews, despite being published in 1984. What were you inspirations behind the ruleset for Flashing Blades? What did you get right and if you were starting again from scratch, what would you do differently?

I was 16 when I wrote it. I was a fencer, I loved Dumas and Sabatini and swashbuckling films, and I was an avid role-player, so I guess all those interests just came together in Flashing Blades.

As far as the rules went, I swiped every good idea I had seen in other games. A big influence was GDW's *En Garde!*, which is a beautifully designed gamemasterless RPG. (I just made that word up, but it describes what makes *En Garde!* unique, both then and now.) My friends and I enjoyed En Garde!, but wanted to play out full-blown adventures in its setting. As far as I can remember, the only point on which I deviated from my models was the design of the combat

system, which had a bit of rock-paper-scissors thrown in to modify the standard d20 roll to hit. I wanted to add something that felt like fencing—guessing what the opponent's next attack would be.

What would I do differently now? I would work up a minimalist system with more color, more background, and more panache. These days, I admire FATE, which does a wonderful job of foregrounding narrative fun and keeps the rules to a minimum. And swashbuckling really lends itself to over-the-top storytelling.

Flashing Blades is primarily set in the 17th century of France, although also with the High Seas supplement for the New World and seafaring. What made you choose that setting and place? It does come across as a somewhat cinematic flavour, compared to the rather grim experiences of the Huguenot rebellions or The Thirty Years War.

I think the Early Modern Era in Europe is a fascinating historical period because it seems familiar at first (to Westerners, at any rate), but can be weirdly alien at times. It is also corresponds to the rise of the rapier and the culture of dueling among the elite. And France was at the center of everything in the 17th and 18th centuries. As I was working on Flashing Blades, I was reading biographies of Richelieu and Louis XIV and a book on early firearms, and the period just captivated me.

As for cinematic flavor, I suppose that before cinema and Hollywood comes Dumas' romantic vision (or revision) of French history, that leaves out the nasty bits and dwells on derring-do. The religious wars and persecutions, the horrific living conditions of the poor, witch hunts, poor sanitation, high infant mortality, low life expectancy, not to mention the slave trade, early genocidal campaigns in the Americas . . . Perhaps a highly politicized RPG might include those charming features of 17th-century Europe, but I doubt that it would be very popular. Or fun. I think that, like romantic fiction, historical role-playing leans towards escapism. Maybe that's the definition of the 'swashbuckling' genre: escapist romance, not historical realism.

FGU also released just prior to Flashing Blades was Privateers and Gentlemen by Jon Williams, set in the 18th century. Jon would go on to have some success as a cyberpunk science fiction author (Hardwired). Given some similarity of the two games and having the same publisher, did you have much correspondence with Jon?

I read *Privateers and Gentlemen* at some point, but I never knew or corresponded with Jon Williams. I'm glad to hear he went on to do further creative stuff. Fantasy Games Unlimited published a real grab-bag of games, very eclectic, with no unifying system or theme (compared to Chaosium or GDW or Steve Jackson or, well, all the others). The only person with whom I had contact was Scott Bizar, the founder and ringmaster of FGU, who was wonderfully encouraging and friendly. I'm still very grateful for all his mentoring.

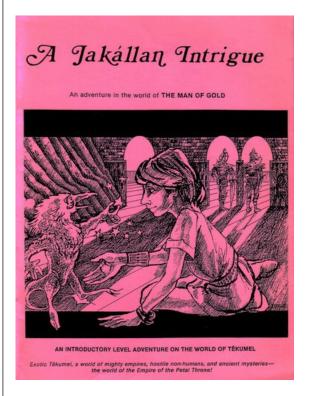
In addition to the core rules to Flashing Blades, which come with their own adventures, there is also four other scenarios and a seafaring and New World supplement, which came with its own mini-campaign. This is quite a prodigious output over a two-year period, which then comes to a halt. Three questions arise from this: Firstly, how did you get through that much playtesting and campaiging? Secondly, did you have a favourite scenario or setting that worked particularly well? Thirdly, why did you stop producing?

I guess I just had a lot of fun making all that stuff up for my friends. I doubt that a single scenario played out the way I wrote it. I wrote most of the supplements for Flashing Blades as I was finishing up High School and the year after that,

which I spent in The Netherlands with my father. I had a lot of time to read European history, visit museums, and write. I actually lived in Leiden, a stone's throw from Rembrandt's birthplace. The 17th century felt immediate there.

I stopped producing game materials for a very simple reason: I went to college and didn't have the time.

Also, at roughly the same time, you wrote two supplements for Empire of the Petal Throne, Jakallan Intrigue and The Tomb Complex of Nereshanbo. Can you tell about those products as well, and your experiences of writing them?



Professor Barker's world of Tekumel has to be the most compulsively detailed fantasy world ever created. He out-Tolkiened Tolkien. And unlike Middle Earth, Tekumel is not a reformulation of European folklore—it is as thoroughly strange and outlandish as you can imagine. When I contacted Prof. Barker, he sent me a mammoth early draft of his sourcebook for Swords & Glory (Tekumel's 2nd role-playing incarnation), an encyclopedic vision of his world. I read it over several times for the pure fun of it.

I sometimes had trouble convincing my friends to play EPT. Everyone loved the weird aliens and weird artifacts and weird, extremely deadly spells. But learning the world requires a hefty investment of time and energy. At any rate, Jakallan Intrigue was my favorite scenario to write and run, because I was trying to design a (primarily) social role-playing scenario, with lots of probing and gathering of information. That was new for me. I'm all for action-packed role-playing adventures, but social interaction with NPCs often gets short-changed (or reduced to a vague combat model: 'Make a charisma roll to see if you can just hypnotize this guy to do whatever you want').

In March last year you announced on the Flashing Blades email list that "... all of you are free to write, publish, etc. whatever you want for FB without worrying about copyright." Is there any interest in doing a second edition of Flashing Blades?

You'll have to ask the folks in the Yahoo group that one. I'm happy people enjoyed the game and continue to enjoy it.

You heard him... Now it's time to start writing!

PIRATE AND SWASHBUCKLER RPGs

by Lev Lafayette

En Garde! Review

Introduction and Physical Product

First published in 1975, with new editions in 1977, 1988, and 2005, En Garde!, certainly classifies as the earliest of the swashbuckling RPGs, and certainly the longest lasting. The 1977 edition, reviewed here, is pretty much the same as the 1975 edition but with errata from the first edition incorporated. It describes itself as "a semi-hisorical game/simulation representing many of the situations of an Errol Flynn movie set in the Seventeenth or Eighteenth Centures".

The game comes in a short 48 page A5 booklet with cardstock cover and saddle-stapled. It is typed in 9-point Century (as we are helpfully informed), a serif font, with justification. About a third of the book is tables. There is a good table of contents but at a mere 48 pages, it is unsurprising to discover that there is no index. One cannot complain about the art, because there isn't any - with the exception of an uncredited cover piece depicting the unfortunate results of a dueling bout among some rather foppish individuals.

It's a very dry and dense read and not very well structured by any stretch of the imagination, but with a surprising amount of humour built into the system dead-pan. The game is subtitled "Being in the Main a Game of the Life and Times of a Gentleman Adventurer and his Several Companions", there is rules for toadying with the introduction "Characters may gain status by being in the company of their better; these may likewise benefit by the cultivation of sycophants" & etc.



NO MATTER HOU LONG WE KNOW EACH OTHER, WHEN YOU ASK "WHAT ARE YOU THINKING,"

I WILL ALWAYS PAUSE BEFORE ANSWERING.



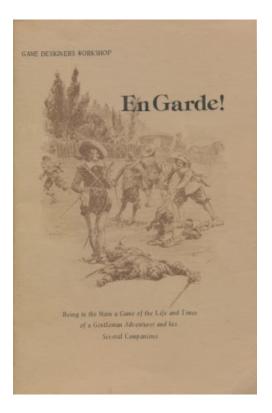
Duelling

The first part of the game is dedicated to duelling. Three character abilities (Strength, Expertise, and Constitution) are determined by a 3d6 roll. A fourth, Endurance, is the determined by multiplying Strength and Constitution (giving the somewhat unusual range of 9 to 324 with an average of 110). Duels are carried out by secretly recording a sequence of twelve turns, with each turn consisting of a single action. A group of actions constitutes a routine. For example a lunge routine consists of a rest, a lunge, and a rest.

When the turns are revealed, one may substitute an "optional routine" (parry, block), replacing the previously recorded routine. Cross-reference the attack with the defenders action, and multiply the value listed with the attacker's strength, and weapon type, subtracting from the defender's Endurance. A successful parry may result in weapon breakage. Characters with advantage in Expertise can force their defender's to take additional 'rest' maneuevers per turn. Following the wounds received, character may recover 50% in the first week, then their Constitution score per week thereafter.

Social Life

The second part of the book is entitled "The Character and His Environment", and despite being somewhat scattered in ordering, can be differentiated between the social life of characters and the military life. With regards to the former, chief among these is their birthright, randomly determined values for Class (Commoner, Gentleman, Noble), Sibling Rank, and Father's Position. The combination of these determines the starting Crowns for the charcters, their allowance, inheritance, and their starting social level.



Characters may engage in one social activity per week; there are (for game purposes) four weeks to a month, three months to a season, and four seasons to a year. A character's objective is to accumulate status points on a month by month basis, so they can raise their social level. However Status is expensive! Characters must pay Crowns equal to twice their Status per mont for support (clothes, servants etc), but could gain status points by additional expenditure (conspicious consumption). Joing a Club is a good way to gain status points, but carousing costs Crowns equal to the existing social level, and so forth. Having "some sort" of female companionship (whether by bawdy house or having a mistress) is also necessary to maintain status; "if desired, mistresses may also be given names". If the circumstances are right, characters may also declare a duel with other characters.

Military Life

Social status is also required to enter one of a number of military regiments and, if they have sufficient wealth, purchase an officer's commission. Every summer season members of the regiment may go on a campaign. On other seasons, if a character is sufficiently

brave and foolish, they may volunteer. Membership of a regiment and participation in conflicts can lead to a income, improved status, opportunities for advancement through heroic deeds, and the the chance to be killed. Such is the life of adventure.

Characters in the military have an additional ability, Military Ability, determined by a single die roll. The success of military conflicts is determined by this ability, but the colonel leading the campaign army may have their own MA modified if they have competent staff officers. There is both a battle outcome and a personal outcome, with the former based on the type of deployment that occurs and the latter determining whether the character is killed, mentioned in dispatches (which improves social status), received a promotion, and whether or not they acquired any plunder. There are notable modifications to the personal outcome table based on the action and regiment in question.

Some additional interesting options includes engaging in poltroonery (i.e., run away from a dangerous battle), an act of cowardice that may be noticed which can result in the character losing status points, or even being expelled from the regiment. Conversely, a character may decide to engage in reckless bravery instead, which whilst increasing the chance of being killed also improves the opportunities for being mentioned in dispatches, promotion, or plunder. Finally if the situation demands it a character may be assigned a brevet rank where a promotion occurs but the character still lacks sufficient status.

Conclusion and Evaluation

Deriving from the very early days of roleplaying games, the production qualities of En Garde! are not the greatest by any stretch of the imagination, whether one considers the actual physical product, the artistic input, the layout of the page and table of contents, organisation of the rules, and so forth. What it does gain a great deal of kudos for however is its uniqueness. In terms of the game system, well, it is primitive to say the least with a distinct lack of consistency in how particular cases are applied - but by the same token each rule itself is self-contained and believable in what it is trying to simulate. In terms of the game's setting, it covers a great range of activities albeit with a tight focus (the lack of female characters for example is obvious), and it does so typically with a minimum of fuss - the signal to content ration is high.

En Garde! also has an unusual feel insofar that it plans activities a month in advance as a schedule; the most obvious comparison that comes to mind is Superhero 2044, but En Garde! is a far superior application of such activity. Simply put, it plays well, very well in fact, and can easily accommodate large numbers of players. One can certainly see why it continued to be played onwards from 1975, an extraordinary success for what is a fairly marginal market.

Style: 1 + .3 (layout) + .1 (art) + .8 (coolness) + .4 (readability) + .3 (product) = 3.2 Substance: 1 + .6 (content) + .8 (text) + .8 (fun) + .6 (workmanship) + .4 (system) = 4.2

Pirates and Plunder Review

Introduction and Physical Product

Pirates and Plunder is a historical roleplaying game of the age of piracy set in the 17th century and specifically for the

Carribean, Central and South America. The boxed set comes with an attractive piece of cover art by Jerry Lee who also does the few examples of fine artwork in the first book; after that there is only functional sketches. There are three books with the helpful titles of The Basic Game (44 pages), The Advanced Game (52 pages), and The Adventures (40 pages). In addition there are eight pages of maps etc, a pad of character sheets (which includes both errors and a summary of character generation), and two small twenty-sided d10s. The three books have cardstock covers, saddle-stapled, and on some fairly good quality paper.

The text is provided in two-column justified throughout with a serif font with boxed sections, and with a clear markings of page numbers. However there are no chapters as such, just sections which are insufficiently distinct. The first book has a table of contents, and the second an index of the two books. Further, the text doesn't pay much attention to issues like tables that sometimes flow across two pages. The writing style is incredibly rambling and informal. The traditional opening of 'what is roleplaying' is more like an extensive essay of some ten pages. It contains some very good points, especially for the time, arguing that roleplaying is like a improvised script-writing of a mini-series, with players taking up roles a script-writers and actors, and with randomness providing some of the challenge and enjoyment of the experience. This is great content, even if the style and signal-to-bandwidth leaves a lot to be desired.



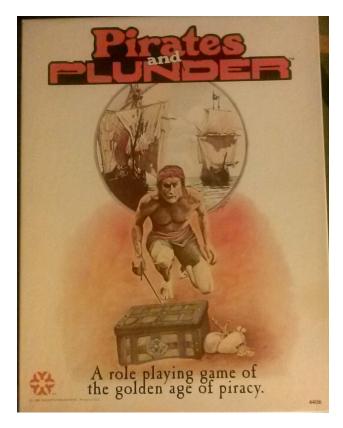
Basic Rules

Character generation and an introductory scenario are interwoven. After two pages of reading aloud an introduction to the players, they get the opportunity to design their captured pirate (better than being a dead one). As an interesting element for the time, players can have one "star" character (who gets bonuses in generating abilities) and supporting

characters (who also receive a smaller bonus). Generation consists of succession of 2d10 rolls, plus modifiers. Height and Weight are determined first with results cross-referenced to a table, with high weight providing a bonus to Strength, Stamina, and Drinking, as "you won't find many fat or poorly muscle-toned pirates". Handedness is random, followed by "Lucky Break/Adrenaline" which allows between 0 to 8 rerolls per adventure. In addition to these there are Strength, Agility (which determines Movement), Vision and Hearing (which determine Senses), and Wounds. The last ability is used to calculate wound points for a rather hefty selection of body areas; Head/Neck, Shoulder/Upper Arm, Elbow, Forearm, Hand, Hip/Thigh, Knee, Calf, Foot, Chest, Abdomen, Groin.

In the basic rules several abilities are not calculted - these include Encumbrance Point, Constitution, and Stamina. In addition to these there are skill-like abilities, albeit a fairly modest selection. This includes musket, pistol, swordmanship, fist/dagger training, all determined by a 2d10 roll. These are combined with various other characteristics (e.g., Vision, Agility, Strength etc) to calculate 'to hit' numbers. For example, the 'Fist/Dagger' to hit number is based on the training times three, plus Strength and Agility, with the sum divided by five. Nationality is also randomly determined with most characters coming from various parts of England, but with a not-insignificant number of French, Dutch, Irish, and Scots. The 'special' results are ignored in the basic rules. Intelligence is then determined, providing a bonus on Read and Write, and Speak and understand foreign languages. All characters are able to speak English, regardless of nationality, and they also have a number of randomly determined language points which they can spend to develop a level of competence in the main European languages (Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Franch), or - at half-value - more generic Indian languages (Yucatan, South American Indian, North Carribbean Indian, South Caribbean Indian). Finally, the character's religion (Catholic, Protestant, None, Pagan) is randomly determined which

chances cross-referenced with nationality, along with their 'Religious Fervor' ability.



silent kills).

Following this basic character generation the text returns to the opening scenario, again with a couple of pages of colourful description, then leading to an in-jail fist-fight among the prisoners, with GMs encouraged to narrative descriptions rather than mechanical. Description of the fist/dagger combat system occurs here, with first strike based on Agility, and with results determined from a combat results table, with notable modifiers from difference between the two character's "to hit" numbers in the respective ability. Damage is differentiated into wounds and stun points, with the latter recovered within an hour, along with half of the former. After the fist-fight, there is a narrative break, and then the characters have an opportunity to experience swordfighting. The system is pretty much the same as fist-fights, with the key difference is that swords do wounds, whereas fists do stun and wound damage. After another narrative interlude, the characters are freed from their prison with a conditional rescue, which involves much bloodshed on the part of PCs and several amorous encounters. This give the opportunity to introduce some new derived abilities into the game, specifically Stealth, which receives a hefty two pages of description (including contests against Senses, movement rate, and

Advanced Rules and Further Adventures

The Advanced Rules are meant to difference in the degree of player-character freedom offered, and with some modest hints to gamemasters on how to ad-lib situations that arise from these new freedoms. The content of the book however does not really reflect this. Whereas the first book alternated between narration, rules, and roleplay, the second book is almost entirely rules. Abilty checks are introduced (rather late in the piece I think) along with an "everything table" which correlates adjectival descriptions of a situation to mechanical modifiers. The "special nationalities" are introduced, Reading and Writing ability, Swimming, and some personality traits primarily for NPCs (Greed, Compassion, Morality, Courage), along with a Physical Appearance score. This is further elaboration on the Luck (reroll) and Adrenaline (1d10 add to ability) rules.

There is plenty of elaborations to the to the fighting rules to include parries and ripostes, clubbing weapons, and various brawling events. Armed versus unarmed combat rules are added, along with special rules for the use of the main gauche, boarding pikes and the like. Combat stances and maneuvers ("patterns") are added along targetting specific body locations. There is significant modification to missile weapons, including notable variation in damage, and spread rules for the blunderbuss. Thrown weapons, including grenades, are added as options. Grenades, which affect the target square and adjacent squares, may cause multiple wounds or none. Appropriately this is followed by armor effects, which is a modifier to attack rolls according to attack type - not to wound points. A notation system for different types of wounds in introduced (for scarring purposes!), along with the natural hazard of snakebites, which provides an opportunity to introduce the Constitution ability, and the recovery of wounds, especially with the advantage of a medical kit. An Encumbrance system is introduced with a carrying capacity of ten times Strength and per item values, which is roughly equal a half a pound in weight. For every 10 points over the capacity, a character suffers a -1 penalty to Strength, Agility, Swimming, and Stealth.

Several pages of a mass combat and advanced mass combat system are offered, with combat values derived as a multiple of the class of combatant, generating a strength value for the conflict, with some fairly hefty modifiers. Despite their relative basic inability, civilians double their ability when defending their homes, Indians are good at fighting in the jungle (pirates not so much) etc. Major characters can avoid the fate of randomly allocated victims in such an environment by making use of the Luck.

The Advanced rules conclude with a hodge-podge of various rules, such as the use of horses, wagons, and a rather amusing discussion of "quiet interludes in Port Royal" which has an extensive treatment of the payments and modifiers to the market price when sailors engage professional ladies for "polite social conversation over tea and crumpets", which is one of the more unusual euphemisms. There are also extensive rules for drinking contests, gambling, target shooting, arm wrestling, and slap fights. The drinking contests do not include the standard rations of a canteen of rum or equivalent per day, without which a sailor will have a negative to their 'Emotional Stability' ability. Just in case you're not learning from all this, the chapter finishes with the rules for the Teaching ability.

"Sailors are, and always have been, sailors. Immediately after reaching a port after a hard tour of sea duty most sailors will make a bee-line for the nearest Lady to engage in polite social conversation over a cup of tea and a plate of crumpets... Professional conversationalists, being professional, have certain specific qualities they look for in a potential customer who seeks to enjoy their company and spirited conversation. These qualities will influence not only the length and depth of the conversations but may indeed influence any monetary consideration. The adage that 'Talk is Cheap,' does not apply in Port Royal.

Sailors, for their part, greatly desire to indulge themselves in feminine company and most definitely in as much conversation and tea and crumpets as possible when in port. The reason for this being that tea and crumpets are not the usual shipboard fair [sic], and female conversation is most difficult to come by on a man of war. Failure to obtain sufficient tea, crumpets, and conversation can cause a deep, disturbing sense of frustration and loss on the part of the sailor often causing him to become somewhat sour of disposition and occasionally rash or aggressive toward those in his immediate neighborhood."

- Pirates & Plunder, Book II, p43-44

Not too much can be said about the third book, Further Adventures. There is a some verbose descriptions of a hacienda which the pirates can engage in some looting and pillaging, an extensive cross-country trek across some inhospitable land (from a pirate's point of view), and the takeover of some forts and a Spanish town, which means more looting and pillaging, including the local church as a prime target. There are "required encounters" in this linear progression, along with some random tables with a modicum of flavour in the text, along with various random encounters, keyed to particular region types. Eventually the story concludes with a journey to Port Royal to witness the marriage of Jake The Peg.

Assessment

Whilst the physical product is quite fair and the art (what there was of it) quite good, the game lacks a great deal of cohesion in its presentation. The initial attempt of modularity is interesting, but when it was abandoned the general organisation of the text quickly went from bad to worse. The aforementioned writing style is just overly verbose, despite some amusing moments.

As for the game system, it is rather primitive to say the least. The degree of randomness in character generation is too high, with too much out of the player's hands. Lumping everything into "abilities" may work in some systems, but in Pirates & Plunder there is significant divergence in the scope of these abilities. There are far too few of the skill-like abilities, and those that do exist are too strongly biased towards core combat abilities, which are at times amazingly clunky and inconsistent. As a historical roleplaying game - which is makes some claims to - it is a terrible failure. There is almost nothing here that provides any background to the period. Given that the game is about pirates, the fact there is nothing relating to shipping is quite inexcusable.

But despite all this, every time I've run Pirates & Plunder, it has been fun. It certainly is very poorly suited to any sort of extensive campaign, and it really only works for "beer and pretzels" (or rum and bread) evenings. The game and especially the adventures, for all its flaws, does have style, and quite a lot of it. For that alone, Pirates and Plunder, whilst certainly a second-rate game, does carry a certain quirky charm from the earlier days of roleplaying.

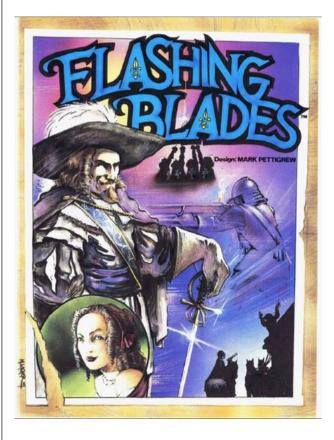
Style: 1 + .3 (layout) + .6 (art) + .7 (coolness) + .3 (readability) + .7 (product) = 3.6 Substance: 1 + .5 (content) + .2 (text) + .7 (fun) + .2 (workmanship) + .2 (system) = 2.8

Flashing Blades Review

Introduction and Physical Product

Flashing Blades is one of those games that has entered legend and lore of the early days of roleplaying games, not the least being for the fact that the author was but sixteen when he wrote it. The game is historical fiction, set in 17th century France, an era of bland and dynamic Kings, scheming and evil Cardinals, the three musketeers, and "countless other swashbucklers, dandies, cavaliers, rogues, villains, highwaymen, and cutthroats".

Consisting of two books and a GMs screen in a box, the game is written in two-column justified sans-serif font (with hand-added accent marks), which is reasonably well-laid out, especially compared to many FGU games. There is a good table of contents in the main rulebook, especially considering that the game is a mere 49 pages, including references and title page! The black-and-white artwork (except for the colour box cover), by Bain Sidhe Studio, is typically contextually appropriate, evocative and shows quite good technique. The writing style is compact but also evocative. There are a couple of minor editing glitches and a couple of organizational issues (e.g. discovering modifications to abilities later in the book after they've been calculated). There are a number of boxed sections of text for examples.



Character Generation

Character generation is familiar to the era; Attributes are rolled on 3d6 in order for Strength, Dexterity, Endurance, Wit, Charm, and Luck. These are followed by 2d6 rolls to determine height (short, average, tall) and weight (thin, average, stocky). Some combinations of these provide further modifications to Strength and Dexterity. If the original rolls are below 54, the total can be increased to 54 according to the player's wishes. Hit Points and Encumbrance values both start off at a base of 10, but the former can be increased by Strength, Endurance, Luck, and Build and the latter by Strength, Endurance, Dexterity, and Build. Further in the rules there is the option of a character with base Attributes of 12 or more being a "Renaissance Man", which generates excellent bonuses to skill attempts etc - this is the "munchkin" option.

Character Background - effectively "class" - is from a selection of Rogue, Gentleman, Soldier, and Nobleman. Professions determine a relationship with skills. Characters begin with 10 skill points modified by Wits and Luck. Bonus skills which are only available to members of that profession at a much reduced 1 point cost

(e.g., Captaincy for Soldiers, Etiquette for Nobles, Bargaining for Gentlemen, Stealth for Rogues), normal skills associated with the profession for 2 skill points, and skills from a different background cost 3 skill points. All skills have an associated attribute and basic skill use is on a d20 roll-under that attribute, with hand-waved modifiers, contested skills, and attribute rolls. Some 27 general skills are provided with a description of around one paragraph each. Multiple purchases of the Language skill are allowed providing an additional language per purchase. Whilst the range is good and appropriate, the skill descriptions are under-developed with no prescriptive in-game modifiers provided, for example.

In addition to the general skills, there are also martial skills with 7 provided, and the Duelling skill coming in five flavours that must be purchased separately according to style (Spanish, Italian, French, Cavalry, Old). Whilst two skills (Artillery and Gunner) function the same way as normal skills, the appropriate attribute is not defined - Wits has been presumed in both cases. Rather than being based on an Attribute martial skills have a base Expertise level (3 for untrained, 10 for duelling and archery skills, 8 for brawling, polearms, and firearms) modified Wit, Luck, Dexterity, and for melee weapons, Strength. Extra training may be undertaken or additional skill points spent to increase the expertise level. The actual martial skills acquired by starting characters is based on the character's Background, whether it was from a civilian martial training organization, fraternity, guild, or in the case of soldiers, a broader selection from the company they belonged to.

Adding a bit of character background flavour, characters may also choose an advantage and a secret from a short list. They also have the option of taking an advantage without a secret for 2 skill points, or just taking a secret for an additional 1 skill point. All characters begin with a randomly determined starting wealth and income, based on their background, with a modest equipment list provided. Soldiers will be pleased to discover that regimental arms and armour are provided. Finally, as appropriate, a character calculates their Social Rank, ranging form 1 to 20 (Rogues 2, Soldiers 3, Gentlemen 7, Noblemen 8).

Personal Combat

Combat occurs in 12-second turns with two actions per turn, recorded prior to resolution. The movement turn is resolved in order of Dexterity but with the highest Dexterity character having the option to move last (reverse Dexterity may have been quicker to resolve). Attack actions are resolved in accordance to weapon type, with missile weapons first, then polearms, swords, daggers etc, and finally unarmed attacks. Within each weapon type attacks are resolved in Dexterity order. Defense actions apply to all attacks directed to a character in a turn, which include various types of footwork, dodging, and parries. A character may also take a counter action which allows a riposte if an attack directed against them misses.

A character's expertise is cross-referenced on a table to generate a base d20 roll-under value. This base is modified by the weapon being used, the type of attack (lunge, thrust, slash, strike) or the defense applied (dodge, duck, sidestep, step back), along with a small set of modifiers. Notable in the system is the inclusion of the foil, which is a little anachronistic, although perhaps one could get away with suggesting a swap between the rapier statistics with foil, and the replacement of the rapier statistics with the épée de cour, or smallsword. Missile weapons have a simple base chance modified by weapon, range, mechanism, and a similar set of modifiers (e.g., brace and aiming). Parries and blocks are carried out as if they were attacks, with weapon modifiers, French-style bonuses (e.g., having a 'parrying hat'!). Weapon breakages are included in the parrying rules (heavier weapons break lighter ones with some regularity) as are improvised blocks (which chairs etc). A noted limitation is that the game does not include unarmed defensive blocks against weapons.

Damage is based on a hit location roll and a base value according to weapon and attack type as a light wound, with bonus damage from high strength. If an attack lands from less than half the needed to hit roll a serious wound occurs with an extra d6 of damage. Armour protects against damage, however it is not clear how it works against grenades which are directed against general hit points. Hit locations have static and proportional hit point damage thresholds (e.g., 4 points to the chest stuns, 1/2 damage knocks out, more than 1/2 damage kills). The damage system would be better if it was more proportional and provided a greater range for unconsciousness. Finally there is a handy list of optional rules for Fatigue (a simple minus per threshold of Endurance, modified by encumbrance, wounds etc), fumbles according to weapon type, and a variety of dirty fighting ('vicious kick' - you can work than one out) and special attacks

(e.g., entangle). Naturally enough there is also a system for recovery, but this can leave scars, broken bones and the like.

Position and Experience

Social rank has an enormous influence on play, not the least being access to power, connections, and a focus on position provides a campaign impetus. Across various professions, descriptions of rank and position are provided and the process by which one can acquire promotions, which is typically by either a bit of luck (roll for opening and promotion) or by buying oneself a promotion. Characters from different backgrounds can begin at variant professional positions (e.g., Soldiers start at the rank of Sargent, all others start at Trooper). Many of the professions have rivalry within their groups. For example, in the military (e.g., the Cardinal's Guards vs the King's Musketeers). Where appropriate each position is given a one paragraph description of requirements, role, remuneration, and responsibilities. The professions thus described include the military, the clergy, the royal bureaucracy, clubs and orders, banking, nobility, and fencing schools.

Most of these positions require several months dedication per annum, and various rules are offered to describe how these intrascenario events are played out. Thus there is a campaign timetable and mass combat system which, true to the best versions of such things for character RPGs, answers the important questions of "who won the battle?" and "what happened to the character?" (which comes with a superb example), along with financial investment rules for international and domestic commerce and property investments.

Naturally enough in a game system where there is an implicit suggestion that the campaigns run over many years, aging of characters is an issue. Characters begin to age at 40 with a gradual reduction in attributes and derived statistics which increase in chance. Eventually the character will, regardless of luck, will die. The system is designed so that oldest possible age is 110. Before that of course characters have the opportunity to improve in general skills, martial skills, attributes, and hit points. In an adventure characters may gain a check from extensive or difficult use, with the number of checks required for improvements increasing as the bonuses increase. Skills may be increased by +1 or +2 in base ability or expertise (Master and Master Superior levels). Characters may also gain experience check through practise as well.

Setting, Other Material, and Adventures

An compact yet extensive appendix provides a weapon glossary, life and culture of 17th century France, a map of Paris and the regions of France, religion, military and courts, a historical and political overview of Europe, a religious map of the same (which makes some rather erroneous suggestion of an Anglican Ireland and a conflation of all Orthodox faiths as Greek Orthodox etc, along with a timeline of events, and biographies of several major personalities, along with a selection of recommended reading. Based on the immediate review of the religious map there is probably some more errors in the detail, but its seems mostly right. The opportunity is taken here to also describe the cardstock GM material; it is a reprint of several of the major tables from the game, mainly the combat tables (as is the norm) along with a single-page character sheet.

Included with the set is a booklet of adventures, which consists of a generic tavern setting, Tavern Brevage Noir, which is covered in two pages, a five page but multi-session adventure, The Man Behind The Mask, and a slightly shorter adventure, Monsieur Le Droit's Secret. In addition there are a couple of pages of random encounter tables for urban and rural settings, along with random results from the requests for patronage. To give the briefest summary so not to give anything away, the tavern setting is rough with their speciality drink described as "one part rum, two parts brandy, and one part undrinkable". Rough tavern are provided for fencing loot, carousing, gambling, and brawling. The first

adventure allows characters from a diverse background to meet and work together under a mysterious patron, an international journey, a number of physical conflicts, and an extraordinary artifact. The second adventure, in contrast, involves high society intrigue, secret societies, bureaucracy, and political intrigue. Both are rather enjoyable and capture the style of the setting very well.

Evaluation

Flashing Blades is, simply put, a great game. It is well-designed system, a little like a combination of early RuneQuest and The Fantasy Trip. It manages to provide a good, if overly abbreviated, skill system, an evocative and elaborate personal combat system, the opportunity to build an extensive character history, and all with sufficient background material, a detailed but limited setting, and several sessions set up ready to play - and all of this in a remarkable 65 pages. Unsurprisingly, it is looked upon with significant approval, and - most fortunate of all - the author is quite happy for others to contribute to its ongoing development.

"FGU already agrees that I own the rights to Flashing Blades. I'm even receiving (very small) royalties checks again, after a 20-some year hiatus. I think I mentioned this before, but again, all of you are free to write, publish, etc. whatever you want for FB without worrying about copyright. I'm happy that people are still enjoying the game."

Style: 1 + .5 (layout) + .8 (art) + .7 (coolness) + .8 (readability) + .4 (product) = 4.2

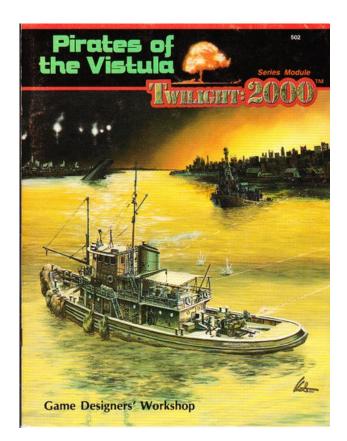
Substance: 1 + .6 (content) + 1.0 (text) + .7 (fun) + .7 (workmanship) + .7 (system) = 4.7

Twilight 2000: Pirates of the Vistula

Introduction and Product

Pirates of the Vistula is a forty page supplement, saddle-stapled with a cardstock cover. As with other supplements in the Twilight 2000 range it is formatted in a two-column justified page style with a sans-serif font with an ideal amount of white space on the borders. There is an excellent table of contents but only modest clarity in the text itself of where one is (page numbers, but no page section heading). The writing style is mostly formal, and quite dense, but interspersed with the occasional narrative vignette. The colour cover art is perhaps a little lacking in technique but is illustrative of a probable moment in the scenarios that follow. The internal greyscale and line drawings typically show good technique and are contextually appropriate.

There are four major sections to the text, so titled, plus rules for riverine combat, a chapter on the



Wilsa Krolowa (the PCs vessel) and some scenario notes. The supplement is designed to be directly linked with the subsequent product "The Ruins of Warsaw" but also serves as an excellent follow-on form "The Free City of Krakow" and several proposal are made on why this should be the case. Aside from the major sections, detailed information about the River Vistula and river journey is provided, with encounters especially tailored as a result of the military conflict that have significantly altered what was once improved navigation. There are several pages in the centre of the book designed for easy removal, which includes an impressive double-page greyscale map of the Vistula River region, various combat tables for larger weapons, a hex map of a river section, and a deck plan of the PCs vessel.

The Wisla Krolowa

The Wisla Krolowa, which the PCs journey on, is a fifteen year old tug boat which is also given detailed specifications. It may not be spectacular from the perspective from players in other RPG settings, but in Twilight 2000 it's a great asset. The 1960s diesel engines have been converted to steam power and an impressive amount of detail is provided on the operation of such an engine, which any sensible referee will utilise not just to improve the sense of immersion but also as an opportunity for plot devices. Apart from the layout (provided in detail with the centre pull-out pages) and an itinerary, specifications also are provided for maximum speed of the vessel according to displacement, draft etc and the effects of damage. All in all, it's everything one could possibly want to know.

Information is also provided on the ship's barge, but more importantly on the crew of five, who are a genuinely rough and questionable bunch, with the exception of the old captain who obviously has a heart of gold. The characters are described with believable motivations given their circumstances and again there's plenty of plot opportunities provided for a referee to slot in at the time which will cause the most consternation to the PCs. The tug itself usually requires a crew of around ten, so it can be expected that, appropriately, the PCs will have to put a bit of work into it as well.

The Sections

Four sections of the river are each provided their own chapter, covering the region from Krakow to Warsaw in total and, for each chapter (i) Nowy Hta to the Wislola River (ii) Wisloka to the San River (iii) San River to Deblin, and (iv) Deblin to Warsaw. Each section is described in terms of its total distance, the average width and depth of the river, towns and landmarks, a general description of the lay of the land, and rumours. This is followed with detailed encounter tables for each of the major locations, both human and environmental. These combine the best of purely random vagabonds trying to make their way through the desolate landscape, organised mauraders enforcing their will over a region, to some thoroughly organised set-pieces, and finally to driving and continuing components of the long narrative of the river adventure itself. Whilst only consisting of a few pages a piece it is easy to generate a few sessions of actual play out of each of these sections such is the level of detail and potential complexity in story development.

As an interesting narrative arc built into the journey itself, as the PCs make their way further downriver towards Warsaw the greater the degree of threat. The region around Krakow has a few civilians and marauders, with the perhaps the most dangerous location being a former industrial city that had been hit by a nuclear device. Further downstream is self-sufficient townships, ruled by a group of former bandits some of which have ideas of grandeur which results into occasional conflicts between them; who the PCs choice in this tussle will be of importance, given their skill and vessel. Even further downstream is the first encounters of the namesake of the publication, the discovery that theirs is not the only river-borne vessel of note in the region, which sets up the scene for future encounters emphasised by a set-piece from the main NPC. In the final section, there is the encounter with a sympathetic village, their encounters with the pirates, the revelation of even greater powers ahead, all leading to a climatic riverine combat.

