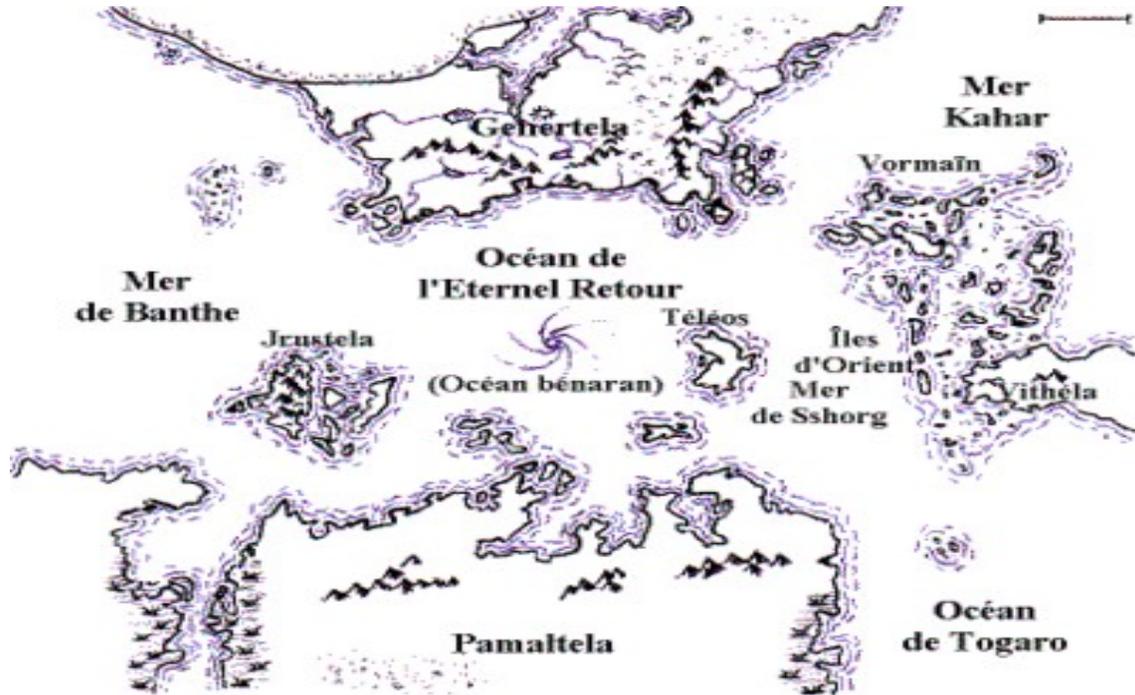


RPG REVIEW

Issue #6, December 2009



Greg Stafford Interview ... Fox Magic Designer's Notes ... WordPlay Designer's Notes ... RuneQuest Rules ... RuneQuest - BRP - Glorantha - HeroQuest Geneology ... Torg Retrospective ... BRP/HQ/WP Torg ... Tunnel Quest ... On Saying 'No' ... Where The Wild Things Are ... Dork Dungeons ... Mooning Ixtrandaz ... Orcus Listens ... Industry News

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ADMINISTRIVIA

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EDITORIAL

Thus ends another year and another four issues of RPG Review. I am pleased to say that readership seems to be on an increase as does interest in the 'zine in general. Maybe that was partially due to hat-tip we received from sites such as "Bleeding Cool" over the Young Gods matter.

Two matters dominate this issue. The first is Glorantha, the great mythic fantasy setting from the fertile mind of Greg Stafford, one of the very few fantasy, let alone fantasy RPG, settings that actually shows some knowledge of a mythic mode of thinking. Far too many fantasy settings tend to simply transpose the cultural mores and worldview of late 20th century advanced capitalism into a setting where fairies frolic and there's a few nasty monsters - an attitude which was delightfully criticised as a "quasi-medieval Tolkien-Conan soup".