Riverine Combat

Twilight 2000 is a pretty complex and clunky game system at the best of times, but it does work with a push and a pinch. The temporal scale of riverine combat is longer (30 second rounds), the unit scale is abstracted (small boats under fifty tons, large boats over fifty tons), with aggregation applied (e.g., initiative determined by collective Coolness Under Fire). Various modifications for movement and spotting are provided, with the combat system itself a combination of aggregation and abstraction for small arms exchanges, but with a more detailed set of rules for indirect and large weapon fire against boats etc. Naturally enough, morale also comes into play. As a summary the system provided a surprisingly workable simulation of river combat, albeit with inconsistent resolution mechanics.

Conclusions

Overall, Pirates of the Vistula is a great product, combining the best of a sandbox and plotted adventure, even if the physical product itself is ever-so slightly on the flimsy side. As for the content however the amount of detail crammed in the pages is exemplary. It is easy to get a dozen sessions of actual play out of the forty pages and still have plenty of loose ends to deal with afterwards. Whilst it does appear to "run on rails" (or float down a river) to some extent, but this is an not the case, as there are plenty of opportunities and indeed often requirements, to venture inland. Despite having to work with the Twilight 2000 system which, in all honesty is not the best, this is a great supplement.

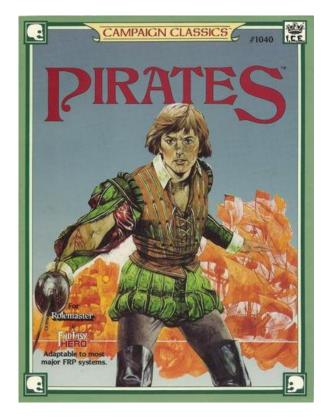
Style: 1 + .6 (layout) + .8 (art) + .7 (coolness) + .7 (readability) + .5 (product) = 4.3

Substance: 1 + 1.0 (content) + 1.0 (text) + .9 (fun) + .7 (workmanship) + .6 (system) = 5.2

Campaign Classics: Pirates

Introduction and Product

For a period of the late 1980s and early 1990s, Iron Crown Enterprises and Hero Games formed an distribution alliance which brought together two very different game systems, Rolemaster and Champions, (or strictly speaking the 'master and hero systems) into some publications. The fourth of these was 'Pirates', a 160 page softback book concentrating on the 17th century, but with a little bit of material for centuries on either side. The cover art, by Susan Hunter, is a little on the romantic side of representing pirates with a dashing young man but with good technique and a little dash of creativity in the washed background of ships. The internal art whilst having some evocative elements, is sometimes a little lazy in technique for the new pieces and sometimes very well detailed. The product makes good use of appropriate out-of-copyright material and whilst there is a fair bit of filler pieces (including repeats) there is many contextual pieces as well. The old maps are an absolute delight, for example.



The layout is pretty much two-column justified with serif text and sans-serif headings. There are fifteen chapters overall, split over three main areas, a Player's Section, the Setting, and a Gamemaster's Section. The writing style is overwhelmingly formal, emphasising content over style. There is however, atrociously, some parts of the Player's Section which are simply copy-and-pasted from the Rolemaster character generation section to the Fantasy Hero character generation section, which a single presentation would have done quite adequately with different system rules highlighted as necessary.

The Player's Section

As suggested the Player's Section begins with character generation rules for Rolemaster and Fantasy Hero, including some basic (i.e., combat-oriented) equipment. The author, influenced by movie logic, assigns power levels to whether characters are "The Leading Man", "The Supporting Cast", or "Extras". Rather oddly for the setting and genre, there is a requirement that "The Leading Man" will be a "goody-two-shoes". Expectations of character behaviour and participation are reduced according to power level. Power levels in Rolemaster are not defined by

additional class levels but in terms of bonus skill ranks, whereas in Fantasy Hero they are defined by starting character points. Whilst a range of standard character classes and package deals appropriate to the setting, of particular interest is the difficult prospect of magic-using characters. Whilst these are sensibly reduced to witch, shaman, and animist professions and there are restrictions on magical spell lists (Rolemaster) and effects (Fantasy Hero) in most cases there are not increases in development point or character point cost.

A potted geography of the world of pirates is provided with a few paragraphs dedicated to the main setting locations (including the West Indies, Africa and the Indian Ocean) and history, with a few pages each covering the 16th and 17th century, especially in reference to the politics and religion of western Europe, and slipping a little in to the 18th century. Three general campaign periods are offered, the Elizabethan Campaign (1558-1603), the Buccaneer Campaign (1630-1670), and the Pirate Campaign (1670-1725). An entire chapter is dedicated under the heading "People of the 17th Century" which covers life in colonial areas, the social classes, normal life experiences of the buccaneer and pirates, letters of marque and pirate articles, money and trade, and even short sections on woman in the pirate world (including a couple of interesting historical examples) and religious life.

A chapter is also dedicated to 'Ships and Sailing', and 'Combat'. The ships chapter gives details of ship types with an emphasis on rigging and ship layout (with handy illustrations), informative sections on navigation, sailing issues, ship life, and maintenance, along with a poorly keyed travel table. Whilst the combat section begins with fencing and firearms rules for Rolemaster and Fantasy Hero and various swashbuckling maneuvers, there is a significant section on ship-to-ship combat with specific characteristics for the two game systems, movement and maneuvers, and boarding actions. As always the case with Rolemaster it's the "criticals" that kill you.

The Setting and The Gamemaster's Section

The section for The Setting is just under twenty-five pages and as such can be combined with The Gamemaster's section. It is mainly an potted description of the world of the period with very brief notes providing a general description, a background, the current ruler, any local customs, and additional notes. It concentrates on the regions of the campaign (The West Indies and the Spanish Main, Africa and the Indian Ocean), but also includes a chapter on The Rest of the World. Most of the descriptions are effectively only a couple of paragraphs with some exceptions running for a quarter of a page or more (e.g., Bahamas, Panama, Tortuga, Madagascar). The maps provided are visually appealing in an old style, but are frustratingly lacking with sufficient keyed information (e.g., the location of major locations mentioned in the text!), and the language maps are over-sized for the paucity of information provided. The Setting section concludes with at a timeline of major relevant events from the late 15th throuigh to the early 18th centuries. There is the sensible suggestions early in the chapter to be quite loose with the history after the campaign has started (so characters do not gain advantage from the players knowledge) along with the setting information in areas that are relatively undiscovered by Europeans.

The Gamemaster's Section begins with a description of flavoursome hints for running swashbuckling adventures, noting the usual flashy maneuvers, but also the importance of ransom and the propensity to spend money as fast as it is received. Several general adventures hooks are provided, which are pretty much as expected with elaboration into adventures styles (simple, episodic). Brief description is made for the inclusion of the supplement in other campaign settings and styles, such as the inclusion of magic, pirates in space, or with the ICE campaign setting, Shadow World.

A Game Statistics chapter defines standard character types (thugs, rogues, soldiers and sailors, merchants, gentleman/nobles. priest/scholar, Indian/African warrior) and statistics for Rolemaster/MERP and Fantasy Hero. The layout for the Fantasy Hero characters is quite poor, taking up multiple pages. Following this is a description and statistics for several well-known historical and fictional figures, including Henry Morgan, Francis L'Ollonois, Blackbeard, Long John Silver, with the same layout issues. A typical NPC crew is added, and a selection of normal creatures appropriate for the main settings; finally the layout issues are resolved with the FH statistics. The chapter concludes with a description of non-monetary treasures that can be found in a Pirates campaign which, with an incredibly limited imagination, basically means weapons. The book concludes with some twenty pages of scenarios, making up some six scenarios in total and in contrast with the chapter introduction which claims three.

The first scenario is really just designed to introduce characters to the setting and the ship-to-ship combat system as they pick off a straggler from a main fleet. The second really doesn't have much more in terms of a plot development - this time instead of a fleet's straggler, it's buccaneers taking on a fortified town. The third however is a combination of investigation and exploration for a fabled treasure which involves some colourful NPCs and some significant challenges. The fourth scenario is rather like the second but with an east African and Arabic take on the matter, the fifth a smuggling scenario with the usual challenges enhanced by intra-crew conflicts, and the sixth a sort of "lost worlds" setting as the characters find themselves trapped in the mythic Sargasso Sea. Ultimately all of these scenarios lack sufficient narrative hooks and work will be needed by any GM to flesh them out to be sufficiently entertaining. The book concludes with a reasonable bibliography.

Evaluation

Despite a lack of flourish, a lack of solid integration to the game systems it is designed for, and some poor layout decisions Pirates is actually a fairly useful resource. The location and timeline descriptions, although fairly brief for

each specific component, do cover and enormous scope and interestingly evoke a global sea-faring sense to the reader. The shipping and ship-life descriptions are among the best available and in their own right valuable for any campaign of such a nature. One will probably find use in the standard NPC descriptions and the adventures, whilst pretty plain in their own right, can serve as useful setting seeds for further elaboration. Overall this is a handy supplement for any existing historical-based pirate campaign.

Style: 1 + .4 (layout) + .7 (art) + .4 (coolness) + .5 (readability) + .6 (product) = 3.6

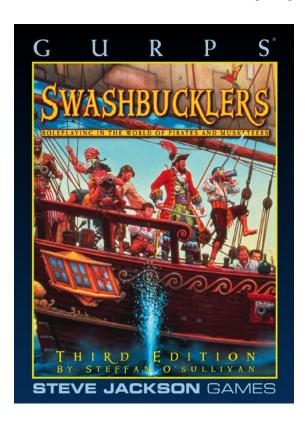
Substance: 1 + .9 (content) + .5 (text) + .4 (fun) + .6 (workmanship) + .4 (system) = 3.8

GURPS Swashbucklers

Introduction and Physical Product

At 128 pages and with a colourful cover by Don Maitz, the third edition of GURPS Swashbucklers has undergone revisions by no less than four individuals other than the attributed author. Nevertheless, it is still overwhelmingly the same book. The first edition was written for second edition GURPS, the second edition for third edition GURPS, and the third edition for third edition revised GURPS plus rules compendiums, plus extra martial arts. In practise, I have found that that the three editions are essentially the same in spirit is somewhat different in letter. This is important of course, because much of the swashbuckling genre, as the author points out, is pretty much a spirited affair.

The softback back is substandard in its binding and glue but may hold up with careful use. Like many other GURPS



supplements it comes in one- to two-column text, typically one for main material and one for extensive sidebars, along with highlighted text boxes, all in a serif justified text. The book is packed when it comes to text and art content, but still with clear page and chapter titles on the bottom of each page. The internal art, whilst showing some creativity, is often lacking in detail and is rarely contextual. There is a solid single page table of contents and likewise for the index. The writing style is classic Steffan O'Sullivan, managing to provide a whimsical presentation with substantive content. The seven chapters are Characters, Combat, The Paris Campaign, The Pirate Campaign, Background, Sailing Ship, and Adventures.

Characters and Combat

The characters chapter outlines several character types, short descriptive paragraphs to spur the playe and GM's imagination, including system integration suggestions. This is followed by the application of particular advantages, disadvantages, and skills which are especially relevant to the setting, along with an appropriate job table. It concludes with interesting and flavoursome discussion on commodity money systems in use at the time, even if ultimately the use of default abstract dollar is probably going to be used. All in all, it's a handy chapter, but hardly earth-shattering.

The combat chapter is pretty meaty, starting off with maneuvers, both realistic and cinematic, twenty five in total. Most of these default to existing weapon skills in GURPS but allow for increased specialisation for the swashbuckling era. For example, a character may be fairly good with the rapier, but has an absolutely devastating feint. Over the years my opinion on maneuvers in GURPS has changed; initially my opinion was quite negative viewing them as adding additional complexity. However, I was wrong - the complexity is actually largely unchanged, what is different is the additional detail and, importantly, options in the cut-and-thrust of dramatic and tactical instances. Complementing the maneuevers are packages representing various taught styles with character point cost for realistic and cinematic games.

Entertainingly, other genere-typed maneuvers are also considered, such as yanking carpets, flipping tables, swinging on chandeliers or ship's rigging, social skills during combat etc. These start of being consistent with the core game rules and are then extended. The chapter concludes with a few pages of weapons and equipment from the era which are somewhat better in accuracy than many other RPGs (with the cinematic sword-rapier noted as such), although it perhaps getting a little excessive to list five different types of rapier.

Paris, Pirates, and Background

The three setting detail chapters make up 58 pages of the 128 page book, and are roughly equal in size. The Paris campaign begins with emphasising the cultural and political centrality of Paris in the 17th century, along with a sidebar pointing out that the city design is realistically very much in the medieval design. The chapter assumes a musketteers-styled campaign, so begins with a summary of Dumas' famous novel, an interestingly equal treatment of King's musketeer or Cardinal's guard paths, and character summaries and game statistics for several of the major figures, both historical and fictional. This is also the location of the more charming sidebars in roleplaying, "How to be French", along the useful suggestion of PCs as a Commedia Dell'Arte band. Concluding the chapter is extensive notes on the duelling code and mechanisms and notes for mass combat rules which require Compendium II.

The chapter for the pirate campaign takes a longer view in terms of time and a wider view in terms of space. Emphasis is placed on the Caribbean but with notes also on the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. The distinction between pirates, privateers, and buccaneers is noted, along the semi-democratic structure of the latter, along with sample articles of agreement, compensation schemes and so forth. Port Royal and St. Mary's Madagascar are discussed in some detail as pirate centres, along with material on Libertatia, the alleged anarcho-socialist pirate commune. Summaries and game statistics are provided for a small number of historical and fictional figures, concluding with ship travel times between major locations.

The background chapter covers the rest of Europe for the period 1559 to 1815, which in its own right is a pretty brave effort for less than twenty pages, provided in four eras and with notes for each major country. This invariably equates with England, France, Holland (and the Netherlands), Spain for each period with an additional mention of "the Celtic lands" for the latter period and a sidebar for the Thirty Year's War, Poland, Italy, the Holy Roman Empire, the Ottoman Empire, Sweden, and Russia. The narrowing of the Celtic lands to Scotland and Ireland because there wasn't any national movements in Breton or Wales is historically inaccurate (a surprising failure for a GURPS book), and the minimal sidebar for the Thirty Years War is utterly insufficient. The chapter concludes with a description of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, various fashion and everyday life experience of the era, and an extensive timeline.

Ships and Adventures

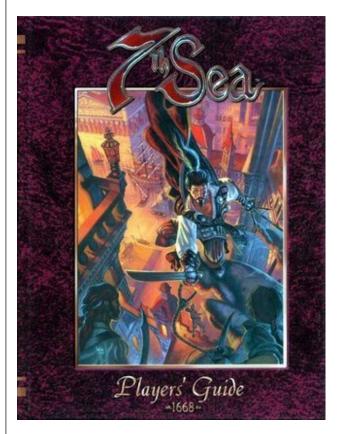
The Sailing Ships chapter is a mainly descriptive chapter and thankfully doesn't attempt to replicate GURPS Vehicles, although there are very brief notes on such conversions. Ships in the age of sail are primarily defined by the number of masts they have; the more masts the bigger the ship, with the bigger the ship typically the great aggregate of draft and freeboard, and slower and more expensive they are. Although specific ships are not described there are abstract categories (sloop, brig, ship) which suffice. The onboard life section is useful and colourful as well. There is also an abstract naval combat system which true the GURPS style is mainly interested in 'who won the battle' and 'what happened to the PCs?', but with lots of ship-based special effects and elaborations, such a boarding, and ship-specific critical charts. To finish the book there is a woefully short four pages on Adventures which offers a few adventure seeds and a little bit in the sidebars concerning campaign crossovers. More useful in the bibliography that follows.

Conclusion and Evaluation

GURPS Swashbucklers is a somewhat mixed product. Whilst mostly well-written and very well-presented, the physical product is quite poor. The content, whilst providing extensive material of the period and absolutely excellent and essential game system rules cannot help but give the impression that it was trying far too hard at times and yet still only managing to have a fairly average density. One simply do a GURPS campaign set in the era of pirates and and swashbucklers without it; and yet it often doesn't quite make it to what is a very good product overall.

Style: 1 + .8 (layout) + .6 (art) + .7 (coolness) + .6 (readability) + .3 (product) = 4.0

Substance: 1 + .7 (content) + .5 (text) + .8 (fun) + .7 (workmanship) + .8 (system) = 4.5



7th Sea : Player's Guide and Game Master's Guide

Product, Art, and Layout

With very attractive covers of renaissance action by William O'Connor, the 7th Sea core Guides are well-produced hardbacks, although a little heavy on the fairly light binding. A title page give a little bit of flavour, suggesting a film rather than an RPG. The black and white line drawings within are quite impressive in technique, although usually without context, and the colour plates in the Player's Guide by Terese Nielsen, of the rulers and their lands, are positively inspirational. Both the Player's Guide and the Gamemaster's Guide come a pretty solid table of contents and an impoverished index.

The text is universally two-column justified with serif font, with a great "old style" font for headings. The writing style is often very informal, and not at all appropriate to the style of the game as a whole. It is also very verbose, and could have easily been half the length with the same core information. Chapter titles and page numbers are clearly marked on each page. For chapters, the Player's Book includes an extensive Primer, Theah as a

setting chapter, a Hero chapter for character generation, a Drama chapter for the game system, a Player chapter, and a set of Appendices. The Appendices include a weather table, an index, and a character sheet.

Player's Guide

Europe's Distant Sister

The Player's Guide opens with a hefty chapter, Primer, which provides a very solid, if verbose, introduction to the setting and rules. It begins with a a few pages of story that's not worth reading, with the game's introduction providing more flavour. "It is a game of swashbuckling and sorcery, piracy and adventure, diplomacy and intrigue, archaeology and exploration. It's a world of musketeers, buccaneers and privateers, ancient sorcery and lost civilizations, secrets that hide in the shadows and monsters that hide in plain sight", which in itself has to be considered a pretty damn fine setting.

The setting of 7th Sea is described as a place which has "cultural and historical similarities to particular European nations on Earth", which is certainly true. Indeed, many people express annoyance that 7th Sea's setting is sufficiently close to the real Europe the designers may have well simply used the period and added magic to the equation. Certainly that would have led to a map that would have made a great deal more sense (indeed it is possibly the worst map I have seen in any roleplaying game), not only for the continent of Theah, but also with new world continents that would provide purpose for the emphasis on seaborne adventures.

As writ, 7th Sea's setting is best for land adventures, even if many of the scenarios and supplementary material assumes waterborne adventures. Nevertheless, the title of the game comes from a description of six seas, and reference to a magical "seventh sea" "where the sun and the moon shine in the same sky, where the stars go backward and the waters turn to silver". There is plenty of material for example on sailor character types and crew organisation, seaborne weaponry, culture and superstitions, and of course, various pirate groups.

There is a gnostic Vaticine Church, which has just finished a Thirty Years War against the Objectionists in Eisen and has a group of agents known as the Inquisition. Plus there is an Orthodox church in the east. Several pages is spent on the general geography and culture of each of the core nationalities in the Player's Book. Eisen is pretty much Germany, Avalon is the British Isles, Castille is Spain and Portugal, Montaigne is France, Ussara is Russia, Vendel and Vestenmannavnjar is the Netherlands and Scandanavian countries combined into a group of islands, Vodacce is Italy, and isolated with physical barriers is Cathay (China) and The Empire of the Crescent Moon (Arabic states).

Add to all this a handful of secret societies and swordsmen's and other guilds, precursor archeological artifacts and noble families with nationality-based sorcery. The history tells of an Old Republic, the appearance of the First Prophet, and the beginning of the Anno Veritas (AV) dating system, the formation of an Eastern and Western Empire, the emperor's Coratine and Carleman, and the Rise of the Crusades, the spread of a devastating White Plague and so forth.

Chargen and Game System

The game system is a variant on the Roll-and-Keep method used in *Legend of the Five Rings*. Character generation is a point-buy system. Beginning with 100 points characters can be assigned sorcery (a hefty 40 points for "full-blooded" or

20 points for "half-blooded", with expected limitations. Joining a swordsman's school costs 25 points for a native school or 35 for a foreign school; these provide a package deal of knacks and other benefits. Traits Brawn, Finesse, Resolve, Wits, and Panache which are ranked from 1 to 5, and cost 8 points each. These represent pretty much what they say on the tin, except Panache, described as "that 'something special' that sets your Hero apart from Joe Average; i.e., *je ne sais quoi*. When experience is received The cost of buying a new skill, advancing a knack, joining a school is significantly more than character generation.

Characters also have advantages, and skills (read: professions) at a cost 2 points which provide a set of knacks (read: skills), both basic and advanced. Knacks are also rated, typically from 0 to 5; basic knacks cost 1 point to increase at character generation, and advanced knacks 3. Typically players roll their Trait plus Knack as xd10 (with 10s "exploding"), keep the results of the Trait, and add the total against a target number. Target numbers may be raised for bonus effects and "Drama Dice" may be spent to enhance the possibility of success. Character generation is completed with the addition of a backgrounds (a negative, e.g., amnesia, obligation etc), reputation (positive or negative), wealth, and "arcana" a driving personality force (positive or negative) for the character as a plot devices. The equipment list provided is more extensive than most RPGs, providing at least as much for clothes as it does for weapons and armoursuch is the style of the game. Several sample characters provide the opportunity for rapid play, templates, or NPCs.

Tactical time is carried out in rounds with initiative determined by a non-exploding Panache trait roll which determines the phases a character acts in. Attacks are based on a skill roll against a target number derived from a defender's knack times five (trait plays no effect). Damage is also based on a roll-and-keep mechanism, with the Brawn trait adding to the rolled dice pool for melee weapons. With the exception of "dragon iron", there is no other armour in use. Some martial knacks, distinguished from civil knacks, also have special effects. When wounded a player character or major NPC rolls a Brawn test against the wounds taken; if they fail they suffer a Dramatic Wound, if not they have an accumulated level of Flesh Wounds. A major character is knocked out if they suffer double Resolve in Dramatic Wounds, NPC Henchmen are knocked out at their Resolve in Dramatic Wounds, and Brutes get knocked out on each hit; it's a mook rule. There is also a combat system, of sorts, for repartee, based around "charm, intimidate, and taunt" as maneuvers.

Swords, Sorcery, and Ships

A substantial portion of the Player's Book is spent on the Swordsman schools, ship design, and the magical traditions. As mentioned, swordsmen schools and sorcery are bound by nationality. For the swordsmen, a general rule is that all swordsmen receive the skills listed, a free rank in the four swordsmen knacks, and membership to the swordsman guild (usually 3 points). For 25 or 35 points this seems incredibly expensive; the school typically provides a couple of skills or knacks in some cases, and four specialist knacks. Each do have a special ability however that can turn a fight, determined by the skill level (apprentice, journeyman, master), such as bonus unkept initiative dice, extra damage etc.

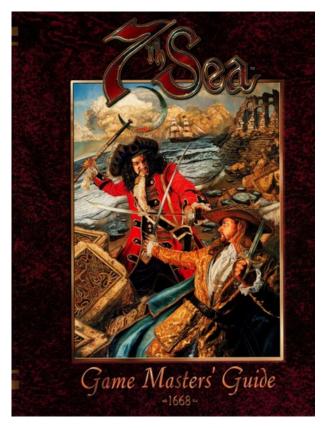
Ships are designed like characters with points and the same basic Traits, with Resolve being used for Draft and Cargo, and with flaws and modifications. The system is in many ways too; Resolve determines Draft and Cargo in ships, but what does this translate to in real-world terms? The total point value also determines the maximum trait values a ship can have, along with maximum flaws and modifications - the bigger the ship, the bigger its "personality". Modifications have difficulty levels, which generates the target number of the shipwright making the design. Several examples are provided based on point value, ranging from the modest pirate sloops to the Man o' War.

Gamemaster's Guide

Théah and Villain

After an obligatory "this is the GM's book, and you are free to cheat" introduction, the substance begins with an elaboration of the gameworld Théah and spoilers follow, you have been warned. It starts with the useful medical advances that the Théaheans have over Terrans, along with a humanistic-romantic worldview within the courts. This is explicitly stated as "In Théah, it means that heroes are back in style." This follows with further elaboration (and replication from The Player's Book) on the nations and various societies of Théah, which in part include national-scale plot hooks which PCs may eventually partake in, major NPCs, and various regional secrets which could be easily converted into plot hooks. However more than three-quarters of the material is both obvious through minimal PC experience and even rumour. It is good, sometimes even <i>great</i> information, but there is little purpose of it being in the GM's book.

The Villain chapter includes a wide-range of rules elaborations, specifically aimed at the GM, making it probably the best signal-to-noise chapter in any of the books. It includes optional character creation rules (e.g., ensemble party lump-sum character points, bonus character points as a indication of player interests), elaborations of skills and knacks, land management rules, options for the Faith advantage, Arcana for villains, suggestions on how to turn Hero advantages into plot hooks, and a Bestiary of some eighteen mundane and supernatural creatures. The latter does illustrate some of the quirks of the game system when applied to non-human entities; for example the brute-henchman-villian continuum is applied to the creature's overall strength rather than narrative importance, and fast creatures are given a high Panache rating.



Drama

The Drama chapter is very much rules intensive. As the books says: "We've got rules for falling, burning, drowning, ship-to-ship combat, battles, poisons, Brute Squads, chases, explosions and just about anything else you can think of." There is actually more than that - as these rules elaborations are presented in alphabetical order, the first are aging rules (trait modifiers according to skill category, death at 65 + one exploding die). The brute squad rules is simple and effective, using the number as the rolled die and the threat rating as the kept die. Chases are conducted as contested skills according to environment with initial head start raises equal to the number of head-start phases with narrative-biased random encounters.

The Drama dice mechanics are more game justifications than actual rules as such, but they make sense. Drowning is Resolve-based tests, a rather impoverished mechanic and equally poorly implemented is Explosions, a simple damage rating, an equivalent TN to outrun them, and a half-damage blast radius. Falling is based on distance modified by the surface (soft, firm, hard); soft surfaces (including another person) negate all damage and objects

dropped from any height but weigh less than a person also do no damage - you can be hit from a bowling ball dropped from 200 feet and no damage would result.

Fear is simple Resolve checks resulting in lost unkept dice, mass combat is resolved by determing the Heroes level of engagement, the tide of a battle determined by a contested skill roll between competing generals. These two factors are resolved in a chart that provides flesh wounds, reputation points, and heroic opportunities - this is not a system that addresses the relative strength of competing sides. It contrasts significantly with the naval battles rules which do, applying (as mentioned in the Player's Book) character traits to ships.

Lockpicking is simply a test, modified by equipment, with a target number based on difficulty. Poisons are deliberately weakened according to the setting and thematic requirements (presumably no wolfsbane in this setting), but based around effect, onset period, and effect time. Some have interesting narrative effects (e.g., Yellow Lotus both damages and increases sorcery abilities). In a similar format, Traps are descibed in terms of their TN to spot, the disarm process, avoidance TN and ability, effect, and salvage value. There is good description on designing traps in terms of the trigger and delivery systems. An elaboration of Raises and Reputation is provided, especially the latter's knightly code of chivalry. There is also an extensive, far too extensive, description of the various flavours of sorcery, although little of this is rules-based. Finally, there is a narrative-based discussion of weather with a modicum of effect implementations, and a probability chart.

Game Master

The Game Master chapter makes the fairly typical comment that above all rules, the game is meant to be fun. It suggests three hats the GM must wear (surely a tricorn would be better?), i.e., author, storyteller, referee; which sort of fits with the simulationist, narrativist, and gamist creative agendas. An interesting challenge comes out with noting that the rules shouldn't be used to slow down the dynamic narrative, but of course, as writ, the Roll-and-Keep approach can lead to such situations. A distinction is also drawn between a "dice GM" (where die rolls are never fudged) and a "story GM" which die results are often ignored. This is perhaps a little unfair to some "dice GM" who is able to reflect on results and create a plausible and entertaining narrative without fudging results.

There is an overly lengthy discussion on group dynamics with sensibly seeks to combine group harmony with solo limelight. The "three hats" (why not a tricorn?) are explored, starting with the "author hat" and distinguishing between scope and story modes, and presents a surprisingly almost accurate description of theme (I am personally so tired of this being completely wrong in both gaming and computing that I'll give credit to one that is almost right). A good variety of dramatic situations are presented as plot hooks with examples, described in basic question with important thematic questions (e.g., 'Ambition', Richard III). What we once called scenarios are properly broken up into their components of scene, act, story, and epic (again almost right), and with plot a little too simply described in terms of beginning, middle, and climax.

The "referee hat" makes the recommendation of being "firm, fair, and friendly", including the frankly inappropriate advice of "stand by every decision you make, even if it's wrong". Nor does the description of the "three Fs" provide much advice on what to do when they contradict each other. The recommendation of follow up consequences to Hero action's is a good one, as is the discussion of character death (work it through with the player), as is the elaborations on punishments and failures, and of improvisation in action scenes. The main complaint is a stylistic one - all of this takes far too much in the word count and could be explained a lot quicker and easier. Finally there is the "storyteller hat", which starts with some fairly basic ideas of NPC motives and the use of mimetic rather than diegetic expression (i.e.,

"Show, Don't Tell."), and the use of voice to convey personality and setting; but that's about it, a hat that is woefully underdeveloped.

The final section of the chapter is giving out experience points (unspent Drama dice plus a difficulty value), plus story-based advances, and seeking player feedback with the interesting suggestion of avoiding "yes-no" answers, and the use of retroactive continuity. Thrown right at the end of the chapter is a variety of "advanced storyteller" techniques including dream sequences, symbolic language (i.e., motif), parallel plotlines, flashbacks, and some 'dirty tricks' (e.g., cheating). None of this is particularly illuminating.

Summary and Evaluation

With regards to the system the Roll-and-Keep method is good in principle, but needs to emphasise the different application of characteristics in physical versus intellectual tests. It is also time-consuming in actual play, requiring a handful of dice and their addition, even with some of the recommendations in the GM's book for speeding up the process. The distinction between basic and advanced knacks is likewise good in principle, like skill prerequisites in other systems, but has not been well-implemented with some rather odd combinations due to the combined skill groups (e.g., Dancing is required for Sincerity, Knotwork for Cartography, Stealth for Interrogation etc). In other words, the core system is fairly good but the implementation is very much below par.

The game does cover a lot of ground, but does so quite poorly. It is difficult to find what one needs in actual play (odd positioning of the index), it is poorly written and delivers too little content per page. The setting irks many, and for good reason. It never feels quite like a seafaring not-Europe when the geography is just plain wrong, and the nationalities sound like the more ridiculous European stereotypes. Where the game does shine is a fairly good physical product, some excellent artwork, and of course, a great concept. Plus, there is just enough in the game system that makes the game fun to play within the particular setting. A careful GM can make all this work, but a thorough consideration of the setting and system is required.

Style: 1 + .6 (layout) + 1.0 (art) + .7 (coolness) + .3 (readability) + .7 (product) = 4.3 Substance: 1 + .7 (content) + .3 (text) + .6 (fun) + .4 (workmanship) + .5 (system) = 3.6

RuneQuest Pirates

Introduction and Product

RuneQuest Pirates is a 96 page hardbound book featuring a deck-bound battle on the cover by Pascal Quidault, which is fairly good in terms of technique and creativity. The internal art, from several authors, is varied in quality, but occasionally is in context as well. As with other Mongoose RuneQuest books far too space is dedicated to the margins and margin-art (this time being seafaring themed), however page numbers and chapter titles are clearly marked on each page. Often the paragraph breaks and white space seem quite excessive. The use of a skull-and-crossbones as dot points is cute.

There is a very short table of contents, but a much longer and more comprehensive index, along with some crew and ship sheets at the back. The introduction specifies that the book will be about a more narrow and specific period that is often assigned to the age of piracy; 1680 to 1720, rather than broader historical definitions (e.g., non-European piracy,

the buccaneer era etc).

Characters and Personal Equipment

Character generation is meant to follow the standard RuneQuest rules with two major additions. Firstly, there are a few tantalising hints for initial concept, which could have been elaborated further, and secondly, there are new skills, specifically Pistols and Long Arms. Annoyingly there is an error in the general description of such weapons which claims their starting skill is DEX*2, then immediately following both are described in their specific sections as 10+DEX. I cannot fathom how an editor overlooked this (and I am a terrible editor). Each of the advanced skills

RineQuest

receives a couple of paragraphs of description; a notable absence is a discussion on languages.

The list of professions is, as prior Mongoose RuneQuest books, heavy on the space with tabulated information. A hefty thirty professions are given game data (profession, cultural background, basic skill bonuses, advanced skill options, trappings) all of which seem to be well-balanced with each other. The random equipment table, meant to represent the oddities found in a life of roaming, is a cute touch, however the "pet albino rat" is quite anachronistic!

The Reputation system is slightly changed, with starting positive levels coming from CHA and certain higher-level skills, and with increases and losses from piratical activity as the campaign progresses. A high reputation reduces one's Disguise skill, and also increases the reward for capture. There is around a dozen Legendary Abilities with a pirate flavour, although "Always Something To Swing From" will require some pretty special narrative interventions at times. There is also a recursive Vice ability. Starting characters have 2 points of Vice, around a score of major personality pirate-styled personality characteristics (avarice, blasphemy, cruelty, drink etc). Characters who indulge their Vice gain Hero Points, Hero Points can be used to

purchase another Vice, which then can be used... The effect is that legendary characters having larger than life personalities.

The equipment chapter includes a fair variety of personal weapons, armour, a passing mention of clothes, and absolutely nothing else. What is provided is mostly fine, although the inclusion of the hira-shuriken is quite unexpected.

Crew, Ships, and Plunder

Pirate crews are primarily defined by their skill levels (from Landlubbers 15% to Devils Straight from Hell 150%) in an

unspecified selection, although we are informed that "Shiphandling, Boating, Gunnery or throat-cutting are of more use to a pirate crew than being able to dance or speak prettily". A selection (10%) are better or worse than the standard, so "choice men" can be picked for special missions. Officers provide a bonus to crew skill checks equal to 1/10th of the officer's skill. Crew morale is also related to base skill level, and modified by various office and crew skills (e.g., musicians and cooks add a bonus), which also adds an additional bonus to skill checks - which makes the base skill level offered at the beginning of the chapter wrong. To be fair, morale can vary by circumstance, but the assumption of tying base skill to base morale is perhaps not the wisest decision. There are rules on the division of spoils (a little overly generous, historically, to the senior officers), recompense for injuries, and a somewhat drawn out system for elections.

To go with the crew, a variety of ships are offered with game and descriptive statistics (length, draft, capacity, speed, seaworthiness, structure points, weapons, crew, and skill bonuses), with a brief sidebar for cost. Imperial measurements is used for style reasons rather than metric. Some 17 vessel-types are given statistics, ranging from the canoe to the warship, with the opportunity for some custom configurations (e.g., bulwarks, aft guns etc). Optionally they have quirks as well, both positive and negative. Movement speed and maneuverability is affected by weather and sail configuration. As can be expected there are rules for damage (to structure points and seaworthiness modifiers) and repairs, along with various natural dangers that occur both from on-board life (e.g., disease) and natural hazards to the ship.

Although ten pages dedicated to the "Piracy and Plunder" chapter, these are nearly all tables; random weather, encounters at sea, events on board, strangers on shore, random vessel (and subtables), and a variety of plunder tables with base determination from the ship type. Of preferential detail, the chapter on "Combat on the High Seas" starts off with ship-board duels, with an emphasis on gaining Advantage, which can be derived from successful hits etc, but then compounds as Advantage gives skill bonuses. A more abstract system is used for crew vs crew combat, which tracks general wounded states that can then be applied on a per-character basis if desired. Player characters also have the opportunity to take up "Heroic Actions" in mass combat which can inspire and give bonuses to a crew. Ship-to-ship combat is likewise abstract with a contest to either flee or catch an opponent, an exchange of fire (with a critical hits chart), and potential boarding.

Settings

Ports are typed as pirate, minor trade, major trade, or fortressed. The reception of pirates in port of course varies, and the main purpose from the book's point of view, is the opportunity to sell one's plunder. The very short chapter on ports is followed up by a range of campaign ideas, which starts with descriptive text on historical piracy, which includes a section on the era of bucanneers and privateers. There is also a descriptive text for cinematic piracy, for which much of the book seems to be have written in mind. The section on supernatural piracy is quite quirky, with a historical tie-in of ships of unintergrated runes crossing the Atlantic serving as pirate-bait, with other ideas including pirates and ghosts, pirates and voodoo, and the rediscovery of Greek clockwork for an alternative setting. A very notable absence is the use of the supplement in the Glorantha setting. Finally, statistics for eight sample NPCs are offered.

Evaluation

RuneQuest Pirates has some excellent additions and elaborations to the core RuneQuest ruleset, and certainl is a necessary supplement for those who wish to play a campaign with the narrow focus that it has set itself. Whilst many of the rule elaborations are designed towards the appropriate stylistics of a pirate setting, a number are stylish *and* cinematic, which does come across a little at odds to a game that historically has a reputation for realism. Indeed, the supplement is best used for such games, although with a bit of tweaking the volume can be turned down a level. Whilst

a solidly produced book, and having a fairly good signal-to-noise ratio overall, there is an overuse of tables when more general descriptions could have been used instead.

Overall this book is mainly useful as a handbook for actual play, with somewhat minimal background and setting information. There is a great deal of material that can be used, but it should be reviewed so it accords with the expectations of the group on the realism-cinematic scale. Certainly it is *recommended*, but recommended with the aforementioned warnings.

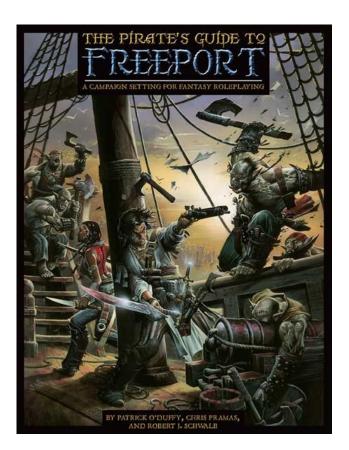
Style: 1 + .3 (layout) + .5 (art) + .7 (coolness) + .6 (readability) + .7 (product) = 3.9

Substance: 1 + .5 (content) + .6 (text) + .7 (fun) + .5 (workmanship) + .6 (system) = 3.9

The Pirates Guide to Freeport

Introduction and Product

With a violently attractive cover, the Pirates Guide of Freeport illustrates what the subtitle suggests - a fantasy setting for a pirate styled game, but as one reads the text various horror elements are also introduced (given the superstitions of pirate cultures this is very appropriate). The 256p hardback book is nicely bound with gloss paper to the usual standard



expected by Green Ronin and whilst written to be systemless it has also been ported to True20, D20, FATE, Savage Worlds etc., as Companions, a bit of an indication of its popularity and as a follow-on to the original sourcebook Freeport: City of Adventure and subsequent supplements (Death in Freeport winning Origins Award and ENnie Awards was particularly notable).

The text is mostly printed in a two-column justified serif font with headings in stylised semi-written font, along with highlighted excerpts with a parchment-styled border. There is a delightfully extensive table of contents, and equally impressive index. The writing style is informal with humour of varying quality thrown in for good measure ("Three Killed My 'Magic Deer' Cultist" is a personal favourite, a hat-tip to Green Ronin's game, Blue Rose), but with a good sense of narrative flow and overall readability. The interior art is mostly greyscale with some full-colour pieces and of varying quality, both in technique and creativity, and are sometimes contextually appropriate. Some of the qualitative choices of what belonged in colour and what belonged in greyscale are a little unexpected.

Beginning with a rather uninteresting narrative, the Introduction dives right into what this product is all about; systemless, a small chain of islands that can easily dropped into an existing world, Gods named by portfolio rather than title, a compilation, consolidation, and update of material from existing Freeport books and assuming events from the original adventures.

Freeport, The Setting

A chapter is dedicated to the history of Freeport, the city itself being "a few hundred years old", but originally inhabited or at least recorded as such since the time of a mysterious past of evil sorcerers of the Serpent Empire - and it is here that the influence of Lovecraftian horror becomes most evident with references to the worship of Yig (so much for setting-free unnamed deities), the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign, and so forth. A "Great Old One" destroy the Serpent Empire and tears apart what was a large island into a chain, one part having a "natural" harbour and thus eventually becoming "the most notorious pirate haven in the world". As organised navies challenged Freeport, it responded in kind with the resulting war and civil war eventually led to Freeport becoming recognised as a sovereign city-state. It has its challenges, most notably the attempt of a Thieves Guild to engage in slave trading, and a major war with the distant slaver-city of Mazin, but none as great as an attempt by the city's Sea Lord to spread madness throughout the word with a magical ritual and a wonderous lighthouse. It was this latter challenge that serves as the stories for the original Freeport trilogy. A crisis following these events unfolded (including an invasion, a hurricane, and a major fire), but eventually settled down with a new Sea Lord rebuilding the city.

An overall summary of the city is provided initially in short paragraphs to provide a lay of the land. The layout of the city is appropriately described for haphazard design, and the common lack of streetnames and streetsigns reminds me of cities in developing nations, along with the use of rickshaws as a mode of transport and the offers of guides - something that is missing is the grim detail of deeply subcontracted services. The city is a bustling, noisy, crowded, mainly human, but with a sizable population of D&D-style 'races'. Social status is determined by wealth more the lineage, a common hand-to-mouth existence among many sailors, the presence of a sailor's creole and slang, a merchant and service economy, the surprising existence of a functioning university and an inventor subculture with a controlled Wizard's Guild. The people are superstitious (primarily following a God of Pirates, a God of the Sea, a God of Knowledge, and a God of War, plus some unsavoury cults), and are prone to 'entertainment', primarily drink, narcotics, and gambling, although the usual sailor's practise is not mentioned as a topic in its own right.

There is a government of sorts, a non-hereditary Sea Lord and a Captain's Council, the latter having some veto powers and - despite its name - mainly from influential city guild leaders and merchants. There are several houses in the city with major influence. Whilst one may reasonably assume that they are "old money" the short descriptions, whilst often interesting, don't really provide much information in most cases on the source of their wealth and income. The executive branch of the government is partially fulfilled by the somewhat anarchronistic Sea Lord's Guard and more commonly by the often-absent Watch. For external threats, and to threat externally, there is an impressive formal navy and informal privateer network. Description is provided of criminal investigation (such as it is), the trial process, and a rather lenient (for the setting) punishment regimen according to crime. There is an underworld of course, and quite a significant one, mainly into drugs and protection rackets, but avoiding slavery.

Districts and Denizens

Each of the main districts of the supplement receives its own chapter, which really is a stunning degree of detail (indeed, perhaps more of the culture and background would have been more appropriate). In order, the districts so

described are The Docks, Scurvytown, Bloodsalt, Eastern District, Old City, Drac's End, Temple District, Merchant District, Warehouse District, and The Underside. With a population described as reaching ten thousand during the busiest times of year, a roughly even distribution would see about 1,000 people per chapter and district. So it is not just sheer page count but an impressive, almost excessive, level of detail that is provided. Each district is provided with a map - indicating far too many buildings for the population size and density supposed - and adventure seeds for each location which ties in with the major personalities, typically interesting and very underdeveloped. The descriptions that follow are not the order they are given in the book, but rather one by association.

The Docks region is designed for trade and visitors, a tolerant and cosmopolitan district. Major features include the seaside market, various bars, a rather unusual Society of Lobster Men, the city's main newspaper, and as a surprising and acceptable anachronism, a very effective Longshoreman's Union. Next to the Docks region is the warehouse district, a place which strangely has the best organisation of buildings on the map. Apart from expected activities, it also has very secure holdings for valuables, an auction house, the office of public records, and the Pilot's Guild. Beyond the Warehouse District is the Merchant District, where the wealthy live and where - for a change - population density does match the map. This is home to the Merchant's Guild, and the more exclusive clubs, not to mention an Opera House.

In rather stark contrast, 'Scurvytown' (an unofficial nickname) is subject to a "decrepit condition, lawless population, and grinding poverty". Appropriately it is downhill from the more salubrious Old City and the Eastern District. Again it has far too many buildings for the population. Of particular note in this region is a neighbourhood dedicated to vice in a myriad of forms, an rather unusual rodent infestation (unusual even for Scurvytown), appropriately a fish market, and most inappropriately, the equivalent of a casino. A step further down the social scale is Bloodsalt, a new community primarily inhabited by orcs and their kin, established following recruitment for the Reclamation Project. It is a disparate shanty town with only a few buildings having any semblance of permancy. The area is rough, very rough, but there is a certain victimised pride among the Orcish peoples who have been persecuted by a racist human population. Sadly, this district is somewhat underdeveloped, both in the descriptive sense, and in the sense of developing interesting narratives, with the most interest location and resident being a goblin wizard.

Surrounded by impoverishment and disorganised crime, the insecure middle-calss of the Eastern District have themselves turned to the Syndicate a criminal organisation run by a halfling. Locations of note include the city's asylum, a fraternal organisation, and a political meethouse. Of a similar class status and above, but inhabited by old money, the Old City district is surrounded by the original city walls and, unsurprisingly, has the appropriate structures such as the Sea Lord's Palace, the legal and military administration, and the Wizard's Guild. Wedged between the Old City and the Merchant District is a Temple District, with its spacious roads and impressive buildings and amusingly, a "Fool's Market" where those of a newfound religion may preach their revelations.

On the outskirts, like a suburb beyond the Old City, the Drac's End district is where the city becomes farmland and eventually jungle. It is a place where the recent great fire in the city has left a deep impression, illustrated by the large number of temporary shelters. As juxtaposition, Drac's End is the location of the city's centre for higher education, The Freeport Institute, along with a martial arts institute. Finally, there's the Underside, a world in itself of the sewer network and hidden or forgotten tunnels. This is, obviously, not a heavily populated area, home only to the "misfits, the mad, the sick, and the dead (and the undead)", but also (and this is not giving too much away) the Serpent People.

Around twenty pages is spent on describing the major NPCs of Freeport in the Denizens chapter, with lengthy descriptions given to some fourteen major characters and around a paragraph to about another twenty. For the major characters, extensive background and plans are provided along with adventure seeds involving the personage. As can be

expected, the major characters have complex personalities, dramatic backgrounds, and quite often there is a lot more to them than what meets the eye.

Region and Elaboration

The final chapters of the book expands Freeport into a larger region, describing in greater detail the geographical context. As part of a small group of islands, surrounded by coral reefs, with a semi-tropical climate, and mainly calm seas, Freeport is in a rather blessed environment. There are a couple of smaller settlements nearby in the small archipelago, and an impressive volcano. However, all is not entirely well, as the great fire damaged much of the jungle and the people of Freeport are beginning to realise how much they depended on those lands - especially given that plant life stubbornly refuses to grow on the damaged areas. Increasingly Freeport finds itself dependent on the nearby farming village of Cabbage Crack, and faces a challenge in the utterly improbable lawless town of Libertyville. Finally, there is one of the wonders of the world, the Freeport Lighthouse, still in operation but thankfully removed from the unfortunate incident of a few years prior.

Going a step beyond this is a description of the wider world, starting with a cosmology that witnesses the "unconsciously guided creation" that lead to the Primal Gods, and especially Yig and the formation of the island Valossa, which forms a sort of *axis mundi* by which other lands are attracted to it. It's destruction, leaving The Serpent Teeth and The Continent nearby. The history of that region is the usual rise and fall of empires, surprisingly powerful ones actually, when the size of the region is considered. Still, as things fall apart, the Continent is now competed space between several kingdoms and tribal lands of various power, all of which are described in some detail, about a page each, some of which have at least a modicum of interesting history and potential dynamic. A map is offered as well, and sadly it must be one of the worst maps in terms of plausible geography to be dumped on the world of roleplaying. Mountain ranges are in the wrong place, rivers traverse over such ranges, there is little sense of prevailing winds, ocean currents, or a plausible distribution of flora.

The final chapter, using Freeport, provides some pretty obvious about on how to use Freeport in a world of one's choosing, most of which should be self-evident from reading the product. Somewhat more usefully is listing of the potential character types that could find themselves in Freeport, and even better still is the few pages dedicated to living in Freeport, and nautical experiences. A even better component is the 'sidebar' discussion of thematic considerations for Freeport games; action, intrigue, horror, and humour. The proposals for altering ("fine-tuning") Freeport are a useful additions and some of them probably make more sense that the default setting. A series of "campaign threads", detailed narrative trajectories, are offered to add additional flavour to a GM's overall campaign as consistent side-plots. The product ends with a publication of history of the Freeport setting, starting from Death in Freeport (2000) all the way to Crisis in Freeport (2006).

Overall

Stylistically, Freeport is an impressive product with above average art (albeit of varying quality) and layout, a very impressive setting and combination of horror and pirate genres, although oddly the latter never quite seems to ring true. It's more about a rough port city-state, rather than a pirate campaign and indeed the dearth of information dedicated to piracy on the high seas is very surprising and frankly, inappropriate. However, given this it is an enjoyable read, and of course, physically, a delight to hold.

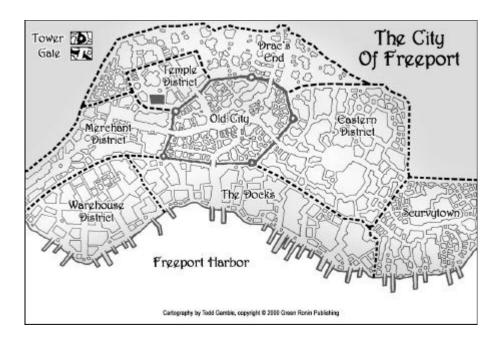
In terms of substance, it covers a lot of ground in impressive detail, especially in terms of locations, people, and plot seeds. However, given the amount of space that is offered to these concerns, what was overlooked (flora and fauna, weather patterns, demographics) was somewhat surprising as the aforementioned disparity between alleged population and density. What is offered is done with insufficient attention of signal-to-fluff, with just a little too much on the latter, and with too much repetition of various features.

With numerous adventure seeds and the impressive threads to choose from, and with a decent combination of genre-elements, Freeport is a very much a fun place to play an adventure campaign, that largely shows a great deal of internal consistency, despite several quirky anachronisms. Finally, one cannot fault the basic system that is offered in terms of integration of abstract levels in character descriptions, although this could have, and should have, been elaborated for other challenges as well.

Overall impressions are thus somewhat mixed. This is a good product, indeed, a very good product, even accounting for its flaws and verbosity. A little more care, a little more elaboration, a savage editor and a mean art critic could have made it a great product.

Style: 1 + .6 (layout) + .6 (art) + .7 (coolness) + .8 (readability) + .8 (product) = 4.5

Substance: 1 + .6 (content) + .4 (text) + .9 (fun) + .6 (workmanship) + .4 (system) = 3.9



CREW OF THE DAMNED: PIRATICAL PREGENS

by Karl David Brown

This article contains a mix of pirate characters generated as starting level PCs for a variety of game systems and settings. These characters could also be used as adversaries against low level characters or minions to annoy experienced adventurers.

D&D 5th Edition: Brorazon the Sail Burner

Brorazon is a crude rhino sized dragon who has sailed with pirate bands in search of treasure.

Barbarian 1, Pirate, Drakon (see Nautical Races this issue). True

Neutral. STR15 (+2), DEX12(+1), CON15(+2), INT9 (-1), WIS12(+1),

CHA8(-1). Proficiency bonus +2.

Proficient saving throws: Str+4 and Con+4. Proficient skills:

Athletics +4, Intimidation +1, Perception +3, Survival +3. Passive perception 13. Languages: Draconic, Common. Other proficiencies: Unarmed, light and medium armour, navigator's tools and water vehicles (the ability to use these is severely limited by Tool Use 2).

AC13. Initiative +1. Land speed 30. Maximum HP14. HD1d12. Bite reach 10ft +4 2d6+2 piercing or Claw reach 5ft +4 2d4+2 slashing. Barbarian

Rage feature two uses, rage damage bonus +2. Fire breath 15ft cone 2d6 fire damage, Dex save DC12 for half damage, recharged by a short or long rest. Damage resistance fire and slashing damage.

Pouch containing 20gp. A second pouch containing a healing potion and strange gold coin minted in an unknown nation.

Personality traits, bonds and flaws: Stretches the truth for the sake of a good story, language as foul as an otyugh's nest. Someday will own my own ship and chart my own destiny. I was cheated out of my share of the profits, and I want to get my due. My pride will probably lead to my destruction.

Large (rhino sized) dragon with Tool Use 2. Poor wings function as per Featherfall at will.

Bad reputation (see PHB139).

Tunnels & Trolls 5th Edition: Flynn

This character was created using the character creation guide in RPG Review issue 22. However, changes to the T&T rules are additions and therefore Flynn is usable without those rules.

Elf Rogue (Pirate) Level 1. Use any weapon can learn to cast spells but currently has none.

A tall athletic Elf in typical pirate garb.

ST14 IQ12 LK14 CON8 DEX18 CHR30 SPeed15

Money: Gold0, Silver 50

Max ST28, Adds+10, Height 6'11, Weight 225Lbs, Age54, Languages: Elvish and Common.

Wt possible: 1400, half wt possible 700. Carried 95units

Note personal Adds have already been applied to weapon.

Scimitar Dice+Adds 4d+10, ST10, DEX11, Wt100

Warm dry clothing and pack Wt10

Calf high boots Wt20

Leather Jerkin Hits1, ST1,Wt15

Conan 2nd Edition (Mongoose): Bloody Aja

Conan is a d20 based games extensively altered to capture the feel of Howard's Conan sword and sorcery stories.

Bloody Aja is a huge brutal pirate.

Race: South Islander. Class: Pirate 1. Male. 25 years old. Height 7'1". Weight 311Lbs. Left handed. Hair: black braids. Eyes: black. Skin: Black. Code of Honour: Nil. Allegiance 1: Cap'n Bajujh.

Allegiance 2: The 'Red Shark's crew. The name of the captain and the ship could be changed to suit. Reputation: +2 (base 0 then +2)

STR18(+4), DEX12(+1), CON14(+2), INT8(-1), WIS8(-1), CHA13+1)

Saves: Fort+4, Ref+3, Wil+1. (-2 for Wil saves against Terror due to superstitions).

Hit points:10.

Lift over head 300, lift off ground 600, push/drag 1500. Current load 25, Speed 30.

Defenses: Base Defense 10, Parry 14, Dodge 11 (12 with armour off, cultural bonus).

Leather Jerkin: type light, DR 4, max dex +6, chk penalty -1, spell failure 40, speed 30, wt 5.

Offenses: Initiative +3. Base Attack Bonus +0. Other attack bonuses parenthesis () indicates attacks with spears. Melee+4(+5), finesse +1 (+2), ranged +1(+2).

Proficiencies: all simple weapons, all melee weapons. Cultural weapons +1 spears and javelins.

Attacks: Brawl p123&145, attack+4, damage 1d6+4, crit x2, type B, not finesse, Notes lethal or non-lethal.

Javelins: attack +2, damage 1d8+4, crit x2, AP1, range 30, hardness 5, HP3, type P, weight 2x5Lbs, not finesse, has 5 in a 'quiver'

The next two weapons can be used together with no penalty for two weapon combat.

War Club: attack +4, damage 2d6+4, crit x2, AP4, hardness 5, HP10, type B, size 2h, weight 6Lbs, not finesse,

Akbitanan dagger: attack+4, damage d4+2, crit19-20 x2, AP3, range 10, hardness 15, HP2, type P, size Lt, weight 1Lbs, finesse (Yes), off-hand use hidden in clothing when not in use.

Combat Manoeuvers: Bull Charge, To The Hilt.

Skills: those with ranks or modified by armour are listed. A=modifier for armour when worn. R=ranks from race (culture).

Appraise:+0=1rank-1Stat

Balance:+1=1rank+1stat-1A

Bluff: +2=1rank+1stat

Climb:+4=1rank+4stat-1A

Craft(Carpenter):0=1rank-1stat

Escape Artist:+0=0rank+1stat-1A

Initimidate:+5=4ranks+1stat

Jump:+4=1rank+4stat-1A

Knowledge (geography): 0=1rank-1stat

Knowledge (local, South Islands):+1=2R-1stat

Perform (Dance): +5=2R+1stat+2 special race bonus

Profession (Sailor): +1=2R-1stat

Survival+1=2R-1stat

Swim+5=1rank+4stat

Tumble 0=-1A+1stat

Feats: two weapon combat, power attack, brawl. (includes

bonus feat

for favored class).

Languages (illiterate in all): Argossean, South Island,

Black Coast.

Special Abilities: favoured class barbarian or pirate, seamanship +1,

ferocious attack (Conan 2nd Edition p58).

Fate Points: 3

Equipment: belt (waist 0.5Lbs), red silk breeches (legs 0Lbs), merchant quality red doublet worn open at the front (torso 0.5Lbs), sandals (feet 0.5Lbs), 4 fishhooks (doublet 0Lbs), drinking jack (belt 0.5Lbs), Costrel of wine (belt 0Lbs), belt pouch (belt 0.5Lbs). Total mass general gear 7LBS.

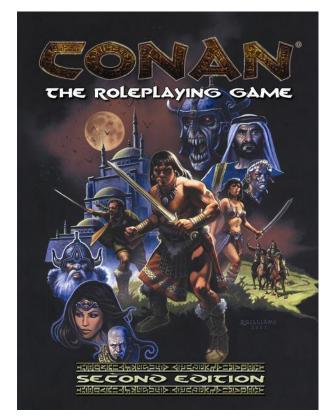
Slave: Shubba is a submissive and loyal male slave. The Conan rpg provides no set attributes for the slaves on the equipment list. The implied intent is that these people do not fight for the PC. Language: Black Coast. Kushite racial features (Conan 2nd Edition p26). Shubba acts as a porter carrying the following: slave collar (2Lbs), loin cloth (0Lbs), sandals (0.5Lbs), manacles (carried but not usually worn 2Lbs), kit bag (0.5Lbs), iron pot (2Lbs), 2 waterskins (0Lbs), bedroll (5Lbs), candle lantern (3Lbs), whetstone (1Lbs), sack folded (0.5Lbs), wooden bowl (0Lbs), 50ft hemp rope (10Lbs), two torches (1Lbs each).

Total mass carried by Shubba 28.5Lbs.

GURPS 3rd Edition, Ice Age. Eel

Prehistoric characters for GURPS first appeared in GURPS Ice Age, later these rules were expanded in GURPS Dinosaurs and Other Prehistoric Creatures.

Cro-Magnon, 17 years old, height 5'11", weight 155Lbs, 100pt.



Eel was a cocky young hunter whose welcome advances towards the shaman's daughter in contradiction of a religious taboo saw him exiled. Stealing a dugout canoe he escaped down-river hoping to reach the warmer south before winter. An inexperience hunter he has taken to stealing in the dead of night to survive.

ST12 (20), DX12 (20), IQ12 (20), HT13 (30) (Attributes: +90pt)

Absolute Direction(5), Attractive (5), alertness+1 (5), acute hearing+1(2). (Advantages: +17pt), Short lifespan (-10), Social Status -3 Outcast (-15), Impulsive (-10), Struggling (-10), Reputation (-2 to reaction roll, people of the northern half of the river's length (large class of people)x1/2, sometimes x1/2, total=-1/2pt). (Disadvantages: -45.5pt, note in an Ice Age setting all characters have Short Lifespan and this species trait would not count toward the usual -40pt Disadvantages limit. If Eel fell in with time travelers his Outcast and/or Struggling Disadvantages would be likely to change rapidly).

Skills (type pt rating): Axe/Mace (PA 1 11), Boating (PA 2 12), Bow& Palette* (PA 1 11), Bow (PH 1 10), Brawling (PE 1 12), Cooking (ME 2 13), Fast-Talk (MA 2 12), Fishing (ME 2 13), Flint Sparking* (PE 2 13), Gesture (ME 2 13), Hiking (PA(HT) 2 13), Leatherworking (ME 2 13), Mimicry (X 2 X), Naturalist (MH 2 11), Survival type? (MA 2 12), Tracking (MA 2 12), Running (PH(HT) 2 12), Sex Appeal (MA(HT) 2 13), Sling (PH 2 12), Spear (PA 1 11), Spear-thrower (PA 1 11), Spear Throwing (PA 2 12) Swimming (PE 2 13), Throwing stick (PE 1 12)

Skills: 29pt *Compendium I page 152.

5pt points for equipment to have the dugout canoe. See Compendium I page 17.

Equipment: Dugout canoe, Tunic boots leggings (6Lbs), fur cloak (3Lbs), flint sparker (1Lbs), small pouch (0.5Lbs), fire hardened spear (imp thr reach 1, 3Lbs, min Str8, +1 damage if used 2h or thrown). Total: 13.5Lbs, unencumbered.

Figured characteristics: Swing 1d-1, thrust 1d+2, Basic speed 6.25, Move 7 (due to Running skill).

Cloak PD1 DR 1 from behind only Boots DR1 feet. Tunic DR1 areas 9-11, 17-18 Leggings PD1 DR1 covers the legs (only)

Dodge: 6, Block: no shield, Parry: spear 5.

Reaction+/-: Attractive +1, Outcast -3=-2, if reputation applies -4.

Legends of Anglerre: The Three of Cutlasses

Despite it's title Legends of Anglerre is a tool-kit to build your own fantasy world with FATE. It also contains two campaign settings. The three PCs presented would suit the Hither Kingdoms setting or any other high fantasy world with the standard tropes. Though options are provided for solo character generation FATE works best when players

generate a group of characters, therefore I have provided a party of three. All three are 'Good' rated characters.

Ashrel of Anjuslo Elf Water Elementalist

Phase 1 Early Days: The spires of Anjuslo: raised among the spires and traditions of Anjuslo, where elves first set foot in the Hither Kingdoms. I was accepted into the Academy of Aqilis to learn the ancient craft of magic. My mother was so proud when I graduated. My family, the Valesqins, are still respected wizards in Anjuslo and I have many old friends there.

Phase 2 Legend: Ashrel and the pirates of the Silver Sea: Hired as ship's wizard I set sail for Argalan only to be waylaid on the Silver Sea by bloodthirsty pirates. After a most of the crew was slaughtered us few survivors were set adrift in the jolly boat.

Phase 3 Guest Star: Ashrel the Imperial Privateer Our jolly boat was rescued by the Imperial Navy. Eager for payback I enlisted to hunt pirates. One red-flagged sloop nearly eluded us then when they were at our mercy the Admiral

pardons then and sets me to watch them as they hunt their former fellows. One of these low-life's, Garod, seems determined to be riend me.

- 6 Aspects: Elf born in Anjuslo, Water Wizard of Aqilis, I have sailed from First Arri-val to the Silver Sea, death is to good for pirate scum, I am the Admiral's eyes.
- 3 Stunts: Water Walk (Elements), Create Water (Elements), Water Perception (Ele-ments).

15pt of skills: Elements (Water, Good 3), Academics (Fair 2), Resources (Fair 2), Science (Fair 2), Investigation (Average 1), Art (Average 1), Artificer (Average 1), Resolve (Average 1), Stealth (Average 1) Melee Weapons (Average 1).

Equipment: Short sword, lantern, scroll case, staff, waterskin, writing equipment, bedroll, a bottle of fine elven wine, pint of oil.

Garod the Privateer Human Imperial Pirate

Phase 1 Early Days: To the gutter born: Garod was born into poverty, but within sight of ruins of the Old Empire's glory, in the slums of Koborreth. He was an urchin child and then a burglar until he escaped the Law aboard a pirate sloop. He has lost track of his impoverished parents and has come to assume they are dead.

Phase 2 Legend: Garod against the Imperial Navy: The pirate sloop ranged out of the Simris Isles raiding spice ships for plunder. Eventually we ran afoul of the Imperial Navy but we eluded the great galleys for weeks. At last caught, we fought like demons but could not withstand the might of the Imperial Warships. Then a miracle, impressed by our skills the Admiral offered us pardons and letters of Marque. Apparently, it takes a pirate to catch another.

Phase 3 Guest Star: Garod and the Water Wizard: So we hunt pirates now, its hard fighting compared to fat spice ships, but fight we must for that damned elf wiz-ard watches to ensure we do our duty. Best

stay on his good side.

- 6 Aspects: To the gutter born, Wanted burglar in Koborreth, Letter of Pardon, We hunt the hunters now, Currying Ashrel's favor, Blooded fighter.
- 3 Stunts: Quick Exit (Stealth), Strong Swimmer (athletics), Sea Dog (pilot).

15pt of skills: Burglary (Good 3), Athletics (Fair 2), Pilot (Fair 2), Stealth (Fair 2), Alertness (Average 1), Contacting (Average 1), Deceit (Average 1), Endurance (Average 1), Fists (Average 1), Melee Weapons (Average 1).

Equipment: Hand axe, dagger, belaying pin (club), backpack, bedroll, flask (empty), waterskin, a bit of stale bread and salami, bottle of ale.

Shriek Wilderling (Parrot) Thief

Phase 1 Early Days: A wandering soul: Hatched in the jungles of the far off Spice Lands Shriek always had a wandering soul. As soon as he came of age he flew out to the next ship that passed to see the world. The ship was a spice trader returning to Koborreth. In the streets of that city he fell in with Garod and fled with him happy to be aboard a ship and travelling again.

Phase 2 Legend: Shriek and the Barque of the Damned: Shriek quickly proved his worth as a scout and messenger. One evening a grey barque flying the red pirate flag is spied. The captain sends Shriek to fly across with an offer of parley. The range captain of the other crew invites Shriek in for rum but locks him below. The Barque is a ship of

Were-hyenas!

Phase 3 Guest Star: Shriek and the Admiral's Ear: The day finally came when the Imperial Navy caught up with us. If

Shriek had not flown across, drugged the Admi-ral's rum and convinced him in his stupor of the pirate crew's worth, well his pirate brothers would be swinging from the gallows.

6 Aspects: Flamboyant Parrot, "Don't be lookin' at me I just got 'ere", "Yerr not a skin-changer are yerr?", "I must warn Garod!", "Don't drink that unless yea want to do as yer told", silver-tongued.

3 Stunts: Glide (athletics), Flight (athletics), The Honest Lie (Deceit)

15pt of skills: Athletics (Good 3), Deceit (Fair 2), Alertness (Fair 2), Stealth (Fair 2), Endurance (Average 1), Gambling (Average 1), Fists (bite really, Average 1), Rapport (Average 1), Empathy (Average 1), Survival (Average 1)

Equipment: Bag of sunflower seeds, bottle of ale, seven assorted shiny baubles and knick-knacks of Mediocre value.

Savage Worlds Deluxe: B=X

A robot space pirate for a generic space-opera type setting using

Savage worlds De-luxe (SWD) and the Science Fiction Companion (SFC).

Profession: Rebel Space Pirate.

Race: Construct.

Height 200cm. Mass 150kg.

Quote: "Logic demands we disassemble the Empire and acquire its resources"

Description: A tall blocky humanoid seemingly made entirely out of old miss-matched parts. Its head is skull-like and painted white with cheap paint. B=X speaks with a poor synthesized 'robot' voice. It's a very old school lumbering robot.

Calculated scores: Charisma 0 (but Outsider SFC7), Pace 6, Parry 4, Toughness 6.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d10, Spirit d4, Strength d8, Vigor d8.

Skills: Pilot d4, Fighting d4, Intimidation d4, Notice d10, shooting d4, repair d10.

Hindrances: dependency electricity (SFC7), Outsider Construct (SFC7), Repro-grammed to destroy the Empire (Major Vow), Environmental weakness electricity (SFC8), Quirk 'Robot Speak', Greedy (minor).

Edges: Construct (SFC7), Mods (SFC7). Currently, B=X does not have any mods installed.

Gear

Flak Gun (SFC19): a large barreled weapon that looks something like a blunderbuss. The stats for this weapon are given SFC19.

BELLY OF THE BEAST

by Nicholas Moll

One of the greatest pirates the galaxy has ever known was Smiling Scarlet Kilik. Known for his lightning fast raids and uncanny ability to escape pursuit, Kilik roamed the stars for over a decade before being caught. Prior to Kilik's execution, however, the pirate was pressured to reveal the location of his amassed booty – reasoning that he must have hidden the vast sum of his plunder as spending it in anything but small and careful sums would have alerted the authorities. The location revealed by Kilik was something of a joke and a challenge: the belly of Behemoth, the great Space Whale. Interrogated over and over again, Kilik's claim was repeated and subsequently assumed to be true. Ever since his death, adventurers, pirates and vagabonds have sought to enter Behemoth seeking the treasure of Smiling Scarlet Kilik. None, however, have returned.

While only the Big Damn Sci-Fi core rules are required to play this adventure, the Game Master and Players alike may find the "That Damn Dirty Word" Core Companion and "This Is Omega Ball" Campaign Structure useful.

Press-Ganged!

The adventure opens with the characters having been press-ganged the night before. How they get there is entirely up to the Game Master. But the likely story is that they were in a star port or space station cantina when a fight broke out and a quick bump on the head later, here they are. Equally likely is that the characters may have been slaves or convicts sold into service on the Porter, not knowing what grisly fate awaited. They awake to find themselves in the hold of the Porter, a Cargo Ship. While the characters have their clothing they are stripped of any Armoury items such as weapons and armour. Curiously, each character is also shackled to the floor. This is because the characters have not been press-ganged to serve on a ship, but press-ganged to be served! The entire crew of is the Space-Whaler are Psychovores, who require fresh minds to feed them!

Let the characters stew in their cell and even try to escape for a bit. The chains can be broken with a successful Arcana roll and the lock can be picked with an Intuition roll, suffering a -2 penalty for lack of proper tools. Once their escape is successful, or once the character's are sufficiently frustrated, have the Psychovore cook come along to fetch them for the Crew's meal.

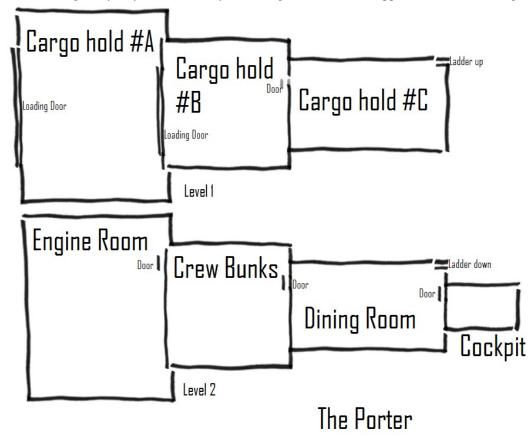
The Porter

The Porter itself is a relatively moderately sized cargo ship, containing three Cargo holds – the first two intended for larger cargo such as animal herds or shipments of minerals – while the third is intended for smaller goods, such as mail, parcels or personal affects. Under the command of its current, Psychovore, crew, however, the Porter has been refitted as something of a people-carrier. Cargo Hold #B has been, for instance, fitted with chains on the floor to shackle prisoners and Cargo Hold #C has been loaded with storage containers filled with body parts – the remains of the Psychovore's meals. Still, the Psychovore's have kept the Porter in good working order and the ship's statistics are as follows:

Description	E	F	P	S	Notes
The Porter	2	1	250	4	5 crew min.

The characters have been locked in Cargo Hold #B. Should they go exploring, Cargo Hold #A is empty and #C contains a hodgepodge of lockboxes, chests, containers, lockers and other storage items. Inside these boxes and

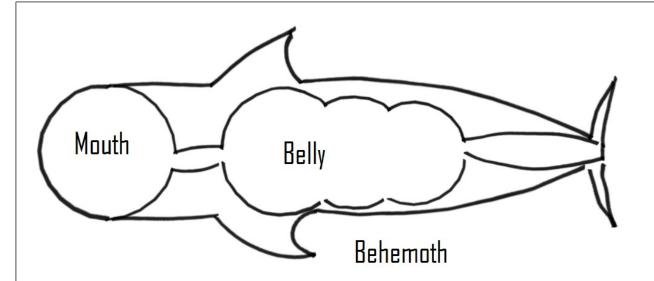
containers the characters find the bones of various sentient Species (a grisly collection of leftovers from the Psychovore's previous meals), Armoury items – most notably, their own lost equipment, and anything else the Game Master feels appropriate. The Porter itself is crewed by five Psychovores, two of which are located in the Cockpit, another one in the Engine Room with the forth and fifth napping in the crew bunks. If the characters are quiet (a Shatter roll for sneaking), they may make their way from Cargo Hold #C to the upper decks without being noticed.



Once the Psychovore crew are dealt with, the characters can investigate the Porter's mission somewhat. To do this, the characters could access the ship's databanks using an Intuition roll, intimidate any surviving Psychovore's with a Shatter or Vitality roll, or examining the lingering thought-matter of the decaying corpses in Cargo Hold #C with an Arcana roll (at -2 due to the deceased state of the targets). Success reveals the mission of the Porter and her crew: To find and enter Behemoth, massive space whale, in search of Smiling Scarlet Kilik's treasure.

Behemoth

No sooner have the character's taken control of the Porter than big red lights begin to flash. Sensors show that Behemoth has been located and the enormous Space Whale is coming right for the ship. Now, the Behemoth is a ship eater and its mouth is capable of swallowing the Porter in one foul gulp. The Psychovore's planned to let Behemoth do just that, relying on the sturdy structure of the Porter to ride their way into the belly of the beast. But the character's don't know that. Let the character's try to flee or fight Behemoth. Even if they are successful in killing the beast, they may still venture inside in search of the treasure. Behemoth, for its part, will try and eat the Porter.



Inside Behemoth, the Porter (if swallowed) will go straight from the mouth to the belly. Space Whale's generate their own atmosphere, so inside the mouth characters may walk about as if on a planet's surface. Any Shatter rolls for acrobatic or athletic actions, such as running or jumping, are at -2 dice, however, as Behemoth's tongue is squishy and covered in sticky saliva. The belly of Behemoth is a different story, however. While the Porter, another starship or even some wreckage will float on Behemoth's stomach juices, the juices themselves are quite murk and gooey (and any attempts to swim through it suffer a -2 penalty). Still, the stomach of Behemoth is a akin to a small sea or large lake, filled with many small, drifting islands of debris and containing a few inhabitants.

A Sporting Rivalry

Unfortunately, the Psychovore's weren't the first ones who have gone looking for Smiling Scarlet Kilik's treasure. Captain Garm of the Dagger, a Svartalfar, and Captain Leena of the Jolly Sparrow – a Human. Both have separate sailing sea-ships (that's right, the old fashioned water-based kind blown by wind, or in this cases – stomach fumes) containing crews of their own Species. Both Garm and Leena's ships (the Dagger and the Sparrow) use the exact same rules for starships as contained in the Big Damn Sci-Fi core rules, the only difference really being asthetic (stomach juices instead of space).

Description	E	F	P	S	Notes
The Dagger	3	6	25	1	10 crew min.
The Jolly Sparrow	4	2	29	4	13 crew min.

Both Garm and Leena know the other doesn't have the treasure. But each is convinced that if they don't eliminate the other, then their rival will find it first. Unfortunately, both like to leap on outsiders – Garm believing that any outsider is a potential weapon against Leena, and Leena believing that all outsiders possess some hidden knowledge about the treasure. And both have a "if you're not with me, you're against me" mentality, meaning that if the character's don't go with what Garm or Leena want, it'll be a long walk off a short plank into the stomach juices of Behemoth (a sadistic Game Master may even add a few predatory lifeforms in the juices, use the Carnivore statistics from "That Damn Dirty Word" and just assume they are aquatic). However, no matter how hard the characters look, there is no sign of the treasure anywhere in Behemoth.

Ending the Adventure

In truth, the Space Whale excreted Smiling Scarlet Kilik's treasure long ago. No matter how hard the characters or anyone else look, it will never be found. To end the adventure, the characters could join either crew or pit both against each other and rule the belly of Behemoth. At the same time, with no treasure and two deranged pirate captains battling it out, it may be prudent simply to leave – particularly if the characters killed Behemoth. If the Space Whale is dead, they have mere days before it doesn't only cease to produce atmosphere, but vent it as well. If this is the case, the characters may attempt to escape the way they came in, through the mouth, or go out the... other end.

Extras

Ancient Space Whale

Being so hideously enormous (big enough to eat a small-to-medium sized star ship), an Anceint Space Whale is generally provided with the statistics of a starship. Here, Engine represents the ability of the Space Whale to propel itself through the void depths of space, Firepower its ability to slam, bite and ram starships and other Space Whales, and Structure its enormous bulk. While a Space Whale has Arcana, their brains are generally too large for the average adventurer's psyschic abilities to affect (if only the opposite was true!).

Description	E	F	P	S	Notes
Space Whale	5	6	0	8	Arcana 3, Swallow

Swallow: A Space Whale may swallow a starship. In doing so, the starship must make a Structure roll or be destroyed.

Leena and her Human Blackhearts

Expanding from their small blue world, Humans were long considered the runts of the galaxy. For Leena and her gang of ruffians, humanity's runt status was taken as a badge of honour. Leena is driven by loyalty to her men. She promised them the treasure of Smiling Scarlet Kilik and she means to deliver.

Description: Like most of the galaxy's sentient species, Humans have a torso, two legs, two arms, and one head, two eyes, one nose and a mouth for eating, breathing and communicating. Leena cuts a very "piratical" image herself, with an eye-patch and tri-corn hat adorning her head, dressed in a corset and old-style naval jacket.

Species Features: Phenotypes, Spirit.

Arcana 3, Intuition 5, Shatter 5, Vitality 4

Barrier 4, Defence 6 (5 unarmoured), Wounds 8

Items: Axe (+2), Light Armour (+1), Scatter Blaster (+3).

Psychovore

Psychovores are parasitical humanoids that feed on psychic energy. They are not only immune to Arcana-orientated phenomenon but actively nourished by it. As such, Psychovores are renowned xeno-cannibals (in the sense that they devour sentient species) – hunting down and feasting on any Arcana-heavy Species.

Description: White, crystalline-like exoskeleton bodies lined with "hairline" fractures arranged in a long spider-web of hexagonal shapes. Each Psychovore possesses three eyes; two horizontal from each other and a third vertically lower from the left, sitting just above their wide maws of needle-like teeth.

Species Features: Immunity (Psychic), Univour (Psychic).

Arcana 4, Intuition 2, Shatter 1, Vitality 4

Barrier 5 (3 natural), Defence 1, Wounds 5 Items: Psionic Helm (+2), Psy-Pistol (+3).

Garm and his Svartalfar Cutthroats

The children of Svartalfheim are known throughout the galaxy for their agility and blood-lust, stereotyped as slavers, pirates, and sexual deviants. Captain Garm and his gang of cutthroats are no exception. Driven by greed to seek out Behemoth, and swallowed subsequently, Garm has come to see the treasure and Leena as a conquest he must have to prove himself a proper Svartalfar.

Description: Tall, lithe, agile humanoids with angular features and pointy ears. Garm himself is a figure of extravagance, clad in an exotic fur cloak with long, oiled locks of hair and jewel-encrusted body armour. Species Features: Agile, Sadist.

Arcana 4, Intuition 4, Shatter 4, Vitality 1

Barrier 4, Defense 5 (4 unarmoured), Wounds 5

Armory: Blaster Pistol (+3), Light Armour (+1), Sword (+3).

PIRATES OF MIDDLE EARTH

by Michael Cole

1 Part 1: Pirates in Tolkien

Aside from the Corsairs of Umbar, Tolkien himself does not make much mention of pirating. There are some notes of Numenor raiding the mainland, but given the naval power of Numenor, this could not be considered piratical pillaging in the strictest sense.

"...after Minastir, the Kings [of Númenor] became greedy of wealth and power. ... their havens became fortresses, holding wide coastlands in subjugation. Atanamir and his successors levied heavy tribute, and the ships of the Númenóreans returned laden with spoil." (The Return of the King, Appendix A (p316))

So to evaluate pirates in Middle Earth, we must only consider the Corsairs.

1.1 The Tale of Years and The Annals of the Kings and Rulers

This (Appendix B of The Return of the King) is where we get most of our information about the Corsairs. The first note is for 1448, with "Rebels [of Castamir's forces] escape [the siege of Pelagir] and seize Umbar". From the Annals, we are informed that "...Castamir's sons escaped, and with others of their kin and many people of the fleets ... sailed away and established themselves at Umbar."

We then have in the next entry, 1540, almost 100 years later, "King Aldamir slain in way with the Harad and Corsairs of Umbar". From this we can assume that we had almost 100 years of war, and that during this time, the Corsairs, once pure-blood (and proud of it) Gondorians were now reduced to alliances with the Haradrim. We could also assume that the pure-bloodlines had become diluted somewhat simply due to the length of time and lack of initial stock.

Then in 1634, almost another hundred years later, "The Corsairs ravage Pelagir and slay King Minardil." The Corsairs are stated in the annals to have been "...led by Angamaitë and Sangahyando, the great-grandsons of Castamir."

No further mention until 1810, when "King Telumehtar Umbardacil [Umbar-victor] retakes Umbar and drives out the Corsairs." Here, in the Annals, it is noted that "... the last descendants of Castamir perished, ..." Once Umbar was lost again, which occurred "soon", it was held by the Men of the Harad.

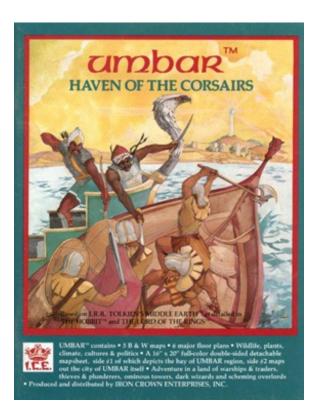
And this is the last mention until they are overrun by Aragorn at Pelagir. It is noted in the Annals that "... Umbar remained at war with Gondor for many lives of men, ... [and] was never again completely subdued until the days of Elessar; ..."

1.2 The Battle of Pelennor Fields and The Last Debate

Here we get our best picture of the Corsairs, even though their ships are now crewed by the Grey Company. "... dromunds, and ships of great draught with many oars, and with black sails bellying in the breeze." In the later chapter, we are told that, "... the main fleet of Umbar, fifty great ships and smaller vessels beyond count." Also mentioned is that the ships contained, "...slaves chained to the oars. ... [many of] who had been folk of Gondor taken in raids."

A "dromund" is a generic term for a large, fast-sailing ship of the Middle Ages. It is also the Middle-English form for dromon, a Greek galley, and the most important warship of the Byzantine Navy. Given the above passages, and Tolkien's own love of history, I would go with Tolkien intending to represent a force of galleys rather than sailing vessels. The exact details are too long to go into here, but I would encourage readers to visit http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dromon for some background.

Whichever way you interpret it, the standard idea of piracy from the age of sail is not applicable in Tolkien's Middle



Earth. I would suggest that the Professor was envisaging the Naval warfare between Rome and the Byzantine (or East Roman Navy), with Umbar as Constantinople - refer to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Byzantine_navy for more details.

2 Part 2: Pirates in MERP - The Corsairs of Umbar

The first issue with this supplement is that as written, it is set in 1607, which is different from the standard ICE date of 1640. This is not a major issue, and it can simply be rewritten without major change.

The major issue is that it envisages Umbar as held by a council of Ship's Captains - this works fine in practice, but there is no mention of Angamaitë and Sangahyando from *The Annals of the Kings*, who would be present and major players in this time. This can be fixed, and has been in various fan modules, by placing Angamaitë in Gobel Mirlond with the major land forces of Umbar, and having Sangahyando as his deputy left in charge of Umbar. The Captains then become an advisory council to Sangahyando, as well as major players in their own right.

Apart from this, the module is pretty good, remaining faithful to the types of ships envisaged by Tolkien, with

Cogs as the only sailing vessels and the major combat ships being galleys.

3 Part 3: Additional Material

3.1 The Azûladanakh'irim of Methrast

This material was originally written by myself for my Tol Aduil campaign setting; Tol Aduil being the small triangular island off the bottom of Tol Falas (see map below). They were created to provide "good" pirates or privateers to oppose the Corsairs of Umbar, and to have a distinctive style all of their own.

3.1.1 The Arrival of the Faithful

This story starts back at the fall of Númenor, back in SA 3319. As has been told, at the fall of the Island and the bending of the seas, Elendil and his two sons set sail for Endor. After a tumultuous time, Elendil landed in the Eriador, and founded the realm of Arnor. His two sons, Isildur and Anarion, were separated from their father, and landed in the Anduin Valley with five ships, and founded the realm of Gondor, which they jointly ruled as vassals of their father.

These five ships were not however the first Dúnedain to settle in the Anduin valley; Númenoreans had been settled in and around the bay for almost 1500 years prior to that. They had already founded the city of Pelagir, and had made many other settlements in the region, mainly in the Gilrain and Serni valleys. A few of the early settlers had moved further west, the most westerly settlement being at Metrast (Methrast) at the tip of the Belfalas peninsula.

3.1.2 The Beginnings of the Azûladanakh'irim

Whilst these people could not be considered to be numbered amongst the Faithful, on the arrival of Isildur and Anarion, the majority of these early settlers immediately swore their allegiance to Elendil, and rapidly assimilated into their ranks. Some sections of the original settlers however, whilst swearing their oath, preferred to continue their own customs and ways, and became known as the Azûladanakh'irim, an Adûnaic word meaning "Those who came eastwards first". The majority of these people resided at Pelagir and in manors in Lebennin, but the Dúnedain of Methrast also held to their common origin. Over time, this distinct cultural grouping became less and less distinct, as people died, and marriages happened, until it seemed that the only people aware of the cultural distinction were the Azûladanakh'irim themselves.

3.1.3 The Kinstrife

We then fast-forward to the time of the Kin-strife, in TA 1432-48. As has also been told, at this time, the Usurper, Castamir, attempted to take the throne of Gondor by force, using the part-Eothraim heritage of the rightful King, Eldacar, as an excuse. In this, the people of Pelagir and the southern Gondorians supported him. Foremost amongst these supporters were the Azûladanakh'irim of Pelagir, who saw this as an opportunity to reassert their cultural identity. They automatically counted on the support of their brethren in Methrast, however they had sadly miscalculated.

The Azûladanakh'irim of Methrast were immediately hostile to the usurpation of Royal Authority, and to their brethren in Pelagir. This was not because of any great love for Eldacar, (for they didn't really care one way or the other about him), but because they considered the uprising to be in effect, the breaking of the Oath of Allegiance that they had made to Isildur all those years ago. The Methrast Azûladanakh'irim had lived with the Enedrim, descendants of the Daen Coentis, the original Oathbreakers, for many years. They had held them in distrust ever since. And they were not going to make the same error. They were most vocal in their opposition of the Rebels, and vociferous of Castamir and his claims, and of anyone who supported him.

The then Prince of Dor-en-Ernil, was personally supportive of Eldacar, however the majority of his people were supportive of Castamir, and many pushed for the Prince to put his full support behind the Usurper, in order to give him some measure of legitimacy. In some way, the opposition of the Azûladanakh'irim of Methrast to Castamir worked in the Prince's favour, in that he was able to use that opposition to explain his official neutrality in the matter.

A lot of political maneuvering was required by the Prince to try to keep tensions to a minimum, and even with his efforts, there was a great deal of antagonistic behaviour between the Aroquain (S. High Knight) of Methrast and his people, and the other people of the province. This antagonism boiled over into some border warfare; however the Prince managed to keep it from totally going out of control. Castamir and his supporters from the east remained out of

the area, due both to other pressing events in the Northern Provinces to take care of, and for fear that their entry into Dor-en-Ernil would upset the Neutral stance of the Prince.

After the return of Eldacar, the death of Castamir, and the fleeing of his supporters to Umbar, life in the Land of the Prince returned mostly to normal. Castamir's supporters in Dor-en-Ernil were quite happy to try to forget all about the rebellion, and to let bygones be bygones, however the Azûladanakh'irim have much longer memories.

3.1.4 Appearance and Attitude

In many ways, this division was exploited for their own benefit, to give an "Us versus them" situation. Whilst they do not push themselves on anyone else; indeed, their existence as a distinct cultural grouping within Gondor is mostly unknown; they do exploit the image to give themselves a reason to continue the story. By pointing out the breaking of the oath, they were able to draw parallels back to the oath-breaking at the beginning of the age, and thus to their origins. In many ways, it gave their own political aspirations a boost.

Politically, the Azûladanakh'irim are traditional mortal enemies of Umbar, particularly of their once-brethren. They are generally most active amongst the Prince's Naval Forces, and many of the best-known Gondorian Privateers hail from the tip of the Belfalas Peninsula. They are also traditionally amongst the most antagonistic of the Belfalas Dúnedain towards the Enedrim, and this feeling is reciprocated. Strangely, they do not seem to have the same antagonism towards the Haruze, and in many ways, tend to have a better relationship with those people than the majority of the citizens of Gondor do.

They retain their cultural heritage via both appearance and education. They are all given an Adûnaic name at birth, but this name is generally not broadcast, and remains only for use by their friends and people. For general use, they also are given a Sindarin name. Appearance-wise, they are fond of facial hair, particularly moustache sans beard, which is extremely uncommon amongst the Dúnedain. They tend to favour a moustache that curves down around the mouth to the jaw line, which gives them a distinctive look. This style of moustache is commonly known in Gondor as the Zôni Moustache (commonly known in modern times as the Zapata Moustache, after Emil Zapata of Mexico), after an early Aroquain of Methrast who first favoured the style.

The Azûladanakh'irim are destined to go out of history, not with a bang, but with a whimper, killed, not by hostile action, but by apathy. As time passes, and the events of the founding of Gondor fade from memory, and as they fail to find new causes to show their distinctiveness, their cultural identity becomes less and less relevant. Until that day comes, however, they continue to be a force in events, at least in the Dor-en-Ernil and the Bay of Belfalas, if not in Gondor proper.

3.2 Escort Duty: A Seaboard Adventure in the Bay of Belfalas

This adventure is the initial section of the first adventure of my Tol Aduil Campaign Setting. It is designed to give the characters an overview of the island, and as such, in many ways, may appear like a travelogue. Note that this adventure takes the form of a narrative, and as such is tightly scripted. There is some room for the PCs to affect the outcome, but the general timeline is pretty such set. Footnotes will be provided to explain some names or terms that are from the Campaign Module.

Setting: Lond Ernil via the ship Halatir to Endil and then around the cape and across the bay to Lond Aduil. Reference

should be made to the map at the end of this article for details as to geography.

Requirements: The PCs are recruited in Lond Ernil to escort Girchel, the son of a local noble, to the school on Tol Aduil. It would help if the PCs were on good terms or well known in the area, for them to be approached for this task. A good recommendation or a referral would be a bonus for the receipt of the mission.

Note that the task does not feature any personal combat or extensive tasks for the PCs, and acts more as an introduction to the island. It is social skills that are most required. For the majority of this adventure, the characters will on board a ship with a set itinerary, so the options will be limited.

Enemies: The ship Bagarrân, running out of Umbar.

Aids: None, except for the wiles and sea-craft of the Halatir's Master, Ragaer, and the skills of her crew.

Reward: Note that the reward for the task

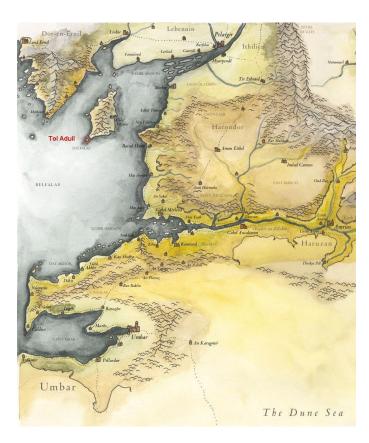
will not be great, as it is expected to be a simple task - some small stipend would be appropriate. Note that if the PCs are intending to journey eastwards anyway, then this could be offered as a, "Well you're going that way anyway, can you just drop the kid off on your way?"

Girchel's father will also provide funds to cover the voyage by both the PCs and his son, and accommodation and meal allowance for a one night stay at both Endil and Lond Aduil. He will also provide details of the expected route and a letter of introduction to be given to Himbros, the Headmaster of the Tol Aduil School.

Note that the trip from Lond Ernil to Pelagir by sea would take roughly the same time as by land, and there are plenty of ships from Lond Aduil to Pelagir or any other port that the PCs may be aiming for.

3.2.1 The NPCs

Girchel is 14 years old, and the eldest son of the Chief Herald of Lond Ernil. Whilst he has received a good education, as befits his and his father's position, he is being sent to the school in the hope of the travel and new environment broadening his outlook. Whilst he does have quite a few good friends, his life has been rather insular, being home schooled up till now, and not having much interaction with others outside his immediate circle.



He is a fit young lad, and acts older than what he is, but does tend to be rather studious and emotionless. He also can sulk if he doesn't get his own way. He is a good lad; he just needs to learn that there more to life than what he is comfortable with.

Ragaer, the Captain and Master of the Halatir (Kingfisher), is a highly skilled and knowledgeable Ship's Master. Originally from a small village in Belfalas, he started his life as a sailor at a young age, and worked his way up to where he is now. He is one of those people whose age is indeterminate - he just looks like he belongs where he is.

He is very well respected in the shipping trade, and trusted implicitly. He is still very humble about his position, and has always had a good relationship with his crew and those he deals with in his business.

He has been plying the Lond Ernil - Lond Aduil route for years now, and knows the journey like the back of his hand.

Emelin (Arbelthâni) an-Amonhîth is the 17-year-old daughter of Namion, the Roquain (Knight) of Tol Aduil, and along with her younger brother, spends three months of each year with her father on Tol Aduil. She is very attractive, slightly shorter than average height and solidly built, with dark wavy hair down her back and a very pretty smile.

She is intelligent, friendly and talkative, and has very good social skills, able to relate to almost anyone. She possesses a wicked sense of humour, and is very rarely in a bad mood. If she has one fault, it is that sometimes can act immaturely, however most of the time, she will behave as if she is older than her years.

She tends to wear her heart on her sleeve, and can be very passionate and headstrong at times - she takes after her parents in that regard. She adores both of her parents and her younger brother, and is very much in love with her father's squire. She does try to keep this to herself, but she is not very good at it.

Diorethrin (Arbazinâth) an-Amonhîth, Emelin's younger brother, and Namion's second child, is 14-year-old Diorethrin, normally called "Rethie" by his sister. He is slight of build and possesses dark auburn hair and freckles, courtesy of his maternal grandfather's mother, who was of Northman ancestry.

He is much quieter that his sister, and tends to allow his sister to take charge when they are together. He is, however, very intelligent and perceptive, and has the same sense of humour as his sister.

3.2.2 The Setting

The Halatir is a fast 60-ton merchant ship of Linhir Long-Fisher design, with caravel hull constriction and carrying three lateen sails and a jib on two masts, fore and main. It possesses a 4' after castle with no forecastle, and is oar-steered.

The ship has no armaments apart from personal weaponry, and is not armoured, and normally carries a crew of around 25, with a Ship's Captain and Master and three Mates.

It is advised that the GM should familiarise him or herself with some basic sailing knowledge and nautical terminology, so as to both purvey the appropriate atmosphere, and to correctly play the role of the sailors. In particular, some knowledge of the following would be advantageous: -

- Differences between clinker and caravel hulls.
- Differences between square, lateen and jib sails.
- Effects of the tide, currents and wind.
- Basic sailing manoeuvres and what good and bad tacking is when using lanteen sails.

The ships in use in the Bay of Belfalas Region. Reference should be made to the ICE Havens of Gondor, Sea-Lords of Gondor and Umbar supplements.

The general geography of the area.

Note that the terms Port and Starboard will be used frequently. For those whom are uninitiated, Port is the left side of the ship, being the side that the ship docks on, and is shown by a red light, starboard is the right side, being the side that the steering oar (or steer-board) is on, and is shown by a green light. I have always found that the easiest way to remember is to group them by the number of letters - port, left and red all have fewer letters than starboard, right and green respectively.

3.2.3 The Timeline

The First Day and a Half:

The day starts very early down in the Lond Aduil Commercial Harbour, with the PC's expected to be on board by first light so that the Halatir can catch the morning tide out.

Here they get to meet their charge - his father, along with the rest of his family, are here to see him off. Girchel is in a bit of a huff, and is very short with his family and extremely abrupt with the PCs. His father explains it as his son is a bit upset, but give him a little while to sulk and he should be okay.

The ship carries around 20 ton of cargo, and up to 20 passengers, although for the first leg of this trip, it carries only the party and their charge. Ragaer will explain that they may be picking up further passengers in Endil, their first stop, which is two days down the coast.

Not much to do as the ship is readied, and sail is set. Even with the ebb tide, it still takes two hours to clear the heads, before the ship catches the Gulf Stream and the prevailing Westerlies, and sets of south-southwest down the coast. The day is overcast, but other than that, the weather is fine.

Note that passing the heads is a rough trip, and it would be appropriate here for seasickness rolls for the PCs, with the extent of the failure indicating how long the PC would be out of action for.

By late afternoon, it passes the Outer Lighthouse set on the westernmost of the Belfalas isles, and turns southward. Around this time, Girchel stops sulking and comes out of his cabin to watch, but he remains reasonably non-communicative

The first night is spent out at sea about halfway down and 60 miles out from the Belfalas mainland coast. By about 3 o'clock in the morning, the captain swings the ship around to run southeast, and shortly after, the fire of the Outer Endili Isles Lighthouse is seen, giving the captain something to aim for. Even still, dawn breaks before the arrival, and the Halatir passes the Lighthouse Island to starboard as the just as the sun is rising.

Passing between the islands, the Halatir turns east-northeast, resets the sail, and begins the run into Endil. Whilst they still have the wind, now they are running into the powerful current, and the going slows. It takes until just after lunch before the Inner Endili Isles Lighthouse is reached. Once the ship passes beyond the Endil Promontory, the effects of the current eases, and Endil is reached by early afternoon. Light drizzle starts falling as they reach the bay.

During this phase of the journey, there really is not much for the PCs to do. In the early morning of the first day, the views of the Lond Ernil Peninsula, with the Prince's Citadel and the Seaward Tower, which dates back to the Second Age and was built for Noldor Galadriel, are very impressive when seen from the sea. After that, however, the ship heads out to sea quickly to pass around the multitude of isles extending out from the coast. Apart from the Outer Lighthouse Island, the next sighting of land will not be until the next day.

Girchel will not be very talkative, even after he stops sulking, and will provide mostly simple answers to questions. The PCs will quickly get the impression that he is not interested in conversation with them.

After rounding the heads and setting sail, Ragaer will have more time to spend, and will happily chat with the PCs. Again, he is probably not the most social of people, but he is happy to talk. His conversation will be limited, however. He knows everything about the sea, and will happily discuss sea travel in the area, ships, winds and tides, the various forces and interests in the bay, and the various ports of call. He can describe the Island and Lond Aduil in general terms, but is certainly not up to speed on internal political issues. He is aware of the school, and can state that a noble from northern Anorien started it only a few years ago, but apart from that, he doesn't know much.

Endil:

As the ship sails into Endil Bay, the bay is quite active in terms of shipping. Quite a few small fishing craft dot the waters, and friendly waves are exchanged between many of the fishermen and the crew of the Halatir.

Endil is a mid-sized provincial town situated in the top of a bluff south of a river that flows into the bay through a deep gorge. The docks are located at the foot of the bluff below the town, and are quite extensive. Approximately twenty odd ships of various sizes are spotted either moored or in the process of coming or going, and many smaller craft dot the waters. To the north of the river mouth is a small Naval Station, with a single Coastal Patrol vessel tied up.

The Halatir makes for the docks and moors, and Ragaer, after asking all to remain on board whilst he speaks to the Harbour Master, departs. He returns shortly in the company of an official looking gentleman, and after having a private

discussion with him on the dock, he returns and informs the passengers that they may disembark.

He mentions that it looks like they will have two additional passengers for the trip from Endil to Lond Aduil, who will be meeting them later tonight at the Endil Inn. An offer is made to provide an escort for the passengers up to the Endil Inn, where they can stay the night in slightly more salubrious quarters - the crew will be coming up to the Inn for dinner, but will return to the ship to sleep. They will then be leaving Endil at first light the next day.

The Endil Inn, located up the road from the docks directly overlooking the bay, is a reasonably large establishment, of good but simple quality and rather busy. The town itself if of a reasonable size, and the locals are generally all pleasant and friendly. The town makes its living from the sea trades, and visitors are very common.

After registering at the Inn, the players are free to explore the town for a few hours. Not much will happen here - the town is as per usual towns of this ilk, and is quite civilized and law-abiding. The PCs will be expected to behave themselves - the locals are very much good solid provincial types who don't take kindly to ruffians.

The constant drizzle continues throughout the evening and night. All the shops shut at five, and the town really doesn't have much of nightlife, so the PCs should return to the Inn for dinner. Ragaer and much of the crew will meet them in the dining room, and the PCs are welcome to either join them for dinner or sit alone. It's a large room but it gets rather busy rather quickly - many of the crews eat here - so it is wise to grab a table early.

As dinner is about to start, a party of three accompanied by two men-at-arms enter the dining room. They spend a brief moment scanning the room before spotting the party's table, and making their way towards it. Ragaer spots them and waves them over, and introduces them as Tharolfin, Steward of Amonhîth, and Emelin and Diorethrin an-Amonhîth, and informs the PCs that Emelin and Diorethrin will be travelling with them to Lond Aduil.

If any PCs are watching the other guests, and are rather perceptive, they may notice that one of the men at another table will notice the newcomers as they are standing in the doorway looking around the room, and react with a start, which he will quickly suppress. He will then get the attention of the other three at his table, and whisper to them. As the newcomers make their way over to the table where Ragaer resides, the four men will get up and exit quietly and discretely.

Ragaer will invite them to join them for dinner, which they will accept, after getting out of their damp cloaks. Additional chairs will be found, and places for the five made. The men-at-arms will gravitate towards the sailors, and Tharolfin will sit with the Captain, and enter into discussions with him about boring things such as trade, shipping, economics etc. Emelin and Diorethrin will greet Girchel - it seems apparent that they all know each other - and if given a little encouragement, will join the PCs and Girchel for dinner.

If any of the PCs make their way out of the dining room to the entrance of the inn, they will overhear the last part of a conversation between the inn-keeper saying, "What, not even going to stay for dinner?" and a man, one of those from the table that got up and left, saying, "No, sorry". Some financial matters are settled as the other three men come down the stairs carrying belongings. All will be quickly resolved, and the four will leave the inn with haste.

If the PC is standing in view, then they will take a good hard look at him or her as they leave, but they will not stop to talk. Any attempt at conversation will be met with a non-committal grunt. The innkeeper will attempt to return to his duties - he is busy given dinner is about to start. If the PCs insist, he will assist them, but the most he can say about what happened is, "They said they had to leave." accompanied by a shrug of the shoulders.

The PCs can spend the dinner talking with Emelin and Diorethrin. Both are friendly and talkative, far more so than Girchel was, and will be happy to chat about various matters. They will inform the PCs that they are going to Tol Aduil for three months to stay with their father, who works there in the army.

Diorethrin will chat quite happily with Girchel, Diorethrin doing most of the talking, asking him about various people and social matters from Lond Ernil. If the PCs ask, they will be informed that they used to live in the city - their father was transferred to the island a few years ago.

They will not specifically inform the PCs as to their father's rank unless specifically asked - not because it's a secret, but because they don't think it's all that important. The way that they are dressed and the fact that their father has a steward and men-at-arms accompany them may clue the PCs into the fact that they are of a reasonably high birth, but they certainly do not dwell on it. In many ways, they are a lot more down to earth than Girchel, and are completely free from airs and graces.

Emelin will be able to answer a lot more questions about Tol Aduil than anyone else they have run into - she and Diorethrin have been there often. She doesn't really think of it as a big deal, and would be much more interested in asking the PCs where they are from and where they have been. She is particularly interested in Pelagir, Osgilliath and Minas Tirith - she has visited those places when she was younger, but not since the plague, and she is interested in what has changed.

If anyone follows the four men, or wanders down to the harbour whilst dinner is happening, they will notice that the men have a quick talk to the Harbour master, and then board a small trading vessel and prepare to set sail. Otherwise, the Halatir's Third Mate, when he comes up to get his dinner, will mention that a small Trader just left the harbour. There will be some comments about the stupidity of people leaving on the flow tide and just as night is falling, but no one will think much of it.

After dinner, very little happens. The PC's can continue talking, but the ship's crew will leave early, and the newcomers will wander up to bed early - its going to be a very early start tomorrow.

The Third Day:

The PCs and all other travelers are called before dawn to make their way down to the docks for boarding. All board, Tharolfin comes down to see his two charges off; all are in good spirits - even Girchel. The weather has fined up, and it looks like it will be a fine sunny day.

If any of the PCs mention to Ragaer of the events of the previous evening, he will make sure that his men keep a good watch, but won't show much concern outwardly. He will suggest that the PCs don't bother mentioning this to any of the other passengers.

The ship sets off very early, at daybreak, south-westwards out to sea. Travel is quick with both the wind and the currents, and by breakfast, is approaching the Methrast Bight Lighthouse. On the way, Emelin or Diorethrin may point out where their manor is as they pass it, but given that the ship will be twenty miles out to sea at that point, not much will be able to be seen.

Just after noon, they round the Methrast Bight Lighthouse Island and set sail southwards. That is the last land sighted that day - the ship pretty much then sails due south till nightfall.

All three of the other passengers will be in good spirits, as will the crew. The sun is out, the sea air is bracing, the journey good, and not much will happen.

Feel free to throw in some sightings of whales or other marine life, or perhaps the passing of a Gondorian Merchant Cog - perhaps even a Naval Ship - but this part of the trip should lull the PCs into a false sense of security.

Perceptive PCs may notice that when Emelin and Diorethrin talk to each other in private, and they do tend to gently insult each other quite frequently, they do so in Adûnaic. If any PCs comment on this, they will be told that it is the language that they use at home. They can also both speak fluent Quenyan and Sindarin, and some basic Dunael.

Morning of the Fourth Day - The Sighting:

By morning on the fourth day, the ship is now heading east-south-eastwards - she changed direction sometime during the night. Ragaer will inform the passengers that they passed the southernmost of the Methrast Isles a couple of hours ago, and should spot Tol Aduil by early afternoon, and make Lond Aduil by late afternoon. The good weather has continued from the previous day.

Only about half an hour after the PCs rise, the lookout at the crow's nest will call out that there is a ship trailing them far astern off to starboard. Ragaer will watch the ship for a while, but won't be too concerned. He will indicate that it is most likely a Privateer Carrack, but they are too far ahead of her for there to be anything to worry about. He does check all sails though. As the children come on deck, they are told about the Privateer, and get excited for a minute, as the trip has been mundane so far, but after a short while, they get bored with it and wander off.

If anyone asks, he will explain what privateers are, and how the politics of the Bay work. He will also state that the Halatir will make about 11 knots and the Privateer at most about 12. Most likely, she will shadow the Halatir for a little while, but as she realises that she cannot catch her, she will break off and go in search of easier prey.

The Privateer will continue to chase the Halatir. As the pursuit continues, Ragaer will start to check and recheck the sails, and check his speed. Outwardly he continues to state that there is no concern, and that they will make Tol Aduil way before the Privateer can overtake them. The fact that she is continuing the chase rather than breaking off does seem to worry him slightly, though.

Perceptive PCs may overhear him talking almost to himself, as he watches the pursuer through a telescope, making

comments such as, "She sails well." "Whoever is sailing her is doing a good job." "Hmm, she may be faster than I thought."

By lunchtime, with the ship perceptibly closer, he sends a message up to the crow's nest to see if they can spot her ensign.

Early Afternoon of the Fourth Day - The Chase:

Just after lunch, a call comes down from the crow's nest, describing the ensign of the following ship - "Red flame on blue field, black edging." Ragaer's face darkens, but all he will murmur is, "We can still outrun her." He will say no more to the passengers, but the crew seems to recognise the ensign as well.

The PCs will notice Emelin and Diorethrin in deep conversation, and then Diorethrin will make his way to the bridge. He will lean against the railing with arms crossed, and after a moment, enquire gently, "Red flame on blue field, black edging - that's Teldûmeir, isn't it?" After a moment, Ragaer will nod his head. Diorethrin will then comment, as if to himself but loud enough for others to hear, "Just a Privateer..." Ragaer will give him a look as if to say, mind your place.

By now the PCs, if they don't know who Teldûmeir is, should be asking. If so, both Diorethrin, and Ragaer, after some prompting from Diorethrin, will explain who Teldûmeir is, and how Umbarean politics work. Refer to the ICE Umbar supplement for further information.

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The intent of this section is both to increase the suspense, and to provide an opportunity for some expose. Given that the situation is two ships, both sailing in a straight line with a fair expanse of water between them and no land in sight, the opportunity for adding drama is limited. Effectively, you will have to use the attitudes of the NPCs to convey emotions to the PCs.

Ragaer will remain tight-lipped and apprehensive, staying on the bridge to watch the pursuer, even though it is well out of range. He will give orders to the Crow's Nest to keep a good lookout forward (for land), and will repeatedly check sails, ship speed, the charts, ropes, anything just to give him something to do. He will talk to the PCs but it will be in an almost absent-minded fashion, with long pauses between sentences, and continuing even when you had thought he had finished.

The biggest change will be between Diorethrin and Girchel. For two fourteen-year-olds who were very similar in their conversations back in Endil, Diorethrin will seem to be acting far beyond his years in maturity, whilst Girchel, if anything, becomes more child-like, becoming more and more anxious as time goes on, and needing constant reassurance. If the PCs won't provide the reassurance, Emelin will take it upon herself to try to calm his nerves.

Like her younger brother, Emelin also takes on a more somber, mature outlook. They both are calm and collected, though slightly anxious, and are the most willing to talk to the PCs through the next couple of hours. The crew will follow the lead of their captain.

Through this period, several points of exposition can be made, such as:

(Assuming that this hasn't already been discussed out previously), the First Mate will wander up to stand beside Ragaer, and comment, (mention what the party saw in Endil, if anything) "..., the small trader that slipped away just before dinner. This isn't a random attack - we've been targeted. They were waiting for us." Ragaer nods, and they both turn to glance at Emelin and Diorethrin on the deck below.

The PCs should hopefully ask what they mean, and thus, if they aren't aware of the nature of the job of the father of Emelin and Diorethrin, should be made aware of it now, and thus the point that the pursuer will not break off pursuit.

Ragaer, saying almost to himself, "To target the Azûladanakh'irim, and their children at that. If they find out that Teldûmeir is behind this, they won't rest..."

The PC's should then ask, who or what is or are the Azûladanakh'irim? Emelin, passing below, will overhear and respond, "We are." Following this, she can provide an explanation of the Azûladanakh'irim, and their history, with obvious pride.

After a short pause after she finishes, Diorethrin, who wandered up halfway through her speech, will speak, again with a sense of ownership and pride, of Marahil's3 adventures across the Bay to raid the Umbarean coastal fiefs (See ICE Havens of Gondor supplement). If anyone asks who Marahil is, he will inform them, including his full title, and finishing with, "... and my Godfather."

The insinuation in all this is that either Teldûmeir has become insane in his old age, or that the pursuers aren't planning on letting any of the people on the ship live to tell the tale...

Around 2pm, there is a shout from the Crow's Nest, "Land Ahoy!" Ragaer practically grabs the telescope from the Second Mate, and goes to the bow of the ship. After a few minutes studying the horizon, he turns to the PC's (assuming they have followed him forward), and states with obvious satisfaction, "Tolfalas".

He looks back at the pursuing ship, and then back at the horizon, as if measuring. He turns to the PCs and says, "We're doing eleven and a half knots, they're doing about fourteen. It's going to be a close run."

Mid Afternoon of the Fourth Day - A Close Run

Now that land has been sighted, Ragaer's demeanor changes. Now he has some control over the situation, he will become much more talkative, and almost cheerful, in a grim sort of way. He will actually seek out the PCs on occasion (assuming that they haven't panicked); to inform them of what is happening.

He will explain the route that they must take, to pass the island to the south and then travel up its east coast, and then come back westwards into the Lond Aduil Bay. Charts and maps will be shown to the PCs, and the issues concerning the currents and wind patterns described. Refer to Section Error: Reference source not found Error: Reference source not found (Page Error: Reference source not found)

At one point, Emelin slips below deck, and returns a few moments later dressed in trousers and shirt with a fleece-lined leather vest, instead of her dress. Ragaer, noticing this, will smile to himself, and call down to her, "Don't bother looking around for a sword, your father would never forgive me if I allowed that to happen." Both Emelin and Diorethrin will smile and laugh, and most of the crew will smile too.

This will lighten the atmosphere somewhat, and most people will become more cheerful. Girchel, however, will become even more scared by the mention of swords, and will take some calming down - Emelin will do this if the PCs don't.

Around 3:30, and the pursuing ship continues to close, Ragaer, will give an almost imperceptible signal to his crew, and some will disappear below decks. They will reappear a few minutes later carrying handfuls of short swords in scabbards, which they distribute to the sailors. Several sailors will be seen to be stringing bows, and quivers of arrows will be distributed around the ship and key locations. A few heavy axes will also appear and be placed in various locations and buckets of sand and water will be brought up and placed down the centreline of the deck.

The PCs may want to take the hint and gear up, if they haven't already. Girchel will become even more anxious at all this, and almost start crying. Emelin and Diorethrin will be nervous but controlled - they will offer assistance to the crew, but will mostly try to stay out of their way. The crew seems to all know what they are doing, and look practiced. They all show calmness, and exude competence and resoluteness.

Around 4pm, the Halatir will approach the southern tip of Tol Aduil, and Diorethrin will take the opportunity to point out to the PCs where his father's house and keep are - the lighthouse should have been visible for some time. There will be a short debate with his sister as to whether anyone will be looking out for them, during which he will comment, "I'm sure Gimi will be." Emelin will smile wanly at this, but neither will elaborate further.

As they pass the cape, all crew will be ready for the tack, but Ragaer will hang on waiting and watching the pursuing ship, which is now very close, running only a few hundred feet to starboard, and only about a quarter mile behind. If anyone asks, he will reply that he is waiting to see if they tack in. "If we tack first, we commit ourselves, and we will lose speed with the tack, and they could possibly come straight on, and catch us broadside. If they tack first, they are committed to going northwards, and thus are gambling so are we. Of course, the downside is that the longer we hold on, the further away from Tol Aduil we get, and the closer they get to us."

He smiles grimly, "Of course, if we do tack, and he comes straight at us to ram and misses, then he will have over-committed himself, and we will be able to make Lond Aduil easily as he will have to tack back. If we don't tack and he does, then we will be forced to take the outside route, and thus he should easily be able to cut us off at the heads. So the question is, how will he gamble? Will he continue on our course, and thus force us either sail on to the open sea or tack and present our side to him? Or will he tack north to cover the heads where, assuming we tack, he will be able to cut us off, but he will only get one shot at it? He looks at the PCs with an ironic smile, "This is the fun part of sailing..."

All of the crew watches the pursuing ship intently as she passes the cape. As clears the rocks, she tacks to port, and up the coast. The crew almost as one let out their breath. Ragaer comments to no one in particular, "He blinked first", as he turns and studies the sky.

If anyone looks, it does look as if there are dark storm clouds on the horizon coming from the west, but it is uncertain as to when they will arrive.

One of the mates, with the telescope studies the side of the pursuer, as she cuts across the Halatir's Wake, "The Bagarrân, 80 footer, two ballistae bow, catapult stern. Probably about one hundred odd crew including soldiers." He lowers the telescope, and adds, "Armoured bow."

Ragaer looks down, "They're running about a quarter mile out from the coast. We'll tack a mile out. If we're lucky, we'll catch a good squall of wind coming over the top of the island by running out wide, which should hopefully give us an edge to make the heads. Of course we will have to tack back in to make the heads, so we will lose speed on that. He smiles and shrugs, "It's a roll of the dice."

Late Afternoon of the Fourth Day - A Dice Roll

Very shortly afterwards, the Halatir tacks northeast, and faintly, a cheer can be heard from the ship to port. Ragaer almost smiles in spite of himself, "Sounds like they're pleased."

Both ships now run along the coast northeastwards, parallel with each other. Again, there is a bit of a lull in what happens, and someone will take the opportunity to point out to the PCs the various landmarks of the Tol Aduil east coast - the Mausoleum, the Arch and Blowhole, the Torr, Big and Little Cow.

As the Torr is pointed out, some birds will be seen circling above it, and someone amongst the crew will comment on the Sea Eagles, and how their sighting is one of good luck. The storm will look a lot closer behind them.

Perceptive PCs who look at the area closely may notice the figure of a man on horseback riding fast northwards. If this is pointed out, Emelin, after a moment's intense staring, will add hopefully, "It could be Gimi." This time if anyone asks who Gimi is, Diorethrin will comment, "Androth, my father's squire."

As they pass the Torr, the storm sweeps in, with blustery gales and the light but cold rain driving into the faces of those watching the Bagarrân. The Halatir will surge forward and start drawing ahead. A muted cheer will come from the sailors on the Halatir, and Ragaer will give a small smile. He will comment to himself as he looks skyward, "Don't know if it will be enough."

By the time the Halatir draws close to level with the Heads, it is about two miles in front of the Bagarrân. All of the crew is nervous, and some discussions will be had amongst the Captain and the Mates as to whether to try for Lond Aduil, or keep going straight on and aim for a different port.

Ragaer will mention to the PCs that if he wants to make the heads, he cannot hold his course much longer, and will have to tack soon, as the wind is coming in from the west-norwest, and he would like to make it through the heads on a starboard tack. Even though he is making ground on a straight run, if he leaves it too long, he may have to make a port tack, and not only will he lose time on making the tack, but given the setup of the ship, a port tack will be the bad tack4.

Ragaer comes to a decision, and gives the order to make for the Heads, and the ship starts to tack. The sails are drawn tight across the ship, as the wind is now coming from tight on the port bow - as such, the ship speed slows considerably. Across the water, a faint cheer is heard from the Bagarrân.

As the ships draw closer together, everyone on board readies themselves. All are nervous, and no one speaks unless they have to. Whatever happens, it is going to be very close. If anyone bothers to look for him, Girchel can be found tucked under the ladder to the aftercastle, drawn up in a ball. He will resist any efforts to make him go below decks, as down there, he will be alone. Ragaer will order Emelin and Diorethrin (and any non-combatants amongst the PCs) below decks. Emelin and Diorethrin will go to the door into the aftercastle room, but will prop just inside the door with the door open, watching.

The time seems to drag on, and on the Bagarrân as it gets closer, it can be seen that the crew is reading the catapult and ballistae, but they don't make any long-range attacks - it seems that everyone is waiting till they are at their closest. It looks like the Halatir will make it to the heads ahead of the Bagarrân, but not by much, and they will definitely be within range of the siege weapons...

Suddenly, there is a cut off shout almost simultaneously from both the Crow's Nest and the Bow. Someone then comes charging back along the ship towards the Captain as someone almost flies down the ropes from above. The man from the bows makes it onto the after castle first, and pants out, "It's the Oneth sir, and she's coming through the heads. She doesn't have full sail up yet, but she's coming."

Early Evening of the Fourth Day I - End Game

Ragaer pauses only for a second, before bellowing out, "Hard a-port," and swinging the wheel down hard. The crew drops their weapons and rush to drag the sails across to the other side of the ship. The ship shudders as she crosses the wind, and the ship swings onto a bad tack and slows, and starts heading back behind the Bagarrân, away from the heads and directly into the rocks along the Point. On the Bagarrân, there is a moment's confusion, and the order is given to reef sails, as they try to slow the ship down.

Ragaer will take this moment to quickly inform the PCs about the Oneth. "She's a Royal Naval Tender from the Tolfalas fleet at Caras Tolfalas, must have been visiting in the bay. Carries four ballistae - two front, two rear. We have to keep the attention of the Bagarrân - allow the Oneth to get sails up and clear the heads. If the PCs want to take this opportunity to try to do something to confuse or draw the attention of the Bagarrân, allow them to do so.

Whilst the Halatir is now travelling away from the front-mounted ballistae, it is now travelling directly into the path of fire of the rear mounted catapult, and it can be seen on the Bagarrân that the crew is preparing the machine for use. Ragaer gives the order, "Hold fire - don't do anything to start them firing - just draw their attention." A couple of the seamen take the opportunity to drop their pants and moon the Bagarrân over the rail. The two ships are now within extended bowshot range.

Behind the Bagarrân, the Oneth can now be seen coming into view through the heads. She has got full sail up now, and is starting to increase speed. She comes on quietly directly towards the side of the Bagarrân.

She covers a fair proportion of the distance between the two ships before there is a sudden shout from the Bagarrân, and faces suddenly swing around and look behind them.

Almost simultaneously, the whump of two ballistae is heard, and the catapult on the aftercastle of the Bagarrân swings around to face the rear and jerks forward. Screams are heard from the aftercastle, as some of the catapult crew disappears from view underneath it. The swing arm snaps near the bucket, and the bucket disappears onto the deck. The remaining arm snaps forward, unrestrained, and the catapult jerks upward, before crashing down and onto its side, precariously balanced on the edge of the castle. It pauses there for a moment, before rolling off the aftercastle onto the deck and railing below, where it also balances for a moment before gracefully tipping off the ship and disappearing into the sea. Quite a few bodies from the railing above follow the catapult in its dive into the sea, some of them looking quite mangled.

Screams can also be heard coming from the forecastle of the ship, but as that is hidden from view of the Halatir by the sails, the damage cannot be seen. The Halatir has now come into direct view of the Oneth, and massed archery fire can be seen coming from the Oneth onto the Bagarrân, and the crew can be seen quickly reloading the ballistae. Much screaming and panic can be heard coming from the Bagarrân, but above the screams, shouted orders can be heard, and sails are unreefed and the ship starts to pick up speed again.

One of the Ship's Mates says to Ragaer, "They're running!" to which Ragaer replies, "They can't do much else - they're caught dead to water." He yells out orders to swing the ship back onto a port tack, and heads northwards along the edge of the point, towards the heads.

If the PCs would like to try some archery at the departing Bagarrân, feel free to allow them to try. The range will be long, and they will be firing from a moving surface at a moving target, but they could certainly hit something.

As the Oneth turns to chase the Bagarrân, the Halatir's crew gives a cheer, and the captain of the Oneth turns and raises a hand to the Halatir. Ragaer mutters, "Don't cheer just yet, I've still got to bring this in through the heads, and we'll be travelling at a walking pace."

Early Evening of the Fourth Day II - The Heads

The ship moves slowly up to the point, and then tacks to port in through the heads. As it swings in, Ragaer yells for everyone to hang on, and the ship starts to bounce as it hits the turbulence. If you want, you could make the PCs make rolls to avoid being loosing footing or being thrown about, but it is possibly overkill at this point.

As the ship passes through the heads, it runs directly into the wind and current, and its speed slows right down. The ship starts drifting with the current sideways towards the rocks. Ragaer gives orders to untie the longboat. Suddenly there is a yell from the bow of the boat, "It's the Desert Rose, and she's sent a longboat!"

Assuming the PCs go to the bow, they see a longboat crewed by Haradrim pulling towards the Halatir. As she heaves in sight, the longboat pivots around, and the officer at the rudder yells for a rope to be thrown. One of the sailors heaves out a hawser, which the officer in the longboat makes fast.

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quickly resumes	ut, Emelin squeals out to a demure pose. The sq ast, the longboat rower	ueal carries, and a	white face among	st the rowers raises a l	nand. As soon as the

PIRATE ENCOUNTERS FOR GULLIVER'S TRADING COMPANY

by Karl Brown

New material for use with Gulliver's Trading Company Grub Street Edition (GTC) a roleplaying game of exploration of strange lands in the 18th century. GTC is set in the world of the classic satirical novel Gulliver's Travels. It uses game system derived from FUDGE and FATE second edition. FATE 2e is a story-oriented roleplaying game system by Robert Donoghue and Fred Hicks.

The latest version of Gulliver's Trading Company (currently version 0.61) is free on www.Scribd.com or at this link: https://www.dropbox.com/s/2feoha1zdfscm2l/Gullivers%20Trading%20Co%20Grub%200.61.pdf?dl=0
To stay up-to-date and find out more about Gulliver's Trading Company join the low volume mailing list: http://rpgreview.net/mailman/listinfo/gullivers rpgreview.net

As always if you have any feedback on this article I'd love to hear it. Send feedback to: karl@rpgreview.net

Pirate Incidents at Sea

This article describes example incidents to be used with the sea travel rules in GTC. Under those rules a 'Pirate' incident is any encounter with foes from without. A 'Pirate' incident could be pirates but might also be a naval vessel of a opposing nation, a hostile animal, or even vermin. However, most of the incidents in this article are encounters

with actual pirates, i.e. rogues aboard sea-going vessels.



The incidents at sea rules are there to model the fact that sea voyages in the 18th century were risky, especially for the unskilled and unprepared. They are not intended to overly detract from the voyage's destination or purpose. Nor are they intended to be onerous for the referee to prepare. Accordingly, using the maritime combat rules if the players are prudent and seek to escape they usually will. Referee's should not be disappointed if the PC's ship escapes; this is supposed to happen most of the time so you can get to the proper adventure sooner. The pirates can be used again and again until the PCs get a very good look at them.

In this article I have use an 'O' to indicate check boxes for aspects and extras.

Thieves by Night

When the ship is near land, a small boat approaches it in the dead of night. This could be a native canoe, a mud lark rowboat, or other vessel consistent with the location. Make a fair roll against the ship's observation skill or the

natives managed to sneak aboard and steal a trade opportunity worth of small valuable goods. If detected, the boat turns around discouraged and vanishes into the night.

Pirate Attack

This is an encounter with a small fast European-built pirate ship like those found in the waters around Europe and the European colonies. Begin as a standard maritime combat. In most cases the player's ship will escape after a few of turns but unfortunate or brave characters could end up in actual canon fire and boarding.

Pirate Sloop

Typical Colossal Vessel

This is a typical coastal pirate sloop or schooner armed with small cannon and carrying 40-75 ruthless pirates. Small single or double masted vessels like this actually represented the most common form



of pirate; only the most successful pirates had larger vessels and few pirate ships were over 200 tons. The *Fiery Dragon*, ironically destroyed by fire in 1721, was typical.

To threaten larger merchant vessels the sloop relies on speed, superior numbers on boarding, and intimidation. 150 tons, 52' Colossal. Crew of 70.

Aspects: Pirate Sloop **O**, Fast **O**, Open decks above and below* **O**, Only the Captain has a cabin **O**, Flush fore and aft (the upper deck is all one level no forecastle or stern roundhouse)* **O**

*both of these aspects create more room to house pirates or canon and for fighting. They are especially useful for boarding actions.

Weaponry: five 3Lb minion cannon on each side (Average WR9)

One 1Lb swivel gun (Average WR6)

Ram WR7 **Armour:** AR9

Skill levels are those of a typical pirate or average.

Skill Crew Member(s) providing it (level)

Alertness Typical Pirate (Fair). Cooking Ship's cook (Average) Logistics Commander (Average) Geography Commander (Average). Intimidation Commander (Average). Observation Crows nest (Average) Commander (Average) Oratory Navigation Commander (Average) Persuasion Commander (Average) Sailing Typical Pirate (Average) Strategy Commander (Average) Tactics Commander (Average)

Weapon Skills Cannon (Average). For deck fighting use the typical pirate skills and weapons

Pirates

Typical Minor NPCs

Given that these salty rogues are likely to be encountered in a boarding action they are given here ready for savage deck fighting.

Nationality: (varies) O

Aspects: Pirate O O, Bully O, Cruel O, Debaser O, Roaring O

Conscience: Corruption 3.

Extras: Cutlass Fair WR2, Knife Good WR1, Naval Pistol Average WR2, Item of Gold Jewellery

Skills

Sailing 3 0 Average
Pistol 3 - varies
Single Handed Melee 3 - varies
Brawling 3 - Good
Alertness 2 1 Fair
Intimidate 2 -1

Mediocre

Ornery Leviathan

There are recorded instances of bull sperm whales attacking sailing ships. A particularly huge and ornery whale takes a disliking to the PCs' vessel. Run this encounter as a maritime combat. During the Spot scene the whale will burn a corruption point to approach beneath the water in an attempt to avoid detection. The whale uses swimming rather than sailing and all the whale's attacks are brawling attacks. If combat occurs the whale will typically travel just below the surface and can be attacked as if a ship but can invoke aspects to use deeper water to aid its defence, attack from below &c.

Sperm Whale

Collosal Animal

This bull whale is a massive 67' sea-monster.

Nationality: Sperm Whale O O
Aspects: Ornery O ** Collosal Scale O

Canny Beast O

Conscience: Corruption 3 (use for actions fuelled by anger or deception)

Extras: Ramming head +1 Fair WR8, Powerful tail-slap +1 Fair WR7, Conical teeth +1 Fair WR6, Thick Blubber

AR7, Dive Deep and Long.

All weapons and armour already include the effect of scale.

Skills

Survival 3 2 Good Swim 3 2 Good Alertness 2 1 Fair



'At last they found me.'

Brawling 2 - varies Strength Feats 2 1 Fair

Athletics 2 1 Fair (good for breaching the surface)

Deception 1 0 Average
Intimidate 1 0 Average
Resist 1 0 Average
Stealth 1 0 Average
Tactics 1 0 Average

Barbary Dogs

Pirates: A small pirate ship (an Arab-built Xebec) attacks. Barbary corsairs are most active around the Mediterranean and West African coast but have been known to raid as far afield as South America and Iceland. They seek valuable cargoes and people to take as slaves.

Xebec

Typical Colossal Vessel

160 ton. Colossal. Crew 300

Aspects: Arab Xebec **O**, Large Crew **O O** Galley Slaves **O** this ship uses 24 chained slaves to pull her oars, Arab Xebec **O** this type of ship is narrow with lateen rigged sails on two or three masts, an arrangement that is swift and agile. Additionally, the xebec has oars like a galley enabling it to gain extra speed to catch becalmed ships. Cunning Captain **O**

Armour: wooden hull (3+Scale 6) AR9

Weaponry: nine 4Lb Cannons on each side (Average WR10), two 2lb Swivel Guns (Average WR7), not equipped with a ram.

Skill Crew Member(s) providing it
Skill Crew Member(s) providing it (level)

Alertness Typical Corsair (Average). Cooking Ship's cook (Average) Logistics Commander (Average) Geography Commander (Average). Intimidation Commander (Good). Observation Crows nest (Average) Oratory Commander (Average) Navigation Commander (Average) Persuasion Commander (Average) Sailing Typical Corsair (Average) Commander (Average) Strategy Tactics Commander (Average)

Weapon Skills Cannon (3 varies). For deck fighting use the typical corsair's skills and weapons

On the xebec

If boarding action occurs use the mass combat rules, remember there are 300 corsairs! Should the PCs and crew board the pirate ship some might think to get the slaves to revolt. If they do, there are three problems they must overcome.

Firstly, the slaves are chained to their benches. Second, there are only 24 slaves, the slaves are out-numbered, and they know it. Thirdly, years of backbreaking toil and the lash have broken their spirit. A social combat will be required to convince them to help.

In the unlikely occurrence of the players being victorious, the pirates have some loot mostly as worn items. Players can pick up an item of gold jewellery and pirate weapons as temporary items. The pirate captain's cabin has fine cutlery

and tableware of silver and ivory. There is also a good deal of hashish onboard.

If it comes to a boarding action and the corsair win, they will enslave (most) or hold for ransom (the rich) the PCs and their crew. Any character who is strong will be put to work on the oars and separated from the others in the hold. The PCs have until the slavers reach the Barbary Coast to escape or foment a revolt. The pirates will keep the PCs ship (cargo intact) in convoy with the xebec until then. The PCs must get out of their chains, open the hatch to the hold which is barred from the outside, sneak across the deck, swim or steal a jollyboat, cross to their own ship and retake it from the skeleton crew aboard. Alternatively, a long arduous sea crossing could be attempted in the jolly boat.

Barbary Corsairs

Typical Minor NPC

Nationality: Arab or Berber (do not speak English) O

Conscience: Corruption 2, Pride 1

Aspects: Barbary Corsair **O**, Knows the xebec well **O**, Cruel **O**, Bully **O**, Slaver (can be used on starter attacks) **O Extras:** Armed with a dragon (WR2 but see page 55 of the core rules, Mediocre -1), scimitars (WR 2, Fair +1) and a starter (WR1, Good +2). Has an item of gold jewellery.

Skills

Intimidation 3 2 Good
Single Handed Melee 3 (varies)
Observation 2 0 Average
Cannon 2 (varies)
Pistol 2 (varies)

Galley Oar Slaves

Apprentice Minor NPCs Nationality: varies O Concience: Enlightenment 3

Aspects: Galley Slave O, Down-trodden O, Strong O

No Extras Skills

Athletics 3 2 Good Strength Feats 3 2 Good Observation 2 0 Average

Jolly Boat

The jolly boat is a small rowboat used to ferry small numbers of people, inspect the ship while at sea, and other tasks where only a small number of people need to be afloat. On most ships it is kept at the stern on a pair of davits (small cranes) enabling the little boat to be rapidly launched. There are two sail masts that can be assembled *after* launch if desired

Large Unstable Vessel

16' Large, can hold nine.

Aspects: Jolly Boat O, Clinker-built O, Removable sail masts O, Barely room for nine O.

Armour: Wooden hull AR4

Weaponry: there are no weapons mounted on this vessel. The crew can use personal firearms when the maritime combat rules indicate swivel guns may attack. Ram WR2 not reinforced to ram.

If maritime combat or a sea crossing occurs in the jolly boat the player's will have to assign positions to characters.

Skill Crew Member(s) providing it

Alertness Commander
Cooking Ship's cook
Logistics Purser

Geography Master

Intimidation Commander, or Head Marine

Observation Commander
Oratory Commander
Persuasion Commander
Sailing Crew
Strategy Commander

Tactics Commander or Head Marine for deck fighting

The First Plague

Don't tell the players this is a pirate, there should be some doubt. The observation phase of combat can reveal such details as: the vessel flies no pirate flag, looks like a French naval vessel but no French flag, instead she flies the St. Andrew's Cross. She is better armed than the Hopewell but poorly armed for a naval ship. The figurehead was Neptune but the god's skin has been painted red.

This is the ship of Red James, the Gentleman Pirate. Red James is interested in profit to sustain a lavish lifestyle, not bloodshed. At the closing phase of maritime combat James tries to manoeuvre close enough to shout across to the other captain. As a referee let players know that on his first chance to attack James lets the opportunity slip by, the players can still have their ship fire.

Red James proposes a that the officers of the PC's ship attend dinner aboard the First Plague (unspoken hostages) while his men conduct a thorough search of the player's ship(s). Social combat is entered. If the PCs actively get the crew involved this becomes an Intrigue instead and numbers matter. There are 200 jeering pirates aboard the First Plague.

Run as normal except on each hit scored the attacker can gain a concession. Red James has a scribe who is recording the details. It is likely that the players will use Ship Combat to escape the pirate rather than go to dinner. That's fine, Red James ranges widely over the sea, they will likely meet him again.

Some salvos from Red James:

- I would like to avoid tasteless bloodshed
- I am a Gentleman and an Englishman and offer you my word allow youself to be boarded and no harm will come to you.
 - You are outgunned
 - You are outnumbered
 - My crew are veterans of a bloody war but are faithful and will keep my word.

The dinner is in James' cabin. The cabin is luxuriously appointed with French style furniture. The Dinner is a delight. The food is somewhat French: thin onion soup, roast fish in a white wine sauce with a selection of local vegetables, fruit platter, bread and raison pudding, coffee (no milk). Conversation over dinner is not a social combat, once he has the upper hand Red James is quite talkative and open, he is pleased to have gentleman guests. The xplains he is sorry he has to 'tax' them so severely but he must hold onto what luxuries he can now the war is lost and he is exiled. Player's might initiate social combat to win concessions, perhaps Catholics among them might appeal to his better nature. If so rolls for social combat can be declared trade rolls if that optional system is being used.

When the player's return to the ship they will find it stripped of all food, and valuables that can be carried by hand. If the optional trade rules are in use half of the ship's trade opportunities are lost. Food stores are so depleted that the ship must make immediately for a port to restock.

The First Plague.

Typical Gargantuan Vessel

400 ton. 120' Gargantuan. Crew of 200.

Aspects: Purpose built Transport O, Thick Hull O, Faithful Crew O, "Pull Together Lads"*O, Catholic Crew O,

Excellent Cook O

*good for pushing the ship's capabilities e.g. speed ,manoeuvrability etc. **Armour:** warship hull AR18 but ensure you use the Thick hull aspect. **Weaponry:** 2x6 12Lb Cannons WR21, 2x2lb Swivel Guns WR7.

Can ram: (2+Scale) WR8 (Reinforced bow) see the GTC maritime combat rules for ramming rules.

Skill Crew Member(s) providing it
Alertness Captain or Crow's Nest (Fair)

Cooking Ship's cook (Good)
Logistics Purser (Average)
Geography Master (Average)

Intimidation Captain, or Head Marine (Average)
Observation Captain or Crow's Nest (Average)

Oratory Of Captain (Fair)
Persuasion Of Captain (Mediocre)
Sailing Crew (Average)
Strategy Captain (Average)

Tactics Captain or Head Marine for deck fighting (Average)

Cutlass 3 1 Fair
Pocket Pistol 3 0 Average
Cannons & Swivel Guns 3 -1 Mediocre

Red James, the Gentleman Pirate

Experienced Major NPC

Born a gentleman's son James Pollock Grew up on the family estate. However in his early teens his family was exiled for their Catholic faith. From France James joined the Jacobite rebellion as a naval officer. When the rebellion failed he and his crew fled to Far East and turned pirate. James and his crew have given up on returning to England and instead seek the luxuries that can be gotten from loot. James is interested in treasure not bloodshed and always behaves as something of a gentleman.

Nationality: English O

Conscience: Quality 1, Corruption 1, Pride 1.

Aspects: Strapping **O**, Gentleman **O**, Catholic **O**, *The First Plague***O O**, Pirate Captain **O O**. **Extras:** Pocket Pistol (-1 Mediocre WR1 but don't forget rules for pistols at close range)

Cutlass (+1 Fair WR2)

Father Isaac

Old O

Brother John

Youth O

Brother Michael

Cabin Boy O

Lucky Rosary

Lucky O

The First Plague

Thick Hull O

Transport O
Pull together lads O
Large Crew O

Catholic Crew **O**

Crew Minions **O**

Skills

Alertness 1 0 Average Geography 1 -2 Poor Persuasion 1 -1 Mediocre 2 -1 Mediocre Sailing Weapon Skill Pistol 2 - varies Art, Culinary 20 Average Cutlass 3 1 Fair 3 1 Fair Oratory

Catholic Pirates

Typical Minor NPCs

Nationality: Scots, English or French O (Note all speak English and the Englishmen speak French)

Conscience: Pride 1, Enlightenment 1, Corruption 1

Aspects: Faithful to Red James O, Catholic O O, Ex-Navy O, Jacobite OO

Extras: Cutlass (+1 Fair WR2), Pocket Pistol (0 Average WR1, but remember rules for pistols at close range), little

luxury (e.g. snuff, candied fruit, good pipe etc.), religious item (rosary, crucifix, icon etc.).

Skills

Sailing 3 0 Average
Weapon skill single handed melee 3 - varies
Weapon skill Pistol 3 - varies
Weapon skill Cannon 3 - varies
Alertness 2 1 Fair
Language (French or English) 2 0 Average

Jean-Pierre the Ship's Chef

Experienced Major NPC

As well as providing James and the crew with excellent fare, Jean-Pierre uses his barber and herbalism `skills to do the best he can as a substitute surgeon. The First Plague does not have a proper surgeon.

Nationality: French OO

Conscience: Pride 2, Corruption 1

Aspects: French Chef **OO**, Catholic **OO**, Outrageous Accent **O**, Pirate **O Extras**: Bubber's Liver, Literate, Chef's knife (+1 Fair WR1) with Fine Steel **O**

Skills

Cooking 42 Good Art, Culinary 3 1 Fair Stewardship 3 1 Good Logistics 3 0 Average Single handed melee 3 - variesHerbalism 2 -1 Mediocre Barber 2 - 2 Poor Insult 2 1 Fair Conversation 20 Average

Natural History 2 0 Average Horticulture 2 0 Average Climbing 10 Average Dance 1 -1 Mediocre Intimidation 10 Average Geography 1 -2 Poor Boating 1 -1 Mediocre Language English 1 -1 Mediocre Language Spanish 1 -1 Mediocre Language Italian 1 -1 Mediocre



'Binding me Hand and Foot.'

NAUTICAL RACES FOR D&D 5th EDITION

by Karl Brown

Part 1: Understanding the race descriptions.

This article provides new PC races chosen to suit nautical adventures inspired by Harryhausen Sinbad films, the golden age of piracy, or viking sagas. I have reverse engineered the WOTC race creation system and used this to ensure these races are balanced designs. This race creation system will be released separately when it is complete. It is not the system published in the previous edition of RPG Review. The article before you provides only the material needed to use the races presented here.

To save space most traits are not described in full, instead the core books are referenced. References to page numbers are encoded by book. PHB (Player's Handbook), DMG (Dungeon Master's Guide), MM (Monster Manual).

Safety star rating

To help you judge how certain I am of the evidence used to create a race I have a star system. Like the hotel and car safety scoring systems, races range from 0 to *****. Note that the star rating does not reflect 'balance', all races are designed to be balanced, but how sure I am of the design. The star system could be used to communicate to players what races you are going to allow, you might for instance only allow races rated 3 to 5 stars.

0 Flawed: This race actually breaks the rules set by WOTC's race creation system. Many fan created races on the net are at this rating.

- * Experimental: Contains one or more traits that are products of intuition. Most commonly speeds above 40ft or below 25ft, and Reach over 10ft. It does not break the rules of WOTC's system. Very few fans extend the game system in new directions so this level is actually rare among fan created races on the net.
- ** Playtest: This race contains uncertain traits. It probably does not break the rules of WOTC's system and that there is a chance that it may be a little over- or under-powered. Alternatively, the race uses rules that extend PHB rules in new ways. Many better fan created races on the net would be at this level.
- *** Typical: This race contains at least one trait that we do not know the exact value of and does not break the rules of WOTC's system. Conservative fan based races created by using PHB races as templates can reach this level. A deeper understanding of WOTC's system obtained by reverse engineering allows greater design freedom while still remaining at this level. If not canonised by the PHB the builds for halflings, gnomes, and half-orcs would be at this level.

**** Safe: The races traits are all one for which we have very good evidence. If not canonised by the PHB dwarves, elves, tieflings, and dragonborn would be at this level.

**** ½ to ***** Very Safe/Canon: The race has no uncertain items, all the traits can be valued by direct statements in the PHB. Of all the PHB races only the Human reaches this level without canonisation by the PHB.

Type & Tags

A PC version of a monster has the monster's Type and any Tags.

Racial ability score adjustments

Unlike the PHB, racial ability score adjustments can be negative.

Ability score range

The canon rule in the PHB is that the range of ability scores for PCs is 3-20. However, who ever heard of a Str9 awakened frog? Optional ranges are given for starting ability scores. During play misfortune can reduce a character's ability scores below these minimums but a PC may never rise above the maximums given.

Age

This has no bearing on game mechanics and might be gleaned from MM text or invented. Age ranges are not given with the races.

Alignment

The alignment given in the MM is the one the race adheres to most often. For mortal races this is just a tendency but for extraplanar creatures deviation from the given alignment can be vanishingly rare. Alignments are not given in the race descriptions.

Traits

Size: 3e veterans note that Size does not include Reach.

Weapons of different Sizes are different proficiencies. A Large javelin proficiency does not let an ogre use her proficiency bonus with a human's javelin. If a creature changes size when levels are gained then all weapon proficiencies also scale up at the same time.

Natural armour: if the PC wears armour use the highest of the natural armour and the worn, they do not stack (like the barkskin spell).

Water breather: you breath water not air. If you enter the air the usual rules for holding your breath and suffocating apply (PHB183).

Low CR monsters

Some creatures are so weak that extra traits are assigned to the PC version.

Flight

Care must be taken in this edition of D&D when allowing flying 1st level. The level at which PHB only characters can gain good access to flight is 6th!

Races with a flying speed at 1st level should have the following warning:

"Having a flying/swimming) speed before 6th level is exceptionally effective in certain circumstances and exceedingly dangerous in others. As a result, playing a (race) requires special consideration by your DM who may disallow this choice."

Part 2: Overcoming the limits

Playtest

The rules in this section are not part of the reverse-engineering of WOTC's system.

The PHB is designed to support humanoids of Small or Medium size and lower power level as PCs. The reverse engineered race creation system is bound by these limits. This section contains new rules to overcome these limits. The rules use existing D&D rules and math as a basis but are NOT something WOTC uses. For example a mathematical analysis of classes was used to create the Level Adjustment rule. Players and DMs should treat these rules like a play-test. If you use these rules you should regard your character as a play test and accept that the referee has the right to remove the character from play at any time.

Out of Combat: Disadvantage & Inspiration

We don't want to write a library of special case rules to cover marine creatures on land, awakened animals trying to pick pockets, etc. We need a separate alternative system. Fortunately, we are given two general tools for players who play within the limitations of a role: Disadvantage, and Inspiration.

- Use Disadvantage when the race can do something but with difficulty.
- When a race can't do something say 'no' but if this prevents the character from taking an action

critical to survival or achieving important goals award Inspiration. Inspiration is explained as the character trying harder to prove themselves useful.

The Inspiration awards are important. Awarding Inspiration when the handicap becomes critical compensates the player in proportion to how often the handicap is actually important during play.

Specific examples follow in the sections below on Size and Beasts.

Size

Whenever the Size of your race place you in danger or prevent you from doing something critical your referee might award Inspiration (PHB125). A giant might be rewarded Inspiration for not being able to enter a room where the rest of the party was loosing a fight but not if the door went into an inn on a warm summer night. If your Size makes something more difficult but not impossible apply Disadvantage, for example a hill giant trying to pick a human-built lock.

Size and Equipment

The other issue is equipment of the right size. For scaled armour we learn from the barding rule, the armour does not differ in AC from Medium scale, cost is x4 per scale up and x1/4 per scale down, weight is x2 per scale up and x1/2 per scale down. In the PHB Small armour costs and weighs the same as Medium you may wish to change this. These rules could be used for any worn equipment including packs.

For other non-worn gear my best guess is cost x2 per increase in scale, x1/2 per scale down. The exception is items with value based on their materials, such as gold jewelry, those increase in cost as per weight.

For scaled weapons if the weapon is in the monster's description use the damage listed (minus the monster version's STR mod). If not, Large scale double the number of damage dice, Huge scale triple the number of dice. By extension I'm guessing that gargantuan scaled weapons would be 4x the usual number of damage dice. Ok what about smaller? Well, sprite in the MM tells us 1d8 at Medium goes to 1pt at Tiny but we currently don't really have any other data points for smaller than medium scaled weapons. While we wait on further evidence I suggest halving the number of sides of the dice used per reduction in scale below Medium (for example a 2d8 becomes 2d4, a d2 becomes 1pt, 1pt becomes 0 damage). Using this system weapons can be scaled to Small Size too; for example a Small Greatsword does 2d3 slashing. At Tiny any slashing or piercing weapon can be built with the finesse quality if damage is reduced to 1pt.

Unarmed damage is NOT scaled this way. Unless bought as a separate trait unarmed damage is 1 bludgeoning.

Weapon cost probably increases in proportion to the average damage of the weapon compared to the Medium version, i.e Large x2, Huge x3, Small x1/2 and Tiny x1/4. Weight increases by x8 per size increase or x1/8 per Size decrease in the real world.

A giant's rock is a simple ranged weapon.

Beasts and other oddities

There are issues if you cannot wield tools or speak. Whenever the limitations of your race place you in danger or prevent you from doing something critical your referee might award Inspiration (PHB125). For example an awakened panther might be rewarded Inspiration for not being able to open a door to a room where the rest of the party was losing a fight but not if the door went into an inn on a warm summer night.

Speech

Not being able to talk can cause communication issues that could occasionally be worth Inspiration. You might understand languages without being able to speak or write them. Speech is characterized into three categories:

1. If you can't vocalise at all then you can't cast spells with a verbal component and spellcasting classes are not recomended. You can still learn languages and understand them, just not speak them. (twig blight, crawling claw)

- 2. If your natural form can't speak humanoid languages then for spells with verbal components assume you are able to translate the arcane formulas into noises you can make. If shape-changed into a form that cannot make your natural range of sounds you cannot cast spells with verbal components until the effect ends, even if your temporary form can speak humanoid languages. (chimera, chuul, manes).
- 3. If you can speak humanoid languages then you use words for somatic components. If you are polymorphed or shape-changed into a form that cannot sound out words you can't cast spells with somatic components until the effect ends (human, awakened animals, silver dragon)

Tool Use

Not all races have hands or tentacles able to wield weapons and use tools well. For weapon and tool use rate the creature into one of 5 categories most races presented are equivalent to a human (tool use 5) but a few are tool use 2.

If you have no hands or an odd body-shape armour is usually no problem, exotic barding can exists in D&D. You may need help to get in or out of armour (see below).

You cannot begin play with equipment you cannot use, nor proficiencies in weapons, shields, or tools you cannot use. This also applies to any class benefits you cannot physically do. You are not directly compensated for this you just lose these benefits. However, the more often this comes up the more limited your character is and the more likely they are to earn Inspiration during play.

For those without hands a spell focus can replace most material components and can be simply grasped or worn. I would assume you can interpret somatic components into complex sets of movements you can perform in your natural form. Just as a human transformed into a handless parrot can't cast spells with somatic components a parrot transformed into a human cannot use somatic components even though the new form has hands. If you can't write you cannot write into a spellbook without aid, therefore creatures that cannot write who are wizards must take the Mage Hand cantrip at first level.

Tool use 1: Paws, mouth, or similar. Unable to use any weapons, shields, or tools. Cannot don or remove armour without help. Cannot apply the bonus for Dexterity to thrown or missile weapons except objects dropped from above. Cannot open locks, disable traps, pick pockets, open a doorknob, or write. A wizard must take Mage Hand as a known spell at first level. Spells requiring specific material components with a gp value require an active Mage Hand. Can cast spells where a focus can substitute for material components. Cannot use a component pouch without an active Mage Hand. Somatic components require your whole body to be free to move (behir, beholder, blink dog, chimera, cloaker, killer whale).

Tool use 2: Grasping paws or similar. Able to grasp items and point wands but due to weak grip, lack of coordination, or limited range of movement cannot wield weapons, use shields, or perform fine manipulation such as writing. Cannot don or remove armour without help. Cannot apply the bonus for dexterity to thrown or missile weapons except objects dropped from above. Cannot open locks, disable traps. Can pick pockets with a Disadvantage. Requires a DC10 Dex check to open a doorknob though if the door was intended for people two or more Sizes larger you are at a Disadvantage. Wizards must take the Mage Hand cantrip at 1st level. Able to cast most spells requiring material components. Spells requiring specific material components with a gp value require an active Mage Hand if fine manipulation is described in the spell description. Can cast spells where a focus can substitute. Can use a component pouch. Somatic components require your whole body to be free to move (dragon, raven, crab, homunculus, otyugh, raccoon, possum, umber hulk).

Joining levels for powerful creatures

Level adjustment (LA) is how many class levels the race is worth. Joining level (JL) is the level when the race can join a party. If no LA or JL is listed assume LA+0 and JL1.

Joining level (JL) is the level of PHB race characters when the monster race joins them. Typically, JL=LA+1 but not always. For example a monster with LA4, JL6 joins a party two levels in her class when the humans in the party are 6th level in their classes. A character must have at least one level in a PHB class to be legal for play. Sometimes however

JL is higher because an trait requires a higher level (see below).

Level Adajustment & traits

Where a race trait is granted at a level use LA+class levels to determine when the trait is gained.

Joining level & traits

For some creatures an adult starting without a particular trait is stretching credibility. If this is the case JL may be higher than LA+1 so that the joining level is one where a desired trait is balanced.

Part 3: Unusual characters in play

Character creation

You still get the usual 1st level HP for your first class even if you have racial HD. Proficiency bonus is determined as if your level was LA+class levels. There are no limits on Background. The Outlander is good for marauding humanoids and wild creatures, even those from the ocean. Equipment is as given by Class and Background or purchase. If you go with the Class and Background options weapons and armour are scaled to your size representing a significant saving in the cost of scaled goods for large races. You may not begin with equipment you cannot use, for example tool use 2 races do not begin with weapons.

At the table

The more human–like the character is, the easier it will be to include them in D&D's traditional types of adventures. Creatures of any Size could be adventurers. If your campaign features a lot of dungeons then Large is probably the maximum Size for PCs. However a nautical campaign consists mostly of ocean travel and islands. Huge PCs should play just fine if adventurers stick to the shallows or if a large ship carries the party. Tiny PCs can be useful in any type of adventure.

Unusual shape is actually even less of an issue than size if the character is part of a party. Compare a giant eagle and awakened parrot, the latter can easily perch on another PC's shoulder and go where they go. A solitary awakened parrot is going to be stuck when faced with their first doorknob but as part of a party they can get past the door and do their fair share to overcome whatever is on the other side.

If during play the unusual character seems too powerful the table should negotiate a solution. One alternative is to remove the character from play.

Part 4: Nautical Races

Aquatic Elf

***1/2 Medium Humanoid (Elf)

Elf traits (PHB23).

Subrace traits: Dex+1, Con+2. At 1st level Swim speed is 35ft and land speed 25. Amphibious (PHB305). Mask of the Sea: you can attempt to hide even when you are only lightly obscured by seaweeds, silt, and other natural underwater phenomena (as per Mask of the wild PHB24). Proficient in spear and trident. The aquatic elf speaks Elvish, Common and Sahuagin.

Notes: This version of aquatic elf is based on the 2e version from the Book of Elves and the Monstrous Manual for that edition. Interestingly, these two sources are inconsistent in several places.

Cat, Awakened

** ½ Tiny Beast Tool use 1. Languages: Common and one other of the player's choice.

Str-2{1-6}, Dex+2{3-20}, Con+0{3-20}, Int+0{3-20}, Wis+1{3-20}, Cha+0{2-14}

Traits: Speed 40, Climb Speed 30ft. Proficiency in Stealth, Perception, and unarmed attacks. Keen smell, no

disadvantage on sight checks in dim light. Claw attack does 1+STR slashing damage. Exceptional individual: your unusual past is represented by one feat of your choice.

Notes: most ships have a cat, when a skald takes a liking to the feline or wild magic is encountered in uncharted oceans characters like this can result.

Eagle, Giant

* ½ Large Tool Use 2 Speech 2 Beast. LA2 JL3

 $Str+3{3-20}, Dex+3{3-20}, Con+1{3-20}, Int-1{2-16} Wis +2{3-20}, Cha+0{3-20}.$

Traits: Speed 10ft, Fly speed 80ft, cannot fly while wearing heavy or moderate armour, keen sight, Perception skill, Beak 1d6 piercing and talons 2d6 slashing no extra attacks reach 5ft. Racial HD 2d10. Unarmed Proficiency.

Speaks Giant Eagle. Understands Common and Auran but cannot speak them.

Notes: In nautical campaigns one can easily imagine giant versions of white sea eagles. Being able to fly before 6th level is exceptionally effective in certain circumstances and exceedingly dangerous in others. As a result, playing a giant eagle requires special consideration by your DM who may disallow this choice.

Fog Giant

* ½ Huge Giant. LA8, JL11. A fog giant joins an 11th level party with three levels in a class. Languages: Common, Giant. The first two times a fog giant would gain an extra attack from a class she gains a 1d8 hit die and associated increase in maximum hit points each time instead.

Str+9{3-20}, Dex+0{3-20}, Con+5{3-20}, Int+0{3-20}, Wis+2{3-20}, Cha+0{3-20}

Traits: Reach 10ft. Natural armour 13+DEX. Racial HD 5d12. Speed 40. Proficient in Dex, Con, and Wis saves. Skill proficiencies in athletics, survival, and stealth. Advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks for both smell and hearing. Blend into fog, mist, falling snow, hail, or heavy rain (this works like Mask of the Wild for these conditions PHB24). Unarmed attacks do 1d10 bludgeoning damage. Weapon proficiencies: unarmed, huge rock (as per a Cloud Giant's rock MM154) and Great Club (as per Hill Giant MM155). Advantage on saves vs poison and resistance to poison damage.

Notes: based on the 2e Monstrous Manual creature. The Fog Giant was first seen in the 1e Fiend Folio. These 24ft tall muscular giants have milk-white skin and silvery hair. They dwell in temperate coasts, marshes, and boggy forests; all places prone to fogs. They are hunter-gatherers but know some metalwork and value silver. There are both good and evil fog giants, both are known for being as quiet in ambush as they are boisterous in carousing. Aboard a ship the Fog Giant takes up as much space as 64 Medium sized crew/passengers probably by sleeping in the hold. Only large vessels. However, the giants great strength and hieght enable him to do the work of 64 crew also but only if say 20% of the vessel's cost and construction time is spent modifying the ship. In a coastal or island hopping campaign the giant can wade or swim while other PCs sail but Fog Giants cannot swim an ocean crossing.

Half-Elf Variant

**** 1/2 or ***1/2 if half aquatic elf. Medium Humanoid

Charisma is raised by +1

Speed 30ft

Choose one subrace of elf. You gain all of the traits of that subrace including the ability score modifier and lesser traits. Note that you done not get the core Elf traits and modifiers, only those listed under your chosen elf subrace (PHB23-24 or aquatic elf above).

Traits: You gain two skills of your choice. Darkvision 60ft, Fey Ancestry (PHB23), plus those granted by your elf sub-race. Languages: Common, Elven, and any one other language.

Notes: this can be used to make half aquatic elves for nautical campaigns, half drow for underdark settings etc.

Half-Mer

***1/2 Medium Humanoid (Merfolk)

 $Str+0{3-20}$, $Dex+0{3-20}$, $Con+1{3-20}$, $Int+0{3-20}$, $Cha+1{3-20}$.

Traits: Amphibious (PHB305). Land speed 30ft. Shore walker: the half-mer can take an action to transform between two physical forms, one with legs and an land speed of 30ft and the other with a fishy tail instead of legs, a swim speed of 30ft and a land speed of 10ft. Exceptional individual: your unusual past is reflected in the free choice of one feat.

Lesser Traits: speaks Common, Aquan, and one other language of the player's choice. Half-Mer: when adjudicating magical effects the character counts as both a human and a merfolk, both a land creature and a marine creature.

Lizardfolk

**1/2 Medium Humanoid (Lizardfolk) Speed 30ft. Languages: Draconic, Common.

Str+2 {3-20}, Dex+0{3-20}, Con+0{3-20}, Int+0{2-14}, Wis+0{3-20}, Cha+0{2-14}.

Traits: Swim Speed 30ft, Natural armour 13+DEX. Bite 1d6+STR piercing and claws 1d4+STR slashing, both reach 5ft. Weapon proficiencies: unarmed, heavy club, and javelin. Hold breath for 15 minutes.

Notes: In a nautical campaign one can easily imagine marine lizard men who perhaps look like anthropomorphic saltwater crocodiles.

Merfolk

*1/2 Medium Humanoid (merfolk)

Str+0{3-20}, Dex+1{3-20}, Con+2{3-20}, Int+0{3-20}, Cha+1{3-20}.

Traits: Perception skill. Proficient in spear, trident and net. Land speed 10ft, swim speed 40ft at 1st. Amphibious (PHB305). Your unusual past that has driven you away from the usual life of your kind is represented by two skills, a feat, and an extra language of your choice.

Notes: This race is designed for a campaign where the Merfolk PC will be spending at least some time out of water and interacting with land-dweller PCs. It may be overpowered in other contexts. You should discuss how you and the referee imagine issues like thirst, dehydration, and jumping and how Disadvantage and Inspiration will be used to make sure you are on the same page.

Minotaur

** ½ Large monstrosity, the first Extra Attack from a class is swapped for a 1d8 hit die and associate increase in maximum hit points.

Languages: Abysal, Common. LA4, JL5.

Str +4{3-20}, Dex+0{3-20}, Con +3 {3-20}, Int-2{2-12} Wis +3{3-20}, Cha-1{3-18}.

Traits: Darkvision 60ft, Labyrinthine Recall. Speed 40ft, natural armour 14+DEX, Reckless. Proficient in: Perception skill, unarmed and great axe. 3d10 racial HD. Gore, at 13th level gains Charge but with a damage bonus of +1d8, this becomes +2d8 at 19th level, Charge only applies to gore attacks.

Note: The maritime minotaurs of Kryn were player characters in previous editions. Minotaurs might also find a place in settings inspired by the Argonauts of Greek myth or Harryhausen films.

Octopus, Awakened Giant.

* ½ Medium Beast. Tool use 5 (as good as human hands). Languages: Common and one other language.

Str+2{3-20}, Dex+1{3-20}, Con+1{3-20}, Int+0{3-20}, Cha-3{2-14}.

Traits: Aquatic (see above). Swim Speed 60ft, land speed 10ft. Water breather (PHB309) but able to hold breath for one hour (MM326). Stealth skill. Tentacles 1d6 bludgeoning, reach 10ft, and DC is 13+STR modifier (otherwise as per MM326). Ink cloud (MM326). At 5th level becomes Large, tentacle reach extends to 15ft, and tentacle damage becomes 2d6. To counteract the effect Large can have on damage per round a giant octopus replaces their first Extra Attack from a class (like fighter at 5th) with a 1d8 hit die and associated increase in maximum hit points.

Notes: An octopus is an alien. A solitary ambush predator with no need for friendship and incredible patience. You are never motivated by friendship, family ties, or love. In your bonds you only recognize the value of others' skills and resources. You might be motivated to protect your ocean home, by curiosity, or to amass gold to buy safety and food. The Hermit background would be a good fit.

That you have eight tentacles does not grant any extra attacks.

Parrot or Raven, Awakened

* ½ Tiny Beast Tool Use 2. Languages: Common, any one other language.

Str -4{1-4}, Dex+2{3-20}, Con+0 {2-16}, Int+0 {3-20}, Wis +1{3-20}, Cha0{2-12}

Traits: Speed 10ft, Fly at 50ft. Cannot fly in Moderate or Heavy armour. Mimicry (PHB309). Unarmed proficiency. Advantage on saves against magic with Dex, Wis, Cha, and Con. +3 to initiative. Skills: Perception, Stealth, and one extra skill of the player's choice. False appearance: looks like an ordinary parrot or raven. Beak does unarmed 1 piercing damage. The ability to communicate with ordinary parrots or crows and ravens. Additionally, a Raven has advantage of saves against poison and resistance to poison damage but only from ingested poisons.

Notes: Most of a bird's survivability is in her power of flight. The best character options are those that enable the bird to attack or aid at a distance. Parrots would stereotypically have the pirate or sailor background but it would also be suitable for the ravens taken by Viking ships to seek out land. The Sage Background is suggested for Viking ravens who emulate Odin's birds Huginn ("thought") and Muninn ("memory") or ravens attracted to "many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore".

Having a flying speed before 6th level is exceptionally effective in certain circumstances and exceedingly dangerous in others. As a result, playing a bird requires special consideration by your DM who may disallow this choice."

DEEP IN THE IVORY TOWER: A RUNEQUEST PIRATES ADVENTURE

by Lev Lafayette

With thanks to Stan Polson, Ralph Lovegrove, and Steven The Red

Part One: The Treasure Map

As these stories often do begin, "Deep in the Ivory Tower" starts with a treasure map. However the placement by the GM should be undertaken with some care with two key considerations (a) the map should be found in possession of distatesful, if not downright evil individuals and (b) the map should be a obsfucated puzzle in its own right or, as a simpler alternative, as a jigsaw puzzle. The map itself is on the reverse of a parchment ascribed to Abramelin the Mage.

Some examples could include (a) among the accounts of a corrupt town alderman, (b) in the possession of a thieves or assassins guild, (c) a ritualistic wizard who commands a band of orcs. Another essential element is that the treasure map makes great promises not only of wealth, but also of esoteric knowledge that provides one special insight to the world, unavailable to lesser beings.

For example:

"... thou wilt therein find certain examples and other matters which will be most profitable unto thee to learn the Veritable and Sacred Magic, and unto the practice of that which I, ABRAMELIN, THE SON OF SIMON, have learned, in part from my father, and in part also from other Wise and faithful Men, and which I have found true and real, having submitted it unto proof and experiment. And having written this with mine own hand, I have placed it within this casket, and locked it up, as a most precious treasure; in order that when thou hast arrived at a proper age thou mayest be able to admire, to consider, and to enjoy the marvels of the Gods"

... and so forth. Make the treasure map and its text something for the players to figure out through obsfucated language. If they throw their arms up in complete frustration allow an appropriate skill roll for a few hints. The major elements is that:

- (a) the great treasure is to found on the isle of San Lorenzo. This can be expressed as the "the island holds the esoteric knowledge of the greate martyr, the First and Last of the Seven Deacon of Rome", i.e., Saint Lawrence.
- (b) on the island of the great martyr the esoteric knowledge will be found in a dungeon. This is from "it will be found from she who has eyes like the pools of Heshbon by the gate of Bath Rabbim" (i.e., the Biblical reference to the "ivory tower", i.e., an inverted ivory tower that is made from bones).

In something that might be a hint to the particularly insightful, the location of this treasure is located on the isle of San Lorenzo, for those using a fantasy-Earth or similar environment. This island and its religion of Bokonism are described with some completeness in the novel by Kurt Vonnegut Jnr., "Cat's Cradle" of which elements appear in this scenario, although in a modified manner for the purpose of the scenario.

If any characters bother to do some appropriate research (and they surely will) they will discover that San Lorenzo is a tiny, rocky island located in the Caribbean Sea, positioned in the relative vicinity of Puerto Rico. It has no resources, no industry, and a population of miscreants. The one township, Lugar de Madeira, is a ramshakle collection of hovels with remarkably poor sanitation and is usually described by its few visitors as Lugar de Mierda, instead. In a nutshell, the place is worthless. The very idea that a great treasure could be found there may seem strange the say the least.

The written history of the island begins with Cristóvão Jacques as the first European man to land San Lorenzo. Jacques and his men came ashore for fresh water in 1519, named the island, claimed it for Manuel I, and never returned. Subsequent expeditions came for gold and diamonds and rubies and spices, found none, slaughtered most of indigenous population entertainment and heresy, and sailed on.

The Spanish challenged Portuguese rule in 1535, but there was no objection from Portugal. The France claimed San Lorenzo in 1540 with no objection from Spain. The Dutch claimed the island in 1634 and faced no objection from Spain, and England claimed it a mere ten years later in 1644, with no objection from The Netherlands.

In an environment where good fortune could be achieved by Anglo and French privateers sailing under a letter of marque, a handful of surly individuals who were rejected of such a normally loose license and could find no other place to inhabit, ended up in San Lorenzo. There was no complaint from the British either.

Part Two: San Lorenzo and Brawl at the The Flying Shuttle

The Flying Shuttle is, without doubt, the worst public house in the worst city in the world. The famous latrine from "Trainspotting" is positively immaculate compared to what will be encountered (and GMs should endeavour to mention this to a random character who just so happens to feel the need to visit such facilities; e.g., make a Resilience check). The beer is like making love in canoe, the wine can be used a paint-stripper, but the gruel - despite a taste on par with the rest of the fare - is surprisingly nutritious. Weapons must be left at the door with a particularly burly bouncer emphasising this point.

The company of about a score of pirates are a surly lot to put it bluntly. Nevertheless they consider themselves to have some expertise on a surprisingly wide range of subjects, whether it be music and other arts, political institutions and legal norms, various sciences and most importantly, mathematics and statistics. Several conversations should convince the PCs that whilst some of those present may indeed have a modicum of skill in these fields, the most prevalent characteristic (even among those who do know something) is a most disagreeable arrogance that they know *everything* about a subject and are *never* wrong.

It is unavoidable at some stage in the process the PCs will be drawn to a gambling table where a number of people are debating over the relative advantages of a craps-like game where "7" is a magic number to achieved on 2d6 and whether it is better to base the game on a roll-high ("big endian") or roll-low ("little-endian") mechanic. Gamers who are long versed in the debate of high versus low roll systems should encounter some familiar arguments in this debate, such as deeply held (but completely incorrect claims) that row low has a fixed floor whereas roll high has an infinite ceiling. A particularly onery GM may wish to introduce the different virtues of 2d6 versus d12 with their different distributions.

It is important that the GM encourage the players to voice their opinions on such matters. At an opportune moment in the debate, a hush will full upon the bar and a big ugly pirate captain will enter the room. A hissed voice will mention "There be trouble now.. It's Captain Franciscus!". The Captain will lean over the PCs with his incredibly pungent body odour, his gnarled teeth with external fangs and will introduce his most loyal companions - Master Bates, Seaman Staines, and Roger The Cabin Boy - who accord the Captain messiah-like devotion. Any mocking of these fine individuals will result in immediate violence.

In fact, violence in inevitable. The friendlier and more concilatory the PCs attempt to be, the more aggressive and abusive the response will be, especially from the Captain - it as if he was wearing a ring of contrariness, to use the classic D&D magic item. Eventually as voices are raised and push becomes shove, the bartender will call out that if there is going to be a fight on his premises, as there must be between locals and strangers, then there will be no swords, daggers, or clubs - fisticuffs only! The Captain will take that as his cue to land a haymaker on the jaw of the biggest PC.

This is a classic barroom brawl of all-on-to-all. A GM should run it for as long as it is entertaining. Sadly however for the PCs, this is one fight that they cannot win. The Captain in particular seems to have this uncanny ability of being immune to damage, no matter how well a blow is landed. He has, and perhaps not just metaphorically speaking, the hide of a rhino. Eventually the PCs will find themselves unceremoniously turfed from The Flying Shuttle, almost certainly with a number unconscious and perhaps even badly wounded.

Part Three: Bokononism and Deep in The Ivory Tower

After being turfed from The Flying Shuttle, the PCs will be rescued by a bronze-skinned individual named Agueybana, who is descended from original nobility of the islands and slaves brought here by European powers, or so he says. Explaining that he can help them, he will take the party to the small seaside farm house where he and his family of wife and five children raise a few goats, engage in a bit of fishing, and grow cassava root and fruit.

Agueybana is an advocate of Bokononism, who fundamental principle is that all dogma is based on lies. However these untruths, if properly applied, can bring a solace; these lies are called foma. It is, essentially, a recognition that knowledge is imperfect, incomplete, and - when applied to transcendental truths - necessarily so. "Those who live by foma that wants them to believe without doubt will be unhappy as they are damaged within. Live by the foma that make you brave and kind and healthy and happy".

When questions are asked about Captain Franciscus it is explained that he settled on San Lorenzo after several years of being systemically thrown out of numerous other ports. With a small group of lackeys and a larger group of slaves, he took the previously peaceful island and established his rule from the former Bokononism temple and catacombs. If asked if there are any riches or knowledges within the temple, Agueybana will answer that they "beyond imagining". If asked for specifics, he will mention coinage, weapons and so forth - which, in accord to his religion - is a harmless untruth, or rather, a truth when carefully considered. The treasure "beyond imagining" is the sacred texts of Bokononism, and there are coins and weapons which he's happy to see the party take if the temple comes back in the hands of the local people.

The temple itself is on a hilltop graveyard, designed in the style of pre-classic Mesoamerican Architecture. It consists of layers connected by stone stairs at cardinal points all of which reach a seven metres high stone temple at the apex with the floor space of twenty metres by twenty metres. The entrance facing the town (and the dawn) is double-sized. The temple entrances are guarded (one at each minor door, two at the major entrance). Inside the main chamber is an additional dozen members and an equal number of auxiliaries of Captain Franciscus' crew. This space is used as a common room and as a result will have the expected bedding, trinkets, and so forth. There is also, in the middle of the room, a set of circular stairs leading downwards to the catacombs. Taking the temple is an extraordinary challenge in its own right, and clever PCs will consider Bokononist strategy of verbal deception to gain entrance; anyone who attempts this will gain a +25% chance of success due to the holy foma of the place. In addition, any character who goes barefoot on this holy ground will gain an additional +10% to all skill rolls, although that does have the usual risks.

The Boko-maru Calypso

We will touch our feet, yes, Yes, for all we're worth, And we will love each other, yes, Yes, like we love our Mother Earth.

The second level of the "ivory tower" is appropriately named; approximately a third in dimensions to the level above (7m by 7m), the walls are encrusted with bone from generations of individuals who have died and have been buried in accord to the Bokonon faith, giving an appearance not unlike the Crypt of the Sepulchral Lamp in Parisian Catacombs. It is here that Captain Franciscus has made his home, with a large bed adorned with skulls (for the Captain and

whatever poor lass he has dragged into his den for the night), along with a stout table with the sacred texts of Bokononism, which also holds a lantern. There is a trapdoor in the centre of the room underneath a rich carpet and, at the foot of the bed, the Captain's treasure chest which contains the following: 3 seats of fine clothes, 2000 Reales, 4000 Pieces of Eight, 2000 Doubloons, 4000 Reales of jewellry, a compass, a logbook (back in the day...), navigator's kit, 4 pocket watches,

As for the books, the title page of the first book opened gives the appropriate warning "Don't be a fool! Close this book at once! It is nothing but foma!" Inside these texts is various marginalia by Captain Franciscus, a review of which will quickly indicate that the Captain is searching through the texts for the means to save his troubled soul. In a future age, the comments will indicate a sufferer of histrionic personality disorder, paranoid personality disorder, antisocial personality disorder, and psychotic schizophrenia.

As can be imagined the Captain will engage in defense of his room, a last line from any invading forces. He also carries a scroll which can summon forth a veritable plague of mindless skeletons to assist him in this process (being mindless and following the Captain seems to go together very well). This scroll, entitled, "pool-pah" must be read aloud to function and through a Spellcharge Enchantment, will Summon the former priests of the temple in skeletal form. It can only be used once.

The third level, deep in the ivory tower, is accessible only by the trapdoor under the rug. A rickety ladder leads down to a cold and dank chamber which measures a mere 3m by 3m. Again like the chamber above it is encrusted with the bones of the dead and if the scroll has been used as above, there will be active skeletons prepared to slay any foreign intruders. Also in the chamber, crawling around the dark - and perhaps considered another foe by the party - is the half-starved and insane wife-sister-daughter of the Captain, Elisabeth. It is probable that she will will attack the party as well unless calmed in some manner.

Appendix: Franciscus The Half Troll and Friends

Franciscus The Half Troll has had a troubled life. He was got in fear by a mother that had a predilection for burly men with big teeth who like to bite. Naturally enough Franciscus father didn't stay to see his progeny develop. Almost as attractive as his father, his mother seduced him, and he fathered upon her a daughter, Elisabeth. When she came of age (albeit barely), he married her under the ceremony of an extraordinarily drunk priest. Tired of having to introduce his wife, his sister, and his daughter when there is one woman present and, as usual, refusing to acknowledge that there might be something wrong with this relationship, he locked her up deep in an ivory tower. For the past twenty years he has kept his wife-sister-daughter in this dungeon prison and subjected her to the usual abuses that one could expect.

Whilst described as a "half troll", in RuneQuest terms Franciscus was fathered by an ogre, who has passed on his Chaotic taint which apart from giving him a taste for human flesh, a contrary nature towards those that have not sworn fealty to him, also has provided him a rare affliction; attacks upon him both heal and empower him, with each point in damage either providing a point of healing or a point of strength (if undamaged) for the following action. Instead, Franciscus is wounded by first aid or magic healing, something which he is well aware of and will viciously attack anyone who attempts this. There is nothing more "damaging" to Franciscus that being healed, and if "killed" in this manner, he will awaken (albeit barely conscious), the Chaotic taint removed and remorseful.

Over the years Franciscus has managed to acquire some considerable loyalty from those impressed with his strength and his imperviousness, specifically Bates, Staines, and Roger. They too, through partaking the foul rituals that Franciscus is fond of, have acquired Chaotic features, although they are hardly of the same ability or depravity as their Captain.

Captain Franciscus The Half Troll
STR 19 CON 16 DEX 11 SIZ 13 INT 13 POW 13 CHA 14
Rleg -/7 Lleg -/7 Abd -/8 Cht -/9 Rar -/6 Lar -/6 Hed -/7

Actions 2 SR +12 Move 4m +1d4 Dam

Unarmed 80% (1d3+1d4), Dagger 90% (1d4+2+1d4), 1H Sword 90% (1d6+1+1d4), Pistols 55% (2d4)

Athletics 60% Boating 40% Dodge 50% Gunnery 50% Influence 70% Perception 80% Persistance 90% Resilience 90% Shiphandling 50% Stealth 35%

Infamous, Vice, Fearsome Aura, Chaotic Taint, Absorption (see text)

Master Bates

STR 16 CON 16 DEX 10 SIZ 13 INT 10 POW 10 CHA 11

Rleg -/6 Lleg -/6 Abd 1/7 Cht 1/8 Rar -/5 Lar -/5 Hed -/6

Actions 2 SR +10 Move 4m +1d4 Dam Buff Coat 1AP (-3% to skills)

Unarmed 60% (1d3+1d4), Dagger 60% (1d4+1+1d4), 1H Sword 60% (1d6+1+1d4), Whip 50% (1d3), Musket 40% (1d8)

Athletics 50% Boating 35% Dodge 20% Handiwork 30% Influence 30% Perception 50% Persistance 50% Resilience 50% Shiphandling 30% Stealth 35%

Infamous, Vice, Chaotic Taint

Seaman Staines

STR 14 CON 12 DEX 11 SIZ 14 INT 10 POW 10 CHA 11

Rleg -/6 Lleg -/6 Abd -/7 Cht -/8 Rar -/5 Lar -/5 Hed -/6

Actions 2 SR +11 Move 4m +1d4 Dam Buff Coat 1AP (-3% to skills)

Unarmed 50% (1d3+1d4), Dagger 50% (1d4+1+1d4), 1H Sword 50% (1d6+1+1d4)

Athletics 40% Boating 30% Dodge 20% Handiwork 25% Influence 25% Perception 40% Persistance 40% Resilience 40% Shiphandling 25% Stealth 30%

Infamous, Vice, Chaotic Taint

Roger The Cabin Boy

STR 10 CON 11 DEX 16 SIZ 08 INT 12 POW 11 CHA 09

Rleg -/4 Lleg -/4 Abd -/5 Cht -/6 Rar -/3 Lar -/3 Hed -/4

Actions 3 SR +14 Move 4m Dam -1d2

Unarmed 50% (1d3-1d2), Dagger 50% (1d4+1-1d2)

Athletics 40% Dodge 35% Handiwork 25% Perception 35% Stealth 40%

Crewmen (17)

STR 12 CON 12 DEX 11 SIZ 13 INT 09 POW 09 CHA 09

Rleg -/5 Lleg -/5 Abd -/6 Cht -/7 Rar -/4 Lar -/4 Hed -/5

Actions 2 SR +12 Move 4m

Unarmed 50% (1d3), Dagger 50% (1d4+1), 1H Sword 50% (1d6+1)

Athletics 35% Boating 25% Dodge 15% Handiwork 20% Perception 35% Persistance 35% Resilience 35%

Shiphandling 20% Stealth 20%

Auxiliaries (12)

STR 10 CON 11 DEX 11 SIZ 12 INT 09 POW 09 CHA 09

Rleg -/5 Lleg -/5 Abd -/6 Cht -/7 Rar -/4 Lar -/4 Hed -/5

Actions 2 SR +12 Move 4m

Unarmed 30% (1d3), Dagger 30% (1d4+1)

Athletics 35% Dodge 15% First Aid 35% Handiwork 25% Perception 35% Stealth 30%

Level 2 Skeletons (6)

STR 12 CON 03 DEX 10 SIZ 10 INT 0 POW 0 CHA 0

Rleg 5/3 Lleg 5/3 Abd 5/4 Cht 5/5 Rar 5/2 Lar 5/2 Hed 5/3

Actions 2 SR +5 Move 4m

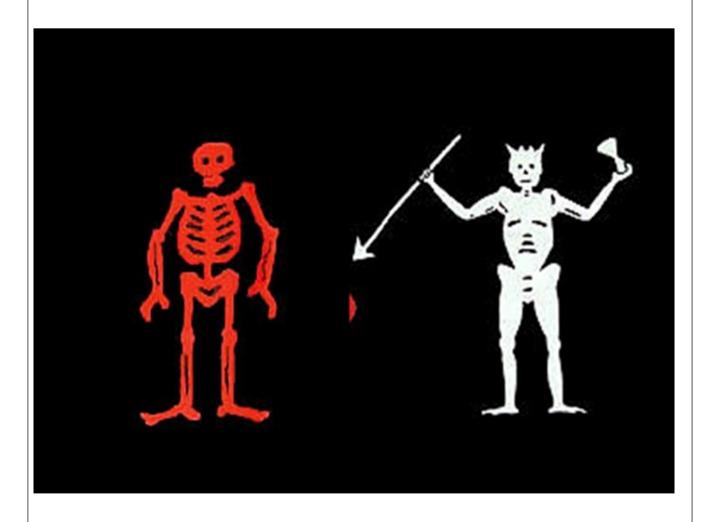
Unarmed 30% (1d3), Bone Club 30% (1d6) Dark Sight, Night Sight

Level 3 Skeletons (3)

STR 13 CON 05 DEX 11 SIZ 12 INT 0 POW 0 CHA 0 Rleg 5/4 Lleg 5/4 Abd 5/5 Cht 5/6 Rar 5/3 Lar 5/3 Hed 5/4 Actions 2 SR +5 Move 4m Unarmed 35% (1d3), Bone Club 35% (1d6) Dark Sight, Night Sight

Elisabeth

STR 10 CON 11 DEX 13 SIZ 09 INT 12 POW 11 CHA 09 Rleg -/4 Lleg -/4 Abd -/5 Cht -/6 Rar -/3 Lar -/3 Hed -/4 Actions 3 SR +13 Move 4m Dam -1d2 Unarmed 50% (1d3-1d2), Bone Dagger 50% (1d4+1-1d2) Athletics 40% Dodge 35% Perception 35% Stealth 40% Insane



SHAB-AL-HIRI ROACH REVIEW AND SCENARIO

by Lev Lafayette

Review

Physical Product and The Question

It's 72 pages (plus advertisements), lightly glued for binding, A5-sized, single column serif font throughout with shaded emphasised text. The short game has an excellent table of contents but no index. Various black-and-white art pieces are appropriate for the 1920s Ivy League setting albeit with little direct reference to the text, and there's a set of somewhat flimsy cards. All of this sounds rather plain at this point, so it's worth jumping into what The Shab-Al-Hiri Roach is all about. It poses what must certainly be one of the more unusual and supposedly difficult questions of all time. "Are you willing to swallow a soul-eating telepathic insect bent on destroying human civilization?" "No? Even if it will get you tenure?"

The background to the game - there is only one - is that an ancient Sumerian monster, The Roach, has awoken due to the stumbling mistakes of Pemberton University's Dr. Appleby-Jenkins, who released the creature from its four-thousand year sleep. Scuttling among the cobblestones and the neo-Gothic ediface the Roach, once known as Num-Sodar-Ra seeks to re-establish a culture that will cater to its greasy needs.

Character Generation

Character generation is selected from a number of balanced choices. Every player initially decides whether their character will be a Full Professor or an Assistant Professor, as all characters are members of the University. NPCs also get to be Townsfolk, University Staff, or Luminaries. For conflicts involving Academic Status, the Townsfolk receive a d4, University Staff and Associate Professors a d6, Full Professors a d8, and Luminaries a d10. For any other sort of conflict the values are reversed (i.e., Townsfolk d10, University Staff/Associate Professors d8, Professors d6, Luminaries d4). This is the character's Personal Die.

Charactes also have an Expertise, "a peculiar body of specialized and often useless knowledge" (e.g., Greek rhetoric, yeast reproduction) which will help determine the Department the character belongs to. Apart from the examples already mentioned no suggestions are provided and Pemberton's department list doesn't really suit 1920s academia, has some odd absences (e.g., law, politics, and economics) and some unexpected differentiation (e.g., a Biology department and a Botany department). If a conflict occurs where the character's Expertise is appropriate they receive another Personal Die.

Finally, characters choose two personal enthusiasms. No enthusiasm may be chosen by more than two players, and if there is a conflict for that choice, determine by player age - oldest first. The enthusiasm include the likes of creativity, debauchery, wit, etc. A total of twelve are offered, and if an enthusiasm is involved in a scene (or possibly both!) the character will receive an extra Personal Die, or even two if both enthusiasms are included.

Finally, characters have a relationship with each other and Reputation. The simple relationship rule is that there is a back story which means that the character owned by the player on the left is positive and the one on the right is negative. Each character starts with three points of Reputation which should be marked with some token.

Scenes and Conflicts

Actual play is carried out in a series of Events and Scenes at Pemberton University (with a conflict in the text of whether it is actually 1919 or 1923 - we chose the latter). Each Event (e.g., Convocation and the Greeting of the Class) consists of a number of scenes which must include specific NPCs, but others can be narrated in. Each player draws a card at the beginning of each Event which can be used in a Scene during that Event. If a character is controlled by the Roach they must designate another player's character that it will be performed on prior to reading. Each card has instructions in both free characters and the Roach-bound.

Each player takes turns in setting a Scene at each Event, framing the conflict and setting the consequences (which cannot involve the death of PCs or the Roach - it is actively encouraged that NPCs a tragic end), and introducing any NPCs. The player setting the Scene can wager one to five points of Reputation. Other characters can enter the Scene by the player wagering a point of reputation and introducing additional narration. Ultimately conflict is resolved by the die roll based on their dice pool achieved by their

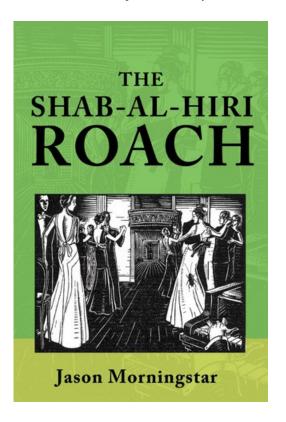
narration with the character with a single highest individual die result determining the outcome. Reputation is gained or lost depending on the amount wagered and the outcome.

That Psychic Roach

Unlike other characters whose Personal Die is a pool of d6 or d8s, depending on their role in a Scene, a player whose character is under the control of the Roach gains a d12 and an additional d12 the first Scene that they make use of the requirements of the Roach commands. This may seem to provide a great advantage, but the most important disadvantage is that if a character is under control of the Roach by the end of the the Events the character cannot win. Presumably the Roach kills them or something and scuttles off to wait for the next game.

This advantage stated, becoming a slave to the Roach is relatively easy simply declare oneself and the Roach will happily slither down your throat and the PC uses the Roach half of the cards from that point onwards. There can be, however, only one Roach-bound character at a time. There are also ten Roach cards in the pack leading to characters who become taken over against their will by the Roach. Roach commands at each Event must be carried out at least once in a Scene, hopefully with the PC reciting the Roach's command in a deep otherworldly voice.

The Roach can be resisted by drinking a lot of wine at any social function that a Scene is based at. It also reduces the PC's Personal die to a d4 and of course they don't get the Roach's d12. Getting rid of the Roach permanently requires a Roach card to be drawn, representing an opportunity, and losing an Enthusiasm, representing the loss of psychic integrity.



Evaluation

The Shab-Al-Hiri Roach is an enjoyable game, and can certainly be run for a few sessions with some variation. The semi-professional production qualities, the less than clear writing, and short length of the text all are unnecessary negatives to the game. There are some great opportunities for expansion which are unfortunately not included; any somewhat constrained setting where power and reputation is the prime currency (e.g., the Roach on a pirate ship, the Roach in a prison, the Roach in parliament). As another matter of elaboration, it would have been helpful if the game considered design features for an ongoing story, developing year-by-year, as the Roach continues in its incomprehensible plans of human enslavement.

More substantially, some of the commands or opportunities in the card system are ambiguous or rather plain in their effect. Clarity and raising the narrative stakes would be welcome. Finally, an issue exists with the GM-less narrating system, which lacks a means of validating the verisimilitude of narration in Scenes; it is too easily to slap in bonus die from NPCs etc whose association is tenuous at best. Overall however, both the scenario and system work well for single-session games.

Style: 1 + .4 (layout) + .6 (art) + .8 (coolness) + .4 (readability) + .3 (product) = 3.5

Substance: 1 + .4 (content) + .6 (text) + .8 (fun) + .6 (workmanship) + .6 (system) = 4.0

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The Shab-al-Hiri Roach

Jason Morningstar





The Shab-al-Hiri Roach

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The Shab-al-Hiri Roach

Jason Morningstar





A Pirate Scenario: The Cockroach Cosairs

Introduction

The backstory to this version of the Shab-Al-Hiri roach assumes the theft of mummy from Sheik Jafari of Barqah which is then transported to a slave-cum-cosair-cum-trading vessel. Travelling along the coast of Ottoman Tripolitania and into Ifriqiya, with occasional forays into raiding wealthy Christian merchant ships, the band of cosairs have an additional visitor aboard that's determined to use what powers it can to establish a loyal cult of servants (and thus rule the world, naturally).

Character Generation

For character generation each player chooses either Officer or Crewman. Officers will have a slight edge in specialist skills, whereas Crewmen will have a slight edge in combat roles. As with the normal game, characters also choose an area of expertise from the following list:

Boating, Brawling, Cooking, Craftwork, Gunnery, Medic, Musket, Logistics, Lore, Navigation, Performance, Pistols, Shiphandling, Swashbuckling, Woodwork

Being pirates, the characters will have Vices instead of Enthusiasms. The effect is still the same however. Each of these are considered major sins in Islam with various appropriate punishments as determined by hanafi fiqh. A character gains a bonus from their enthusiasm but it must be in circumstances where witnesses are absent, or are otherwise silenced.

Apostasy, Cowardice, Cruelty, Deception, Debauchery, Greed, Lust, Pride, Uncleanliness, Violence

The objective in the game is still the same; acquire Reputation. Because enough Reputation means that you can become Captain one day.

Standing(choose Crewmember or Officer)

Galley Rower (Power/Status d4, Everything Else d10) Crewmember (Power/Status d6, Everything Else d8) Officer (Power/Status d8, Everything Else d6) Captain or Imam (Power/Status d10, Everything Else d4)

Sequence of Play

The setting is the summer of 1607. As with the standard game, play hinges on six events with scenes narrated from each player. Three recurring NPCs will be at each Event, can be included in any Scene.

The Events in Order

1. Launch From Tripoli and Crew Assembly

The lateen-rigged and oared xebec has left Tripoli. The Captain, Abid Khattabi assembles the crew and tells them of the journey ahead; capture a Spanish merchant vessel, take the possessions and land in Salé. The Imam wishes to ensure that the law is followed; the head of the galley rowers wants to ensure that they are not worked *too* hard.

- Featuring:
 * Abid Khattabi, Captain
- * Huda Abdullah, Imam
- * Farid, head of the galley rowers.

2. Capture the Ship on the Way to Tunis

The Spanish merchant ship is travelling to Venice full of far too many riches for any cosair to avoid. The Captain calls for the raid, but the Roach might have other ideas. An attack is launched, and with some casualties who will need healing. A good opportunity for the Roach to swap bodies.

Featuring:

- * Abid Khattabi, Captain
- * Karim Sanjar, First Mate
- * Al-Hadi, Ship's Surgeon

3. Knights of Malta on the Way To Tripoli

Ships from the Knights of Malta catch up with the cosair's xebec; as a superior fighting force the Maltese knights will surely be a deadly problem if they can catch the xebec. Does the Roach care? Probably not, but the rowers and the boatswain will be working hard to escape the trap. Unfortunately the Christian slave ship's boy has other plans – he'd rather be rescued!

- * Farid, head of the galley rowers.
- * Ihib ibn Rusd, Boatswain
- * Samuel Morgan, ship's boy and slave.

4. Mutiny on the Alboran Sea

Greed has taken to the First Mate who thinks it's about time that he took control of the ship (and it's wealth). Besides, the Captain lost far too many crew on the raid, and was mainly absent during the counter-attack. Plus there's a mysterious murderer on board. Will you join the First Mate help take over? If only the Quartermaster could be brought on-side..

- * Abid Khattabi, Captain
- * Karim Sanjar, First Mate
- * Abed al-Jabri, Quartermaster

5. Straits of Gibraltar Unseasonal Storm

A freak storm catches the xebec as it crosses the Straits of Gibraltar. This could cause the ship to beach, and it's up to the helmsman, the navigator, and the boatswain to prevent this. It's all hands on deck, as the Roach ponders whether destruction of the vessel is to its advantage.

Featuring:

- * Abdul Rahman, Helmsman
- * Al-Samh ibn Malik, Navigator
- * Ihib ibn Rusd, Boatswain

6. Docking in Salé; Celebration

Finally reaching their destination, the crew want to celebrate, and the Quartermaster knows exactly how much celebrating can be done. The Captain wants to be generous, but the Imam is demanding moderation. The devil Roach never allows for "moderation". Featuring:

- * Abid Khattabi, Captain
- * Huda Abdullah, Imam
- * Abed al-Jabri, Quartermaster

Opportunities

A handful of the opportunity cards are obviously inappropriate for a pirate scenario. These should be altered as follows:

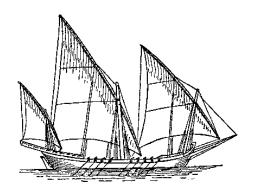
- * "Journal Article" becomes "Display Leadership. Gain a point of Reputation."
- * "Receive University Award becomes "Recognition of Service. Gain a point of Reputation."
- * "Receive Academic Appointment becomes "Receive Important Crew Duty. Gain two points of Reputation."
- * "Earn Tenure" becomes "Receive promotion. If Officer, become Mate. If already Mate, become Captain! (D10/D4) and existing Captain abdicates and leaves ship!"
- * "Uncover Plagiarist" become "Uncover Petty Thief. Take a point of Reputation from the player character of your choice."

ROACH OF THE COSAIRS CHARACTER SHEET

Name:				
Played By:				
Background				
	STANDIN	NG (circle "Crewme	mber" or "Officer	,,
Conflict About	Galley Rower	Crewmember	Officer	Captain or Iman
Power/Status	D4	D6	D8	D10
Everything Else	D10	D8	D6	D4
Aposi		Deception, Debauchery, C		eanliness, Violence
Player	Character	Crewmember	Position	Notes

Dice For Conflicts

Personal die (your Standing, modified by cards) +
Your Departmental Expertise, if narrated into the Scene +
One or both of your Enthusiasms, if narrated into the Scene +
Characters you have narrated into the Scene +
Slave to the Roach (D12) +
Doing the Roach's direct bidding (D12)



Events 1015 AH (1607 AD)

- 1. Launch From Tripoli and Crew Assembly
- * Abid Khattabi, Captain
- * Huda Abdullah, Imam
- * Farid, head of the galley rowers.
- 2. Capture the Ship on the Way to Tunis
- * Abid Khattabi, Captain
- * Karim Sanjar, First Mate
- * Al-Hadi, Ship's Surgeon
- 3. Knights of Malta on the Way To Tripoli
- * Farid, head of the galley rowers.
- * Ihib ibn Rusd, Boatswain
- * Samuel Morgan, ship's boy and slave.

- 4. Mutiny on the Alboran Sea
- * Abid Khattabi, Captain
- * Karim Sanjar, First Mate
- * Abed al-Jabri, Quartermaster
- 5. Straits of Gibraltar Unseasonal Storm
- * Abdul Rahman, Helmsman
- * Al-Samh ibn Malik, Navigator
- * Ihib ibn Rusd, Boatswain
- 6. Docking in Salé; Celebration
- * Abid Khattabi, Captain
- * Huda Abdullah, Imam
- * Abed al-Jabri, Quartermaster

Other Crewmembers Of Note

Name	Notes	Cause of Death
Abid Khattabi	Captain	
Huda Abdullah	Imam	
Karim Sanjar	First Mate	
Abdul Rahman	Helmsman	
Ihib ibn Rusd	Boatswain	
Al-Hadi	Ship's Surgeon	
Abed al-Jabri	Quartermaster	
Al-Samh ibn Malik	Navigator	
Farid	Head of the galley rowers.	
Samuel Morgan	Ship's boy and slave	

FREIBURG: A REVIEW AND ELABORATIONS

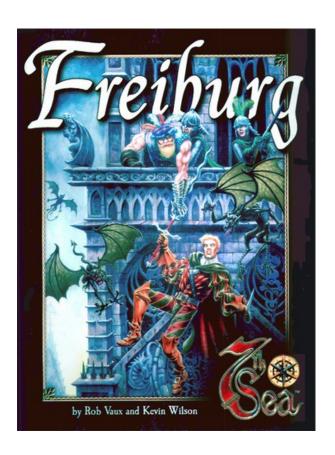
by Lev Lafayette

Freiburg Review

Introduction and Product

Deep-sea adventures in 7th Sea's Theah are strikingly implausible given the lay of the land. If one wishes to avoid this implausibility, the deeply inland city-state of Freiburg offers a good alternative. Here all the good things about 7th Sea can come into play; the baroque richness of not-Europe's 17th century and the admixture of not-Europe's cultures, the combination of intrigue and romance, the violent combination sorcery and swashbuckling. Freiburg is a city-state where the ruler has decided not to rule (or rather, rule in a minimalist manner) and let a social experiment unfold. As a result every vagabond from all over not-Europe has arrived at the city walls seeking to escape their past and build anew.

The sturdy boxed set is quite impressive although the contents are somewhat lighter that the box indicates; about half-full, giving plenty of opportunity to add character sheets and the small bucket of d10s required for play. What it does come with is two A4 books, "The Sights of Freiburg" at 72p, "The City of Freiburg" at 96p, an A5 size "Welcome to Freiburg", at 48p, a huge fold-out black and white map of the city and a smaller (and more useful) A3 map of the same. "The Sights of Freiburg" comes with a numerical and alphabetized index; the "City of Freiburg" comes with no index or table of contents. The line drawings throughout the product are quite good, if sometimes a little cautious in their creativity, but with a solid degree of technique and contextual appropriateness.



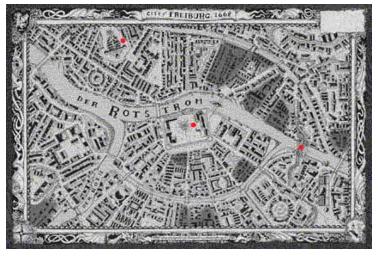
Welcome to Freiburg

The "Welcome to Freiburg" booklet is an introductory guide, written with the sort of the mock style from a friendly and informative guide, who is clearly an advocate describing the city as the most wonderful in not-Europe. A brief history is provided, from the mythic past of the drachen skeletons that litter the area, the building of a great fortress that becomes the military heart of the Eisen, aka not-Germany. During the War of the Cross, the fortress was the lynch-pin of the Vaticine forces in Eisen, but was captured with surprise by the Objectionists, followed by counter-attacks leading to the extremely improbable situation that neither side claimed it, and instead non-combatants moved in making a trading post. This is indeed a challenging proposition for any historian! When a soldier discovers a rich vein of dracheneisen, he chooses the trading post-cum-fortress as his reward and thus established Freiburg: "Instead [of ruling], he simply set himself up as the new leader, and allowed citizens to run their own affairs without any interference from the government". The description explicitly states that there is "no business licenses, no real courts, and very little police protection unless you're willing to pay for it".

How can such a situation exist? Well by charity of course! Yes, there is a guard of sorts, and an able administrator, but the real force to protect civilians against criminal gangs is a mere fifty Wachhunde. Have another look at the city map and decide for yourself how effective fifty Wachhunde would be. In this minarchist utopia, only arson, murder, slavery, revolution, and treason are illegal. Make of that what you will. Through pure self-interest each civilian in Freiburg sleeps safely in their bed at night knowing that their neighbour also desire such safety and through this mutuality violence is stunningly rare. The only problem, the mock author explains, is that the fair free city has attracted, well, too many poor people. Too many people are a threat to good wages, by the way,

so these migrants need to cleaned out. They're a health hazard too. No really, I am not making this up.

Following this utterly painful exposition of closed voluntaryism, the six districts of the city are described; the Shade, the Greens, the Candlelit, the Stein, the Bones, the Downs. The Shade is a shady and impoverished place, and not recommended after dark. It is also the location of the massive Freiburg Cathedral made from Drachen bone, and the ampitheatre for performances (presumably not after dark). In contrast The Green is where the wealthy live, because they always get the best parkland. Here the Guard is paid by locals who regularly expel non-residents "for nothing more than looking the wrong way". Because nothing says freedom more. The Candlelit is the student quarter, so named because they work late at night. The Stein is the central fortress of the city and where what excuse for a guard and the city bureaucracy exists and the ruler prefers to drink and write poetry. Don't expect to get anything done without paying for it. Then there is The Bones, so named by the large quantity of drachen skeletons in the region, which attracts a number of traders. Finally, the Downs, a mainly residential and middle-class district which tries ever-so-much not to be exciting at all.



The City of Freiburg

Nominally the first book in the series, "The City of Freiburg" is a GMs guide for the city, covering "History, Law and Government", "Important NPCs", and, taking up the overwhelming majority of the book, "Hammer and Tongs" a campaign for using the set, to use the section headings. The first section doesn't provide much more additional information on the key points as the traveller's guide although it does so in a more formal manner, and with greater attention to the details. At least it does acknowledge that there is a larger criminal element in the city as the result of the lack law enforcement and zero taxation policy. With twenty neighbourhood watches and no means to pay them the city watch is subject to "horrible abuses, with units of guardsmen serving as armed thugs for the righ and powerful", especially given that senior guardsmen act as judge and jury. Punishment of such decisions can include various fines, floggings, banishment, or even execution. There is a single debtor's prison as well.

The "Important NPCs" chapter is just that; stats and description of the "movers and shakers of Freiburg society", starting with Niklaus Trague, the Eisenfusrt who doesn't rule, his capable advisor Wilma Probst, the scribe Logan Sieger, and the captain of the guard, Vasya Wilem. Outside the immediate "governance" of the city are merchant traders such as Tibold Dedrick, the explorer Madeline du Bisset, and the banker and landlord, Redmund Erhart, along with a few others. Each of these characters is provided with their stat block and a short description of their power, personality, and motives. What is surprisingly absent is their relationships with each other, let alone any family in the present tense. Following this is a few pages of templates for minor NPCs according to profession and class.

The recommended campaign "Hammer and Tongs" starts with the PCs coming into apparently good fortune in the city and then discovering what responsibilities it will all entail. There is a structure provided, with four "hard points" that must be carried out in sequence and eleven "soft points" that have a little more flexibility and can act as side plots to some degree. Despite strong recommendations being provided of when the "soft points" should occur, the book is ordered with all the hard points first and then the soft points. As for the scenarios themselves they are certainly a mixed bag. As a whole there is a workable and rather impressive storyline where the PCs really do have the opportunity to rise to heroic levels. But some of the individual scenarios, including the hard points, are just terrible as written where the PCs are simply thumped several times with an unsubtle plot device stick until they can only go in one direction; they really are among the laziest scenarios ever written in RPGs.

The Sights of Freiburg

The Sights of Freiburg gives an impressive breakdown of the city from some thirty grid references with descriptions of many of the major institutions and individuals from each reference, covering about one and half pages each with half a page dedicated to a map of the grid reference and a quote form a local. One is also able to get a rough idea of the size of the city proper as a result - around 15,000 to 20,000 housed residents is my estimation. The quotes do have a degree of charm about them and the descriptions of the buildings and individuals is a great treasure-trove of potential plots and intrigues. Wherever the PCs find themselves there is a story to tell in each neighbourhood, and there is evidentially some genuine effort to combine character stories together.

The biggest disadvantage is the one of the advantages of the book - the grid reference. Whilst easy to translate from the large map to the book, neighbourhoods are by no means so tidy and are more bound by the natural and human-made boundaries that develop. Strangely however for a city that has no rules there does seem to a great deal of town planning that has gone ahead. Certainly it is by no means as ordered as one would expect in our own contemporary society, but for not-Europe of the 17th century, there is a surprisingly high degree of order that has come about. This is of course highly improbably given the politics of the city, but thankfully sensible in creating almost an ideal-quality Restoration-era city. The streets are mostly straight, and the building size and structure is remarkably uniform according to each district. Whilst there are poor areas, there are no shanty-towns as such, or burnt out districts. Perhaps somewhat disappointing is there is no much discussion on the sewer system, if one exists at all.

Overall

Freiburg is very much a mixed product that leans towards being somewhat above average in most respects. It is physically quite impressive, and with great style and presentation. It really does provide rich detail of the various inhabitants of the city and with a diverse range of personalities and motivations. The campaign has opportunities for exploring this city in some depth, and also provides the opportunities for PCs to make a real difference and be gloriously heroic, which is very much in the style of 7th Sea, even if some of the scenarios as writ are just unacceptable in terms of the plot devices proposed.

Finally, whilst it is easy to poke fun at the contemporary libertarian-voluntaryist assumptions of the setting, the purpose is more of one of design rather than politics. For all its detail, the Freiburg campaign set really doesn't grapple with the difficult questions of how a city of this nature would operate, simply hand-waving the issues. Rather than being "No Questions", as is the city's slogan, the description really does leave one with "No Answers" - which means that the GM has some serious work cut out for them.

Nevertheless with these caveats as stated, Freiburg is strongly recommended and especially for those who want a city and land based adventure of 7th Sea.

Style: 1 + .6 (layout) + .7 (art) + .6 (coolness) + .7 (readability) + .7 (product) = 4.3 Substance: 1 + .7 (content) + .7 (text) + .7 (fun) + .4 (workmanship) + .7 (system) = 4.2

Freiburg: An Elaboration

No Answers

The 7th Sea campaign pack "Freiburg" is described thusly: "Five year's ago, Eisenfurst Nicklaus Trague established a new kind of city: one free of governance, laws, and oppression; one were everyone was welcome." However there is scant detail in the boxed set on how such a city actually operates. Working through the some two hundred pages of text, one discoveres the following:

- * Trague commissioned a few important buildings; a city hall, a new cathedral, a restored version of the Stein and then retired to the Wachtturm to write ontological treatises, drink wine, and watch what happens.
- * Freiburg has no mayor, no governing council, no taxes. "It has very little money to pay for the services that other cities take for granted".
- * There is a city guard which nominally exists to enforce the three or so pages of laws. There is no money to pay salaries, so they receive compensation from local merchants who find it advantageous to have such individuals in their pocket. The crimes of the city include murder, arson, inciting a riot, public assault, engaging in slavery, and sedition.

- * The Hall of Records tracks landed property ownership only.
- * Wilma Probst, the city administrator, handles diplomatic contacts, nominally manages the city guard, and maintains the city records.
- * Residents, where possible, have formed volunteer fire brigades, vigilante groups, pay for services out of their own pockets etc.

Historical Examples

In the way of historical examples from which one can draw some ideas of how Freiburg would function, there are many negative examples and few positive ones. Firstly, it must be realised that this is a sizeable population, some 15000 people or so. Even unincorporated villages such as Max, Nebraska, which does have a governing committee of sorts for necessities. More promisingly, one could look at the anarchist territories in the eastern Ukraine during the Russian Civil War, or in parts of Spain (e.g., Catalonia, Aragon) during the Spanish Civil War, or the Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities of Mexico. Of course, these are notable as having arisen in the midst of conflict, and rather than the Freiburg-style propertarian approach, very much operate from collective property ownership that is democratically managed. This is perhaps not what the authors of Freiburg had in mind.

Something that is a lot closer to what Freiburg would realistically end up looking like is the Kowloon Walled City of Hong Kong in the late 20th century. The informally governed densely populated settlement in Hong Kong was claimed by the British, but not enforced. China also wished to claim Kowloon, but also had no enforcement in the region. Populated by various squatters (rather like Freiburg), it became a haven for criminal tongs, which largely left "normal people" go about their business. Power, apparently, abhors a vacuum. If there is no formal government over a territory, an informal one will take its place. Where there is no definite informal government over a territory, a war results (e.g., such as the conflict between the various Somalia warlords).



The nature and character of that informal government may not as be as transparent as one which has public codification, but it will be just as real.

Gated Communities

Another alternative is that various communities become "gated communities", each with their own enforcement measures and linked by a very thin glue of lawlessness. This certainly fits the propertarian model and can provide a very interesting and challenging setting for the player characters. When expressed in this manner the various neighbourhoods are effectively under the control of the landowners or a collective of landowners who will use their economic rent to fund enforcement agencies and, in some cases, provide public works. The absolute minimum overall governance provided by the City Guard and the Hall of Records for the collective interests of the landlord class.

The strongest force in the city is clearly Redmund Erhart, who makes his wealth through economic rent and monetary interest. It is not surprising that he is the only money By going through "The Sights of Freiburg" book one can discern possible alternatives, which can be thoroughly confusing as there are individual owners, petty neighbourhood landlords, and city-wide powers. For example, the powers in the Shade suburb are certainly Father Weissel, Gertrud Eisler, Janko Pfeiffer, Rainer Gersh and and to a lesser extent, Orlando Fischer and Waldo Huber. Between them they would provide provide from the rental income (after extracting a healthy margin for their own luxury) various collective services.

Some immediate practical effects of such an arrangement should be evident. Even more so that societies where the enforcement of laws is distorted by inequalities in wealth and income, in Freiburg enforcement is dependent on wealth and income. It is not so much a question of law enforcement as an auction; "surely this can be fixed by an on-the-spot fine?" may be one of the common phrases heard. It is absolutely certain that those who are paying the constabulary are not going to subject to their judgement in any negative sense.

Another effect is that private violence will be common. The collective interest expressed by the few laws Freiburg is that public violence and assault is prohibited and, depending on who carried it out, will be dealt with. Within the walls of the private gathering or in domestic situations violence will be depressingly common; skeleton in the closet has never been so true. Further, who is to say where an assault occured where such a distinction happens? A knife in an alleyway, a body dragged into a stable; "It must have been a private dispute".

Freiburg is a city of public poverty for the majority and great wealth for the few landowners who will extract rack-rent. There is close to zero funds available for public infrastructure, such as litter (and attendent public health), fires, public roads, drainage, sewerage. The assumption that somehow civilians will band together to provide common fees voluntarily is most certainly a myth subject to the free rider problem (one only has to visit cities where such a situation exists). It is more likely that if public infrastructure is provided it will enforced as part of the rental system.

As the standard plot of Freiburg unfolds it is probable that the player charaters will confront the existing landlords and the allies in expropriation. If they succeed members of the neighbourhood may come to them seeking further protection. Inadvertently, they will become yet another protection racket. How they carry out such power and responsibility can be a major theme of the campaign, and one which is little explored in the plot and presented.



THE LIFE OF A PYRATE

by Jake The Peg

You offer "Rum, Sodomy, and the Lash", eh? Where do I sign?

"The law of the sea is the law for me, seafaring pedophile. With no law at all, I'll be having a ball, seafaring pedophile!". That Rolf Harris, he be an amateur.

So ye be wanting to become a pirate, eh? Maybe ye are tired from all those kings and generals who tell you, the Catholic, to kill your friend because he's a Protestant? Maybe ye be a slave that's escaped? Or maybe you *are* a robber, or want to become rich an easy way? Maybe ye think you can band together with free men? Well, it's not as easy as ye may think. Most likely ye already be captured, mayhap you were pressed into another ship, eh? Go to the inn for a quiet drink and next thing you know, you wake up with a splitting headache working on a ship. Well, then you was captured by us, and now you have the life of a pyrate. Congratulations, haha.

Many think that the life of pyrate is some sort of free association. Well, it's true in some cases, sort of. Sometimes there are rules, called Articles, that



determine the division of spoils and behaviour, and they apply to all and equally, even the captain, sometimes. Ye may even get to vote on the captain, and the runner-up will be the quarter master. But on other ships the captain rules worse than any monarch. If he don't like ye, ye be flogged if ye be lucky. Or maybe sold as a slave at the next port if ye have a useful trade. But most of the time, a pirate ship is founded on two basic truths. The first is if us don't rob, there be no money for us. The second being, if they catch us, us will all be hanged. That's usually enough motivation to keep us all ship-shape.

Now we know who be in charge. The next be your quarters. Glorious they are! Lots of sweaty men crowded together on a rotting lump o' wood. So ye like that, eh? Fresh water is a luxury; beer and rum is better for ye anyways. The food is mostly hard tack - it be made from water, flour, and lard, and salted meat - and not much of it. There be no fat pyrates, but plenty who are half-starved, with a lean and hungry look. The damn rats seem to like our food tho', they be everywhere. Then there is the bilge. Water always seeps into a ship, even if she be tighter than the arse of a newly ordained nun, and I should know. They don't call me Jake "the peg" for nothing, haha. But the bilge, it fill up with water, and that water begins to rot the wood. So every ship has pumps to get rid of it, for it will smell most terrible and eventually sink the ship. You'll never forget it. And don't move that! Everything here has its place, carefully allocated to keep the ship balanced. If you have the call of nature, go to the bow. We have nice holes there where you squat and deliver ye goods to Neptune.

Remember this when we find a fat merchant laden with gold and other valuable. Us pyrates win because we are sneaky, fast, and normal folk be absolutely terrified of us. Usually the merchant or navy quite outnumber us; bigger boats, more men, and more cannon. So sneak up them, best at sunset or dawn, take them by the bow or stern, so them cannons cannot turn on us. There's a fearsome reputation given to us, so we give a signal, the black flag, and let them know that if they resist, we'll kill them all. A lot of the time it's all that's needed, most crew on a merchant ship won't lay down their lives. But if there be a fight, kill 'em, ye hear? When them surrender, just torture a couple and then put the rest on a boat or island. Our fearsome reputation is deserved!

In a fight ye may get hurt. Mayhap our Articles give ye some extra gold or silver, ye know like insurance. It be a dangerous job! So ye be hurt and in a lot of pain. Well man up, because it look like them merchant pistoles have done ye leg. Shattered it is, we'll dig

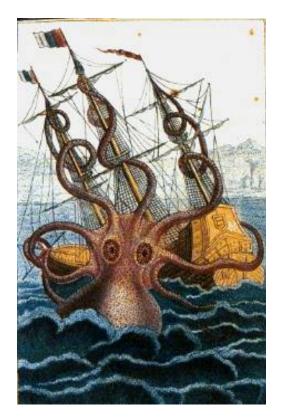
out the shot. No, there is no real knowledge of infection. But us know that flesh like that will go necrotic. So us going to chop ye leg off. A shot of rum will steady your nerves, but not save ye from the pain. But don't worry, us has the best surgeon-carpenter available on the ship. He'll take ye leg off in only five minutes with his saw. If ye don't die from the shock or the bleeding, he'll give ye a haircut! Hahaha.

Stop ye complaining. Ye be lucky, at least ye not have shot in the torso, that almost always kills. The only question is how long it take before the chill hand o'death reaches ye and how much pain ye have in the time reamining. Mayhap if ye be fat, the bullet not puncture too far and it will work itself out, but as I said, there be no fat pyrates. To be fair tho', ye could have been luckier. If ye bones not be fractured then there would be no amputation. "A flesh wound", they say. Us can just dig the bullet out, sew up the wound, and bandage ye up. Who knows? Maybe ye get better from it.

What else can ail ye in this life? Plenty, by God! Us pyrates live in filth. Apart from the those rats who can give ye a wicked bite than cause the fever, there be enough lice, fleas, and ticks to make a stew out of 'em. The scabies will give ye the itch and sometimes ye scratch so much it become the boils. Then there be fevers, like typhoid and typhus, not the same thing. There is also the Great Pox, which ye get from whoring and send ye more mad than ye already be, and the Small Pox, which turn ye body into exploding blisters. Ye may even acquire the malaria, or what the Spanish call *vomito negro* or what we English call yellow fever. Everyone will have some of that, most of ye will survive. Then there may be an outbreak of the consumption, which ye modern types call 'tuberculosis'. Highly contagious and fatal, the devil himself must have brewed that one. Then there's the gripes, which ye call plain-ol' food poisoning, which us can provider lavender water. That'll fix it, eh? More serious is the flux, which ye call dysentery, and cause ye to shit like water and bleed from the arse.

And everyone has the scurvy. Ye bleed from the gums? Ye breath is foul? Why ye be a pyrate!

The best treatment us have for all this is bleeding. Ye see, Hippocrates and Galen both said that disease is an imbalance of the humours, and ye know the Ancients were perfect in all matters of medicine. It is usually blood that go out of balance, so that be why us do the bleeding. If us don't have leeches on board, us just lance a vein. Sometimes tho' it may be a different humour; so we induce vomit, uriniation, or diarrhea, or maybe give ye an enema. Anything to get the overflow of them imbalanced humours out of ye body!



From the plunder ye may acquire all sorts of coin. The Spanish have silver reales and gold escudo. The famous "piece of eight" is worth eight reales, see? But we call 'em "peso". Each reale has one-eight of an ounce of silver, and each onza escuado, one ounce of gold. If ye want to know what that is worth in shillings and pounds, the shilling it has only one twentieth of an ounce, and twenty shillings is one pound. So the English pound is only an ounce of silver. Why the famous treasure of Captain Kidd be found in a shipwreck off the coast of Madagascar ye say? There be 1750 ounces of silver in a single bar? Not quite as grand as the Wydah. She sank carrying the booty of fifty ships, more than ten times that amount.

Now I know ye be thinking "If Jake be such a good pyrate, where be his parrot?" Well, the simple fact is that many filthy rich people have taken an most eccentric hobby of having strange animals and the stranger the better. A talking parrot is worth some good gold among such people, or maybe even a monkey, although the parrot be easier kept. On the ship though, us do keep a cat to keep the rat population down, and even some hunting dogs for when us go ashore. The cat be good luck too, so it best be have at least one. But don't let anyone who has the name Jonah on board. It says right here in the Holy Scriptures that such people bring bad luck to a ship.

Ye say that pyrates be a superstitious lot, but it be for good reason. Life on the sea is full of hidden and unexpected dangers and us have not explored the bottom of Davey Jones's locker, haha. Let me tell ye some of the monsters that ye must certainly will find in the deep. First there be the lucsa, a giant octopus that be almost 25 yards long and with a mouth

like a great shark. It live in the Caribbean among the atolls and reefs. Then there be the Kraken, which is like the lucsa but ye see is from the far north in the Greenland and Norwegian Sea. Ye must also be aware of the Leatherback in the same region, it look like an skerry island covered in heather. But it truly a malicious whale that will dive and drown ye all once you have alighted upon it. Then it will eat you, obviously. It is a dangerous place these oceans, for it is also the home of the great sea serpent. Not much more need be said about that monster; I will let Olaus Magnus explain.

"Those who sail up along the coast of Norway to trade or to fish, all tell the remarkable story of how a serpent of fearsome size, 200 feet long and 20 feet wide, resides in rifts and caves outside Bergen. On bright summer nights this serpent leaves the caves to eat calves, lambs and pigs, or it fares out to the sea and feeds on sea nettles, crabs and similar marine animals."

Now I prefer the islands of the Caribbean, but us have our own monsters here. In Trinidad there is a terrible woman, "La Diablesse" who was born a woman but did deal with the devil. She appears beautiful, but keep her hideous face hidden and have a cloven hoof. She will enchant men with her honeyed and offer them all sorts of favours. When they follow her into the forest, they are lost and never to return. Ye should also be fearful of the soucouyant, an old woman by day, a blood-sucking fireball by night. And then there is the lagahoo who like the werewolf changes shape in the night with malice. And if ye encounter a great man with a beard of leaves then that is Papa Bois, the master of the woods. Be ye polite to him, and stare not at his hooves.

And don't let me get started on The Flying Dutchman.

But there be one final myth that I do want to clear up for ye. That be the pyrate language. Us don't say "arrr", for that be an invention of ye film industry. But we do speak in archaic and working-class English from the seventeenth century. Which be somewhat like Shakespeare, I do suppose. Also us have many words that us take from the French, the Spanish, the Dutch and even from the Carib and Taino people.

So there ye have it. Do ye still want to be a pyrate? If so, come closer to me. I'll keep ye warm, cabin boy.



THAI INFLUENCES IN GAMANDRIA

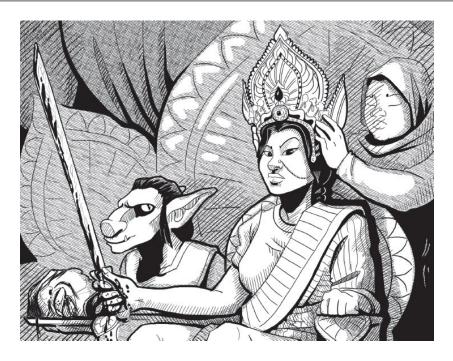
by Brendan Davies

Sertorius is set in the world of Gamandria, a place that draws on many historical cultures familiar to fantasy fans. Most notably the ancient Mediterranean cultures. But there are other influences as well and some of the strongest are the early Thai kingdoms of Sukhothai and Ayutthaya.



The earliest civilization in Gamandria, Nong Sai, draws from Thai history and myth. It is a fusion of the early kingdoms and the Thai version of the Ramayana, called Ramakien. This is the basis of Gamandrian history. Nong Sai was a powerful cluster of Ogre kingdoms, occasionally united by a single ruler and always at war with Anumar, a rival power in the west. The two would clash in brutal conflicts fighting alongside their respective gods, Senga and Lorgo. Nong Sai was assisted by elven slaves, who were specifically created to serve the kingdoms. However the elves were released by the benevolence of Senga and this spread the culture further to the southwest. In the end, Nong Sai was destroyed when its last king stole Senga's power, killing the god and creating Sertori. This unleashed the wrath of the other gods who pulverized Nong Sai and cursed the Ogres.

Most of the present day cultures in Gamandria are surrounded by Nong Sai ruins. Many build their cities on top of them, incorporating the ancient architecture into their own designs. The language of Nong Sai, Singh, remains influential and most people speak it in bits and pieces. The elves carry on and in some cases deliberately resurrect elements of Nong Sai culture. The Ogres who are cursed to wander, also continue the traditions of their great civilization.



Chambar for example is a place where the original settlers tried to restore old Nong Sai customs. The entry for Chambar goes into some detail about government structure and society, while the specific titles are somewhat different due to the unique history of the elves, much of it was inspired by the kingdom of Lan Na and the city of Chiang Mai.

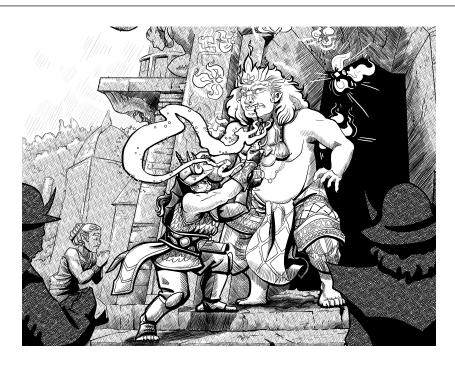
But even Elven places and cultures that are less specifically based on historical Thai states were influenced by aspects of Thai history. Khata, Mandaru and Phu Kao, because they were formed through the Elven diaspora from Nong Sai, all have qualities based on early Thai history. This isn't all that defines them of course. There are other elements as well. But the Thai is clearly discernable.

And it isn't only the Ogres or elves who continue Nong Sai Traditions. The humans living in elven influenced regions have adopted the ways of Nong Sai. This is most notable in Khata and the surrounding areas. Below the image of the Ogre chieftain is a human being crowned queen in a city within the sphere of Khata's influence.

Perhaps most importantly though, because Nong Sai was such a widespread influence, its language became our common tongue. So all characters in Gamandria have a single rank in the language Singh (which is really just our fantasy version of Thai).

When designing the Gamandrian setting I was inspired by many different Thai sources. For the myth, I mainly took inspiration from temple art and from oral retellings of Ramakien that I encountered when I worked at a Thai restaurant. But I also used translations of epic poems that inspired me. One that I quite enjoyed is the Isan folk tale Phadaeng Nang Ai translated by Wajuppa Tossa. For history I found both Chris Baker's A History of Thailand and David K. Wyatt's Thailand: A Short History to be useful.

Another helpful resource was a book called South-East Asia: Languages and Literatures, a select guide (Herbert and Milner). Thai movies, music and television shows also provided some inspiration. I have a particular fondness for Tony Jaa films, but movies like Kingdom of War were also an influence.



Visually Sertorius owes a lot to Thai artwork. If you look at the images of Ogres in the Sertorius rule book, the Thai influence is pretty apparent. In the above illustration of the Ogre King killing Senga, the backdrop is based on Sukhothai temples. The clothing is based on Thai design and the magic symbols floating around Senga were inspired by Thai gold leaf images. Present-day Ogre chieftains in Gamandria wear crowns based on the Thai chada (see the illustration below).

So ultimately the Thai inspiration didn't just serve as ornament to the setting, it was very much the base and foundation.

Original article:

http://thebedrockblog.blogspot.com/2014/07/sertorius-thai-influences-in-gamandria.html Sertorius Page: http://www.bedrockgames.net/untitled1.html

SOME THOUGHTS ON "THE WHEEL OF TIME"

by Nick Langdon

It was in late January 2000 that I embarked upon Robert Jordan's The Eye of the World - a millennial beginning to a millennial epic - and I finished the concluding volume, A Memory of Light, this February. This means that the 14 books have taken me almost exactly 15 years to read, literally half a lifetime in my case, and therefore I believe some reflecting is due. After this long I feel I have earned the right, and as tribute to Mr Jordan I'm setting out upon this essay only having a vague idea of how I'm going to get to my conclusion and I'll probably end up waffling on for far longer than I should and testing your patience, but hey, all Wheel of Time fans should be accustomed to such things by now.

The series begins, as these sort of tales almost always do, with The Hero's JourneyTM. Having over the past few years upgraded myself to almost full time reading of literary fiction, this particular trope of contemporary epic fantasy is probably the one I miss least. You know how it goes, a boy or young man (occasionally a girl, but not often) grows up in obscurity (wretched poverty and abusive childhoods are also options), usually unaware of his real parentage. He is then found by a wise older person who becomes his mentor, this mentor then reveals that he is the chosen one who must save the world or galaxy. Through training he learns heretofore unknown great powers, and along with his trustworthy companions survives many trials and much suffering which may or may not include dying and being reborn. Eventually he will have to confront and defeat the evil one or evil forces threatening to overwhelm everyone he loves, and there's usually a wedding to some sort of princess thrown in somewhere. Naturally, you're already thinking, "Hey, that sounds like the plot of The Lord of the Rings/Star Wars/Harry Potter/The Matrix etc" and you would be correct.

RJ claimed that he deliberately crafted the opening to The Eye of the World to be reminiscent of J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings, but to myself, and many other readers, some of those homages look more like knock-offs. To wit: at the end of the Third Age as a dark lord regains his strength, a wizard-like character brings four young people from their rural idyl famed for its production of tobacco into a dangerous world of beastmen bred during a long ago war by perverted science, an un-hasty race of nature loving giants and a mysterious creature that stalks them on their quest. Said quest involves travels through exotic lands, a breaking of the fellowship after some of its members are kidnapped plus, of course, the obligatory underground journey. Not saying it's terrible, just derivative (although a charge that is by no means unique to Jordan).

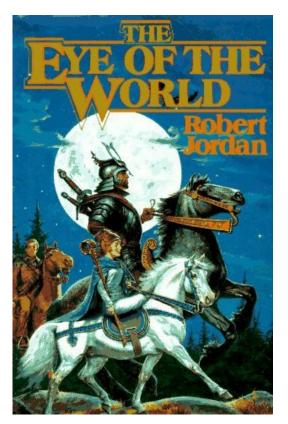
Thankfully, follow up, The Great Hunt is a marked improvement. More characters' perspectives are added, most of the obvious Tolkien parallels are dropped and the Aes Sedai training passages are some of my favourites in

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone. Star Wars A New Hope; synopsis Harry Potter Luke Skywalker is an orphan living with his uncle and aunt on the remote wilderness of Tatooine: He is resucued from aliens by wise, bearded Ben Kenobi, who turns out to be a Jedi Knight. Hagrid Harry Harry Wizard
Ben-reveals to Luke that Luke's father was also a Jedi-Knight, and was the best pilot he had ever seen. Quidditch player a magic wand Luke is also instructed in how to use the Jedi light-sabre as he too trains to become a Jedi. Wizard Herry Hegwart's Luke has many adventures in the galaxy and makes new friends Hogwarts such as Han Solo and Princess Leia. In the course of these adventures he distinguishes himself as a top X-wing pilot in the battle of the Death Star, making the direct hit that secures the Rebels victory against the forces of evil. Gryffindor Lord Voldemort Harry Lord Voldemorf

-Luke also sees off the threat of Darth-Vader, who we know murdered his uncle and aunt. In the finale, Luke and his new friends receive medals of valour. win the House Cup. All of this will be set to an orchestral score composed by John Williams.

the series. Perhaps The Wheel of Time's greatest strength as a work of imaginative fiction is its magic system; in most other fantasy series the magic often feels perfunctory, something the author chucks in more because they feel they have to rather than because they have a new spin on it. Rather than being unbelievably "magical", Jordan's One Power seems a tangible force in the universe, almost scientific rather than ritualistic or religious in its rules and application, yet still undeniably numinous.

After the bridging volume, The Dragon Reborn (which exists mostly to set up the next phase of the story), the



subsequent three books, The Shadow Rising, The Fires of Heaven and Lord of Chaos form both the middle section of the series and also contain its strongest writing. The journey through the Aiel Waste reveals much more of the history of the world, Mat becomes a character of significance, and in general shit gets real, especially at Cairhien and Dumai's Wells. Yes, the books are longer than ever (Lord of Chaos is over 1000 pages in paperback), but things happen in them, interesting things to people you have come to care about.

Unfortunately the same cannot be said for the next FIVE volumes. Now I must clarify that I am not axiomatically opposed to either long novels/series nor large casts. George R.R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire has more than a thousand named characters with still two books to go, but Martin has more skill at manipulating all these plot lines into a propulsive narrative (although even he seems to be struggling over the course of the latest two volumes). From A Crown of Swords onwards the action almost seizes up as story threads wander through multiple books without ever seeming to be advancing towards any sort of conclusion. Characters are stuck in Ebou Dar talking to boring people, lurking in Salidar grimacing at those holed up in Tar Valon and vice versa, or spending far too long being held prisoner or in a bloody travelling circus doing high wire acts. The occasional moment of real action no longer makes up for the thousands of pages where nothing of any real consequence is occurring. Even consulting summaries of The Path of Daggers and Winter's Heart in order to write this has me recalling only a handful of incidents, the rest was just a blur of

repetition, snow and soporific Aes Sedai squabbling.

This is not to imply that my issues with The Wheel of Time begin only at volume 7. In addition to adhering all too closely to the hero's journey archetype, one cannot overlook Jordan's tedious but ever-present gender politics. While occasionally he hits upon something original, such as in the obvious yet unique sexual allegory that is the male/female division and use of the One Power, for the most part this consists of an endless and immature "Men are from Seanchan, women are from Shara" battle of the sexes sniping, and from almost every damn character! Which leads to another complaint of mine: the very thin characterisation on display. Even the principal actors in the series often seem more a collection of catchphrases and mannerisms than believable people, and their emotional development is minimal to zero. I realise that most of the main characters are quite young, but they should be changed far more by their amazing (and often traumatic) experiences.

Speaking of the Seanchan, many consider them both irritating and superfluous to the greater story, but I actually don't mind them. I find the geostrategic threat they pose to the nations of Randland and the Aiel intriguing, as different ways

of political and cultural thinking causing friction is a problem that bedevils real world leaders, and there are often no easy answers, only messy compromises. Also the Seanchan culture, while heavily inspired by imperial China and feudal Japan, is more interesting than the all-too-familiar Wardour Street version of the Middle Ages that is the standard currency in most fantasy novels. Jordan's decision to add to this an almost Victorian era-esq culture and morality along with a greater level of female empowerment has potential, but as mentioned above, his characters' mostly interchangeable dialogue and monologue rapidly have you wishing for something, anything else.

Anyway, back to the summary. After the series reached its nadir with the interminable and inert Crossroads of Twilight, even Robert Jordan finally recovered from his narrative torpor, and in Knife of Dreams things started to get going again, albeit still far too slowly. However while working on was to be the twelfth and final volume in 2007, Mr Jordan passed away, leaving some completed scenes, descriptive notes and dictations of what was to become the conclusion to his life's major work. Enter fellow fantasy author and replacement, Brandon Sanderson, who, while actually managing to finish the thing, regrettably bought with him his own weaknesses.

While the story itself was in dire need of an immediate adrenalin injection followed by narrative triage, Sanderson's greatest challenge was actually the writing. Unlike films or TV series which, even if credited to a single creator, are always collaborative efforts, a novel remains, even with editorial assistants and proofreaders, an individual's personal vision written in their singular voice. For all my complaints about the singular voice of RJ, unfortunately the quality of writing in the last three books fell below even this standard. There was a dulled sense of emotion, major events just didn't resonate the way they should have, and some characters behaved in manners at odds with how they had previously. For all the streamlining and pace Sanderson brought, at times his prose felt more like Wheel of Time fan fiction than WWRJD. Perhaps this was inevitable and I'm being too harsh, but given his status as an über-fan of the series, a published author in his own right and operating under the tutelage of Jordan's editorial team, I guess I expected better. He stated explicitly that he wasn't trying to ape RJ's style, but in so many cases did just that, however as my dad always says, "consistency, thou art a jewel".

And while we're on the language kick, long time Wheel of Time readers became resigned to Jordan's weird repetitions, what with all those woolheaded men exclaiming "Light!" while the women sniffed and crossed their arms beneath their breasts as Nynaeve tugged on her braid.... Sanderson carried on this way too as well as with far too many instances of boring cliches like "his face hardened" or "her expression darkened". BS also contributed some regrettable modern phrases that jarred with the fantasy world, words such as "crazy" and "doctor" instead of, say, "mad" and "healer". Also, being a younger citizen of the United States, he doesn't seem to realise everyone else doesn't speak American, so can't seem to understand why words like "twister" and "stomped" do not work in a fantasy context. US writers from a pervious generation, such as Robert Jordan and George R.R. Martin do, which is why their work is mostly free of such stylistic infidelities, but with Sanderson you're always half expecting to run across sentences like: "And Perrin said, 'Awesome!".

I'm now going to discuss in some detail the final books, so the spoiler phaser that has previously been set on "stun" is now redlined all the way to "kill with fire" for the next six paragraphs, so consider yeselves warned. The Gathering Storm resolved several long and tedious plot strands including Faile's capture, Lews Therin's less than positive influence on Rand's psyche and the split in the White Tower/Black Ajah conspiracy, and about time too. The series always laboured under its somewhat awkward structure whereby the ending was foretold at the beginning; from the first book it's obvious that Rand is the Dragon Reborn and will fight the Dark One at Tarmon Gai'don, therefore the quality of the read becomes greatly dependent on unforeseen plot developments and twists before the inevitable conclusion. Verin being revealed as Black Ajah was one of the increasingly rare surprises.

Having wrapped up most of the loose ends, Towers of Midnight began setting up the big finish we were promised oh so many years and books ago. Rand's quasi-apotheosis has him become a mixture of Jesus and Shiva Destroyer of Worlds,

while Moraine makes a not entirely welcome re-entrance (another annoying trope of fantasy and science fiction is that hardly anyone ever really dies, and with the possibility of resurrection ever-present the stakes are lowered whenever characters become imperilled). As this then segues into the final volume, A Memory of Light, we also get quite a bit of Asha'man politics, more Darkfriends, and yet more not particularly interesting characters. After being mostly off page, the Black Tower arc comes too late and too thickly for my taste, and it happening just when all the equivalent White Tower shenanigans was winding up makes it especially difficult to warm to. I like Logain as a character and Taim is a quality villain, but feel that after volume 6 the whole Black Tower sub-plot wasn't given the time and space it deserved.

Elsewhere in the final book, having said I appreciated another political angle, the Seanchan, I must now counter that with by saying that the Dragon Reborn's plan of setting up his version of the United Nations of Randland with the Aiel acting as peacekeepers makes no sense, and in fact suggests either lazy writing or that the combined efforts Lews Therin and the Dark One's taint on Saidar may have eroded crucial parts of Rand's mind. It comes across like a hypothetical some ignorant novice from the backwoods of Tear angling for a career in the Grey Ajah would invent. The concept of an entity supranational body with authority that, in certain instances, usurps sovereign control and through which inter-state conflicts are adjudicated is too great a stretch for most denizens of THIS world, let alone a fantasy one where the natives seem even more prone to argument than human nature (already a prickly creature) would otherwise suggest. Just look at the opposition to the UN/EU/IMF etc.

Tarmon Gai'don itself is, for the most part, deftly handled, even if we never got our three heroes from Emond's Field standing together and fighting as one which most long term fans of the series sort of expected would feature in its conclusion. The cutting between the points of view was well balanced, it was nice to see all the familiar faces one last time, and while there probably should have been some more deaths of major characters, the ones who do snuff it mostly go out in style. That being said, there are still problems. Tuon's prevaricating is even more annoying than she usually is because it's obvious that Mat, not Elayne, will eventually be directing The Last Battle, and so it proves, making the delay so stupidly pointless that you feel Peter Jackson must have somehow been involved. The fact that Perrin spent most of said battle in bed after playing hide and seek with Slayer was also disappointing and Rand's personal struggle with the Shai'tan underwhelmed. The time dilation was a useful plot device, but their caps lock shouting match and competitive speculative fiction scenarios didn't quite add up to the age-ending Ragnarök we'd anticipated.

I'm also not happy about the Sharan angle. Having read The World of Robert Jordan's The Wheel of Time I was familiar with them and had been hoping they'd show up, but can't help wondering why, even despite their famous hostility to outsiders, neither the White or Black Tower sent emissaries there (or perhaps a bit of the old ta'veren action could have brought them round?) even when it was known the Last Battle was in the offing. And they're ignorant of the prophecies surrounding the Dragon Reborn that every other culture in the world seems to possess yet they have their own wacky one which Demandread can exploit, or was "Bao the Wyld" supposed to mean Rand? Even if there are good answer to these questions, why weren't they in the book? Don't say there wasn't space because there totally was, it was just wasted with other guff.

As with Moraine's non-death, the final ending is, to me, something of a sellout. I know that Jordan apparently wrote it while still alive, but the fact Rand doesn't die lowers the stakes of his sacrifice to practically nothing. It just seems like a cop out in order not to disappoint his three sister-wives (I bet they'd love that concept in Utah) and their offspring. Plus, with no real explanation, he can no longer channel but seems to be able to effortlessly manipulate the Pattern to his will. What is he now, a wizard? The Creator's only son sent down to redeem mankind by dying and being reborn after 3 days? I know Jordan was an Episcopalian, but like all quality fantasy authors he'd worked out that the spiritual never really lies comfortably alongside the magical, so sacrificed the former for the convenience of the latter. Well, I mean he tried to have some sort of spirituality, but put it this way; throughout the series the Whitecloaks were the bad guys, and if the Pattern of the Wheel wove Rand as the reincarnation of Lews Therin then the Creator didn't do shit.

Were Birgitte here she would no doubt admonish me for preaching like a Tovan Councillor, but you don't spend 15 years with something without forming a few opinions on it, so you're welcome. Any battle-hardened veterans who have made it through both The Wheel of Time and this essay/rant (I now have the ending written, I promise!) will most likely share my strongly mixed feelings about the series as a whole. A powerful work of the imagination, it very much improved upon the David Eddings/Raymond E. Feist model of post-Tolkein, post-AD&D modern epic fantasy, laying the groundwork, in a sense, for other, deeper works, such as George R. R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire, that followed. I think I've made, what I consider, the major failings of the series pretty obvious by now, so to add any more would only be belabouring the point. I don't consider the time I invested in reading and talking about Jordan's world wasted, but I still believe much of that time could have been better spent or not cashed at all.

So, aside from the forthcoming companion volume that will mostly be a reference guide based on the books with a few additional notes of Mr Jordan's, this is very much farewell to The Wheel of Time. The two other prequels he was planning to write after New Spring (which I quite enjoyed, coming as it did during the series' lowest ebb and reminding readers that RJ could indeed tell a concise tale and filling in some of the backstory in a very satisfying manner) will never eventuate. More than once I have been asked for my opinion on The Wheel of Time and to state it as emphatically as I can, the latter books stop me recommending the series, as it is somewhere between 4 and 7 books too long depending on to what extent each reader thinks the red pen should have been wielded. The Wheel may turn, but I don't believe I will come around again to reading this series, so from Shayol Ghul I wander away, my destination unknown, but most likely never to return, in this age or the next.

THE PIRATES! BAND OF MISFITS MOVIE REVIEW

by Andrew Moshos

Buckle my Swash and Shiver me Timbers!

dir: Peter Lord and Jeff Newitt

Ah, finally, a film with Pirates that doesn't have Johnny Depp in it. No-one told the lovely people at Aardman Animation that the rest of us in this non-Claymation world are sick to fucking death of pirates, pirate-related stories and even the word 'pirate'. They just went ahead and ploughed through, adapting a book in order to generate some hilarity and some box office. I can't imagine this flick is going to do this well, what with the school holidays being over and all by now, but it was quite entertaining for a 'kids' movie.

Yes, I took my daughter along, and yes, she and I both thought it was a wonderful way to spend an hour and twenty minutes in a cinema strewn with beanbags. But don't go in expecting it to be comparable to Pixar, or for any deep environmental messages or heartfelt heartstring-pulling mawkish sentiment-fests. It's just meant to be clever but goofy fun, and it entirely succeeds. Although, when I tell you that two of the villains in the piece are Charles Darwin and Queen Victoria, you'll think that I've been sucked in



and duped by a flick produced by creationists and anti-monarchist nutbags, which would be a strange alliance indeed.

I have loved the Aardman animated movies, 'specially the Wallace and Grommet stuff, for a donkey's age, but I still find their continued existence in this high falutin' day and age somewhat surprising. Surprising in a good way, but I just find that stop-motion animation something that contemporary kids, who have rarely if ever seen that stuff, would find it too ye olde worldy. There's a charm to it, a physical charm, an expressiveness that is illusive and probably really difficult to achieve, that they do, nonetheless. And it's refreshing to see, after all the goddamn CGI 1s and 0s I've been subjecting myself and my heir to lately.

Having said all that, what I found most enjoyable about the flick were the visual gags (as in the opening seconds, where a title card explaining the time and place is revealed to be being held up by a confused looking chap), the strange Science! based story, and especially the character of the Pirate Captain voiced by Hugh Grant.

Even in our current age where pirate-weariness is at an all-time high, the underlying 'dumb' premise of the story, being the Pirate Captain's fervent wish to win the coveted Pirate of the Year award, leads to a perplexing adventure as the Captain and the crew try to safeguard the most exceptional member of said crew, being Polly. Polly's called a parrot at first, but Polly is actually a dodo, thought extinct for a long while. When they cross paths with Charles Darwin, who reveals himself to be something of a rum cove with a crush on a Queen, it appears the crew have a more fearsome

opponent on their hands than just the potential shame of losing.

The crew in any one of these endeavours would be a motley bunch, but this bunch is even more motley than expected. They have names that describe their purpose or a trait about them, like the suspiciously feminine Surprisingly Curvaceous Pirate, or Pirate with Gout, or No.2. And the Pirate Captain's name is Pirate Captain. All ever so helpful and unambiguous. You know where you stand with names like that.

Most of all, there's a really deft hand at play, lightly dancing over the script. The Pirate Captain gets the majority of the best of the lines, deliciously delivered by Hugh Grant, with all the delusional smugness and braggadocio we've always prized him for. He's not a very good captain, in fact he totally sucks at it compared to the other pirates he is in competition with, who seem to drip with plundered gold and pillaged booty. The problem is that the rest of the crew, who like him well enough, sense that he's pretty much a failure. But when he launches out with top speed to ravage the Caribbean, with braced stunsails and spankers aloft, all he ends up finding is plague ships, leprosiacs (sorry, sufferers of Hanson's Disease) and biologists. That's not going to win you the trophy. That's not going to best the likes of Black Bellamy, Cutlass Liz or Peg Leg Hastings, who are the other pirates vying for the title.

As absurd as I found the whole story, when the Pirate King came onto the scene, and started yelling at everyone, I was thrilled. Thrilled I say, because the Pirate King, who chooses the winner of the Pirate of the Year Award, was voiced by none other than Brian Blessed. Brian Blessed is one of the greatest, loudest bearded men who have ever lived and loved, and I adore his very existence. And, since I've seen him in everything from Flash Gordon to Blackadder, I've known and adored his bearded big bellied ways for an aeon. When I heard his voice I said to my daughter, "That's Brian Blessed's voice! He's awesome!" To which she must have replied "Oh grow up, Dad."

Still, it's Hugh Grant's show, and he carries it all, whether talking about his luxuriant beard, or wondering out loud how to screw over his crew in order to get the fleeting and meaningless respect he so thoroughly doesn't deserve. He's perhaps not the nicest chap in the world, and he doesn't mean well, but as the pride that goeth before the fall teaches him the importance of sticking up for your mates, naturally the story crafts elaborate and dangerous ways for him to make it up to his adoring crew.

Every story needs a big bad, apparently, and this one's big bad is Queen Victoria, who far from being the monstrous and stern figure of renown, is a svelte and lethal swordswoman with a (culinary) fetish for exotic and virtually extinct flesh. How she gets involved I'll leave to the prospective viewer. Let's just say she really, really, really, really hates pirates. And who can blame her; the no-good scavengers and vultures of the sea were never this nice. This Band of Misfits, though, they were a pleasure to spend some time with, and since my daughter and I were delighted with the end result, surely the flick worked on both age levels.

8 times I wondered when the Surprisingly Curvaceous pirate was going to make her move out of 10

"Behind every captain, there's a crew. Sure, some of you are as ugly as a sea cucumber, some of you are closer to being a chair or coat rack than a pirate, and some of you are fish I've just dressed up in a hat..." - thrizzling speech, captain – The Pirates! Band of Misfits

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NOAH MOVIE REVIEW

by Andrew Moshos

dir: Darren Aronofsky

There is no more epic a fantasy than the Bible, really. And Noah, the latest flick by Darren Aronofsky sets out to show us just how absurd believing the literal version of the story is. No, that's not fair. The religious types who took umbrage with this flick, who, let's face it, take umbrage with anything because it's their favourite hobby, and because they're deeply insecure, ignore the fact that the original story, as read, straight out of the Book of Genesis, is already pretty monstrous. And flat out bonkers. Nothing said, no blasphemous statement can really saying anything worse about the Hebrew / Abrahamic / Old Testament God than his own actions



would indicate. I mean come on. He was the original genocidal maniac. He tried to kill off our entire goddamn species, for crying out loud, not just the people he didn't like because they had the wrong coloured skin or because they talked funny, or their eyes weren't the right shape. Every other mass slaughterer of humans has taken their lead, their inspiration, from up on high. From the classics. From the one who started it all.

Aronofsky, who is, by his own admission, not a religious type, sees other possibilities in the story. Most of them have to do with a man, the mind of one man, Noah, the crazy mind of one man (the only other person better than Russell Crowe for this would have been Mel Gibson). This one crazy man has eyes lit by religious fervour. At a young age he sees his father murdered by a man who styles himself a king (Ray Winstone), and, understandably, this makes Noah not like other humans that much. As a sort of pre-Christian survivalist / prepper, he carves out a dicey life for himself and his family on the edges of human settlement. He is plagued by visions, visions of Eden, of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, of Cain slaying Abel, visions of the human world's sinfulness, and what God must do to even the scales.

As industrialisation and the muck of humanity spreads, so too do Noah's muttered and grunted statements become more and more apocalyptic. He sees the coming of fire from the heavens, and he sees all of humanity underwater. Why? Because we're all sinners, apparently. We despoiled the earth, we built stuff, we were cruel to animals, we didn't call our mothers enough, all of us, each and every one, were sinners who deserved to be wiped out. And there were kids around, they were sinners as well. How? Why? Well, it was because of the bloody Apple, wasn't it, in the Garden of Eden. Original Sin was enough to justify killing us all off whether we'd done anything to defy God's ways or not.

In this film, the emphasis is placed on the misuse of nature by the people who follow Tubal-Cain (Winstone), coincidentally the same guy who killed Noah's dad. The way they cut down all the trees, make stuff, and eat animals is

what tips the sinful tipping point. Independent of Noah's vision / delusions, the stuff the baddies are doing seems to be poisoning the earth, leaving it barren, contributing to global warming or something similar. Noah, who sees all this and laments, laments at the top of his lungs, hears and sees stuff no-one else sees. In this day and age, he would probably have been medicated, at the very least, they would have kept him away from sharp objects. He's very good at killing people, but at least, for a while, he's determined to protect his family, and if he has to kill a bunch of people to do so, then so be it. The others are all going to die anyway once the flood comes. The bigger problem he faces is that he has a wife (Jennifer Connelly), three sons and an adoptive daughter (Emma Watson). That's not enough to build a gigantic boat-type thingie with which to protect the real innocents of this world, is it?

Lucky for them, they bump into a bunch of angels. Honest to God, a bunch of fucking angels. These angels are basically giant rock monsters, who are really good at building stuff, because as one of them tells Noah, they're the ones who taught humanity how to do practical stuff with their hands. They gave our species the skills to pay the bills, to store the bills, to do all sorts of bill-related activities. They were punished for this, by God, by being turned into goopy, goofy looking giant Gumbys. They see in Noah, eventually, a chance at returning to God's good graces. The fools. What they really represent is an opportunity to make this Biblical story look a hell of a lot like the missing, apocryphal chapters of Lord of the Rings. It would otherwise be impossible for Aronofsky to have big battle scenes without them, since Noah himself couldn't fight off and kill tens of thousands of people on his own, and there aren't enough of his family to be an army. So, stone angels killing guys... it looks... interesting? They might look like Ents, but they're far less peaceful or slow, and they can kill a whole bunch of people before they're taken down, which is what they really want, secretly, in their fiery heart of hearts.

As odd as these scenes look, they serve a purpose. They stave off viewer boredom. A lot of stuff that happens in the flick is intended to stave off boredom, and in most cases it succeeds. Noah himself is an abusive tyrant, regardless or because of his being the mouthpiece for God's will, so past a certain point all he does is glower and grunt in a fearsome way that no longer seems like he's doing the Big Guy Upstairs' bidding. His family cower around or away from him and his pronouncements, basically doing what he says though they don't really agree with him most of the time.

The story, for some reason that isn't obvious to us in the audience, needs to give one of Noah's sons, Ham (Logan Lerman), ample, or more ample, reason to hate him. The whole family has plenty of reason to hate Noah already, as far as I could see, but Ham has to hate him extra to justify some of the more dubious things he does. What Ham wants is a wife. His suspiciously attractive brother Shem (Douglas Booth) and adoptive sister are all hooked up, and he's looking at being without a shagging partner in the brave new world God is going to create by wiping the old one out. Everything Ham tries to do is rebuffed, by Noah, by God it seems, by a cruel fate that wants him to be pounding sand alone for all eternity. In these fantastical stories, these people, these prophets like Noah and his grandad Methuselah (Anthony Hopkins), were living like a thousand years. I know how ridiculous that sounds, but that's what these dinks who follow this stuff literally believe. So not only was Ham looking at being alone, he would be looking at being alone for a very long time. Thus creeps the snake into the garden, thus does evil sneak its way even into God's plans. His role is really unfortunate, because it requires him to do a lot of dumb things, and then change his mind about them afterward.

The only innocents in this murderous sinful world of ours are the animals, as he sees it (or as God commands). The variation here is that Noah's plan isn't just to nab two of each and push them into place, feeding them straw or whatever they need. His plan is actually to give them roofies and knock them out for the duration of the trip, which perhaps explains something that makes no sense in the original story, but then doesn't seem very believable, though it is horribly convenient. It does show how they could have gotten around the pesky problem of all these animals eating each other.

Only when most of humanity is wiped out does Noah reveal his actual plan. This might be where the story varies the most from the biblical account, but, let's face it, it's all bonkers anyway. His plan is pretty nuts, but then God's plan to wipe the slate clean and start again is pretty nuts as well. Unfortunately for his family, especially his adoptive daughter Ila, Noah's plan is not only nuts, but it is especially cruel. Monstrously cruel; crueller than Tubal-Cain, who happily eats live animals to prove his dominion over the creatures of the earth, crueller than God Himself, who killed nearly everyone in a flashy and inescapable way. Noah gives them an ultimatum, one which they have no control over, but one which made me think that the family, as a whole, would probably have been thoroughly justified in killing Noah themselves, maybe forcing him to walk the plank. It's not like anyone would have thought any the less of them

The dramatic aspects of the story are overamped, which is perversely meant to make it seem more believable, but it's a story that's inherently unbelievable, isn't it, because it's a fable. In a fable, an instructional mythic story, anything can happen as long as it gets to the point that you want to make. Realism and this kind of stuff perhaps are incompatible. Unless you think the story is true world history, in which case there's no fucking way anything can help you, not even my disgust or pity. That being said there are definite attempts to make this seem both epic in scale and importance, but a relatable story on a human level. In that sense, Noah isn't just a tool following his god's commands, he has agency, he has choice (as Ila is forced to concede towards the end, and she explains Noah's Free Will moment to the rest of us). Whether Noah's is a monster or Judaism's / Christianity's / Islam's greatest prophet is up to the viewer, though I doubt the shading this story provides would change any deeply held beliefs.

Aronofsky and crew, who've worked together on six interesting, sometimes great films, really go out of their way to distance this from the other religious Lifetime channel / Christian crap which occasionally clogs up American cinemas in order to get people by the church busload to the flicks in order to prove a political point (and make a pretty penny). I don't think Aronofsky has ever made big bucks from his odd films. This is his most financially successful film thus far, though it's also, despite plenty of weirdness on display, his most conventional. He does use it to say a lot of fairly unconventional stuff. Yes, of course we're all sinners and doomed to die horrible deaths and such, but he links our selfish natures to the way we treat the animals that the Bible alleges God gave us stewardship over, to protect and collaborate with, rather than exploit and destroy for our amusement. I don't know if it's necessarily an anti-meat-eating message, it's definitely an anti-cruelty message, but then didn't everyone already know it's bad to be cruel to animals? We split hairs over what constitutes cruelty and such, and whether it's ethical to eat them, but only the most blind can't see that harming them, harming nature wilfully usually doesn't work out for any of us. The Bible said so, don't take my word for it. Rather than being overtly religious (which, duh, it already is), there is more of a mystical quality to stuff that goes on here. A single rain drop hits the ground and blooms instantly into a flower. The skin of that first tempting snake in the Garden retains some mystical spark, some element of the divine or the mysterious. The fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, which triggered the Fall, throbs with a strange energy.

In perhaps the most breathtaking moments (most of the flick looks pretty incredible, thanks to cinematographer Matthew Libatique, who always works with Aronofsky), and also a moment that made me laugh out loud, Noah tells of Creation, of the Biblical literalist version of Creation, and it's depicted to us in a way that isn't really a million miles away from both the Creationist version or the Darwinian version. That takes balls. Opposable thumbs that prove evolution, but also balls. And when it ends, not content with a simple rainbow to represent God's covenant with Noah that he'd never again kill everyone off, unless he really, really wants to, the sky erupts with a prismatic effect so powerful I thought my retinas had detached. Noah is a strange film. If you could stand watching Russell Crowe doing his best impression of Mel Gibson's weekend visits with his family, you might get something out of this strange, strange film.

7 times their time on t he ark was about the same as what I've heard most cruises are like out of 10

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JUPITER ASCENDING MOVIE REVIEW

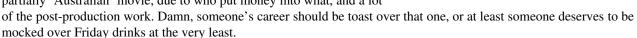
by Andrew Moshos

dirs: Andy and Lana Wachowski

I can't really understand how the Wachowskis can keep getting these budgets for their movies. It's insane. I can't get an extension on my overdraft, but the Wachowskis, whose last few movies have lost an extravagant sum, close to like 500 million dollars, and yet someone keeps bankrolling them. They're like the Donald Trumps of the moviemaking industry. Maybe they have photos of someone, maybe the amount of money they made on the Matrix movies gets them a free pass for life. I have no idea, but if they are given like another \$200 million for their next movie, there is no justice or fiscal sanity in this world.

Nah, just kidding. I knew those two abstract concepts never existed in the first place.

If it does, amazingly, happen, it won't be for a sequel or another installment in the Jupiter series. I have no doubt, really, considering it cost so much to make and could not have made its money back, no matter what is claimed on various sites through the so-called 'foreign' markets. Saddest of all is that somehow this is considered at least a partially 'Australian' movie, due to who put money into what, and a lot





To say that this film is terrible ignores a few basic realities. It looks nice in certain bits. A lot of money was spent on effects. It's not based on Marvel or DC comics, or any comics, and that's a plus. It's an original creation of the Wachowskis, in that it's not directly an adaptation of anything else, although, since it's the Wachowskis, it means it's cribbed from whatever they've seen and liked before.

Any other decent elements? Well, Mila Kunis and Channing Tatum are attractive people, and I believe audiences like looking at attractive people. Other than that...

Before I ridicule/lambaste anything or anyone else, I will point out this one basic fact: Eddie Redmayne is in this. Eddie Redmayne may or may not be a household name in your household. Eddie Redmayne recently, as in a couple of months ago, won an Academy Award, that's right, an Oscar, for playing Professor Stephen Hawking in a little movie called The Theory of Everything. Eddie Redmayne's performance in this here movie is so, so awful that I honestly and genuinely believe the Oscar he won for that other performance should retroactively be taken away from him. Not only that, but he must be barred from future movie roles and awards contention. He should have to pay film studios to get roles, and spend a lifetime doing good works to claw his way out of the deep pit of shame he deserves to be in. But do

you blame him for performing in these horrible ways, or the directors for agreeing with it/encouraging it?

Well, when you see a kid acting awfully in public, don't you sometimes wish the parents would step in and discipline their kid? I don't mean violence, I mean sternly but kindly curbing whatever awful tendencies their little King Joffrey is inflicting upon the general public. Like in those circumstances, it's not entirely fair to blame either party without getting some kind of understanding of what went so very wrong and why. Having said that, I blame Redmayne entirely. The performance, as Balem Abrasax or whatever the hell that villainous name was, is terrible in new and horrifying ways, ways that sometimes aren't even consistent within the same sentence of dialogue, let alone the same scene.

There needs to be a supercut placed on the tubes of the internets that delete every other unimportant aspects and moments of the movie (ie. everything else) and just let Eddie Redmayne be Eddie Redmayne, with the awful whispering line deliveries, the infantile screaming, the arch and pained toffee tone, the everything that makes him seem like someone auditioning for a role in a high school Rocky Horror musical unsuccessfully.

I could go on. In fact I will. Redmayne's performance is so bad it makes many of the other aspects of the movie, which are pretty bad or at least incompetent, seem slightly less bad. It still sticks out like a pustulant, gangrenous sore thumb.

Or infected dogs' balls, or whatever other analogy you could prefer.

By this stage it's almost superfluous to address other aspects of the movie, but what remains does make you wonder how this shit got made. I'm all for 'original' and risky productions, because when they pay off, they're amazing, and they impact the movies that come after them, in ways both good and ill.

Jupiter Ascending will convince at least a few studios not to bother with 'big' sci-fi unless the words 'based on' or 'Part IV' are appended to the script. In another big reach, the Wachowskis come up with another way of saying to audiences that the world they assume is their own is but a pale shadow of what's really going on. In the Matrix movies it was revealed that we're just pale bodies floating in goo as our minds are trapped within a simulation of reality, slaves to the system.

Jupiter Ascending posits something even worse: people of Earth, you are being fattened for slaughter. A clan of virtually immortal aristocrats seed likely worlds with humans, and once the population gets large enough, they're all slaughtered, reduced to their chemical constituents and refined into some kind of anti-aging cream. Now you know the terrible truth about what Lancome and L'Oreal have been doing for centuries, except they just do it on orphans. This wouldn't be too much of a problem, except Earth is getting to be ripe enough for harvest.

All of this is completely unknown to everyone on Earth, especially a young Russian-American girl called Jupiter Jones (Mila Kunis), who, by some vast coincidence, happens to possess the exact same genetic sequence as the matriarch of the awful aristocrats. By this amazing coincidence (which I guess isn't that amazing a coincidence, since there are presumably trillions of human cattle peppering the cosmos, so the reappearance of the specific sequence is perhaps not impossible, though, no, wait, it absolutely is), she is immediately pursued by a whole bunch of different people, despite having done such a wonderful job as a cleaner thus far.

It's not for these qualities that she is the 'chosen' one in this circumstance; it's purely for her DNA that they love her.

The evil Abrasax guy has two equally odious siblings whose sole virtue is that they aren't as unspeakably acted as Balem (though they're both still terribly directed). They all, I dunno, want something from Jupiter, who doesn't really do much other than look surprised when surprising stuff happens to her, and yell / scream when she falls off things.

She has virtually no agency throughout the entire story. Contrast that (unwillingly) with The Matrix, which had some random guy randomly be The One because... well, it happens, but then he actually does stuff and looks cool doing it, and makes decisions. Jupiter gets to, I dunno, decide whether or not to marry an aristocrat, who I guess is her son? Also, she then has to decide whether to give the Earth up or not at the end because... family?

She's given exactly two choices, neither of them being actual choices, and nothing she really does actually impacts on the story in its stupidity-filled entirety. Other characters are always the ones making things happen, saving her bacon, or blowing things up. She doesn't even get to blow anything up, fer crying out loud.

The one with agency in the flick is Caine (Tatum), who is a human/dog hybrid with these hover rollerblades and a shield. It's as dumb as it sounds. And he used to have wings, so not only is he like an angel or something, he kind of looks like a kangaroo as well.

There is so, so much to pick apart and mock but I'm going to go easy – it's really not worth the effort. But I will point out that a lot of the flick plays out like we're meant to know what's going on, and that we're meant to care.

Wrong on both counts. This is a story that must have meant a lot to the Wachowskis, and like truly creative people they've created it with little regard for what some audience might think. But so many bits of this bizarre yet horribly conventional story should really have been excised, and maybe this makes the case for meddling studio execs having more of a say.

What about the former friend/colleague of Caine's (Sean Bean) who they go to for help who starts wailing on Caine, for no discernible reason, who lives in a house filled with bees? Bees everywhere? Is this how the honey industry works: you fill up the whole house with random CGI bees? Why are the bees there? Well, because they're there to acknowledge that Jupiter is a queen, because that's what bees do. Apparently?

If any of that sounds sensible to you, by all means, watch this movie. If that sounds like something you'd hear a crazy person screaming on a street corner, or a child would write as part of a creative writing project in prep, then maybe skip this terrible, inexplicably terrible movie. Or see it, and be amazed and astounded at how something like this could ever be put together by willing participants with bags of money and no obstacles to their horrible ambitions.

2 times I couldn't tell whether Channing Tatum was bored and confused or just confused out of 10

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"I will harvest that planet tomorrow, before I let her take it from me." – and I will help you if it means I'll never have to watch a movie this shitty ever again – Jupiter Ascending

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NEXT ISSUE OF RPG REVIEW



The Undead!
Ravenloft ... All Flesh
Must Be Eaten ...
Outbreak ... World of
Darkness ... Warhammer
40K Undead ... and
much more!