But this does not answer the question on *why* it seems that so many fantasy authors, of fiction and gaming, seem incapable of breaking the mindset. Greg Stafford's response in an interview in this issue is quite blunt: "Brainwashing... We are extremely distant from the natural world.... Mythology draws on 'how things seem' as a valid setting and judgmental system. I blame this loss on the 4th century [BCE] brain/body split, Descartes, and TV."

This is very accurate in many ways and quite understandable. People do follow the mode of consciousness of their time. But given so much attention in RPGs spent on generating plausible simulations, of narrative development, devices and player immersion into the character could we *please* pay some attention to how people in other times and other realities would think and reflect that in the world design and story? It may not be realistic in a scientific sense, but it is in terms of story generation. It's not as if exceptional expertise is required in Claude Levi-Strauss's (the recently deceased great French anthropologist) distinction of synchronic and diachronic story creation.

One game that made a pitch, of sorts, to integrate such design into the game system was *Torg: Roleplaying The Possibility Wars*. Through both the use of realm and cosm axioms, plus "Laws of the Realm" specific realities were introduced that made sense *within* that world. In their fantasy realm, for example, moral action became reflected in physical appearance. *Torg* receives a massive retrospective article in this issue with a near-comprehensive review of the many supplements that were released in its time.

The connection between *RuneQuest* and *Glorantha*, the rules and the setting, has led to enormous and continuing discussion, with both being significant contributions in their own right. Apart from a set of *RuneQuest* rules in this issue, an attempt is also made to draw a genealogy of the influences, especially in relation to the introduction of *Hero Wars* and *HeroQuest*. One can also include a newcomer called *WordPlay*, whose designer has kindly contributed notes to this issue.

This issue also features designer's notes for *Fox Magic*, a kitsune based RPG, Mingshi's industry news, Andrew Moshos's movie review of *Where The Wild Things Are*, Jensen's *Mooning Ixtrandraz* and a contrarian theory article 'on saying no', against the common claim of "Say Yes (or roll the dice)". Also scattered through the 'zine, rather like the odd cartoons in 'Cracked' and 'Mad' are panels of 'Dork Dungeons' with panels from the notorious 'Jack Chick' comics with new text by Steve Saunders.

It's his fault Black Leaf died.

Lev Lafayette, lev@rpgreview.net

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LETTERS

NPCs Wanted

Hello Lev,

I've read and enjoyed your magazine so far. Good job!

I'd like to suggest that you start a new regular feature that would be about fully pre-generated NPCs. Each one would contain a character that a GM could use in their game. It would need to include a full character history. Obviously, this would need to be a character that would have a wide variety of uses.

Many GMs like to use fully generated NPCs but don't always have time to generate one. This proposed regular feature would fulfill that need. Depending on submissions, you might be able to run two or three characters in an issue. It would be best if you could get submissions utilising a wide variety of systems.

I would certainly be interested in submitting worked NPCs for such a feature. If I get word from you that this kind of feature will be in the magazine, I'll start working on some submissions.

Ted Skirvin , United States

As you wish Ted... We look forward to your submissions once again. In this issue we have an example NPC in the form of The Fourth, a Glorantha trollkin who has done particularly well for his species.



Young Gods of Old Egypt

Thank you for the latest RPG Review.

On a related note, I am tinkering with a little known RPG called "Young Gods of Old Egypt", a 24 Hour RPG Project by Frank Sronce. I found it a while ago while exploring 1km1kt.net.

I liked the feel and mechanics of it so much I restructured the layout of the rules and used it to run a game at a local RPG convention (Vorpalcon). Frank was happy to see it being used. I plan on expanding the rules and hope to create some variations for different backgrounds, such as mythic China (eg: Journey to the West).

Dale Long, Australia

Thanks for those comments Dale. Yes, you are quite right, Young Gods of Old Egypt has received some good, albeit brief reviews. On RPG.net it was described as "A supers game with a flavorful twist. Characters are people in the ancient land of Egypt who suddenly wake up with animal aspects and divine powers. This is a spectacular idea for a short game, executed with style."



Avoiding Liberaling Sensitivities

Just read the Diegesis in issue 5, regarding your discussion of Anachronisms, especially:

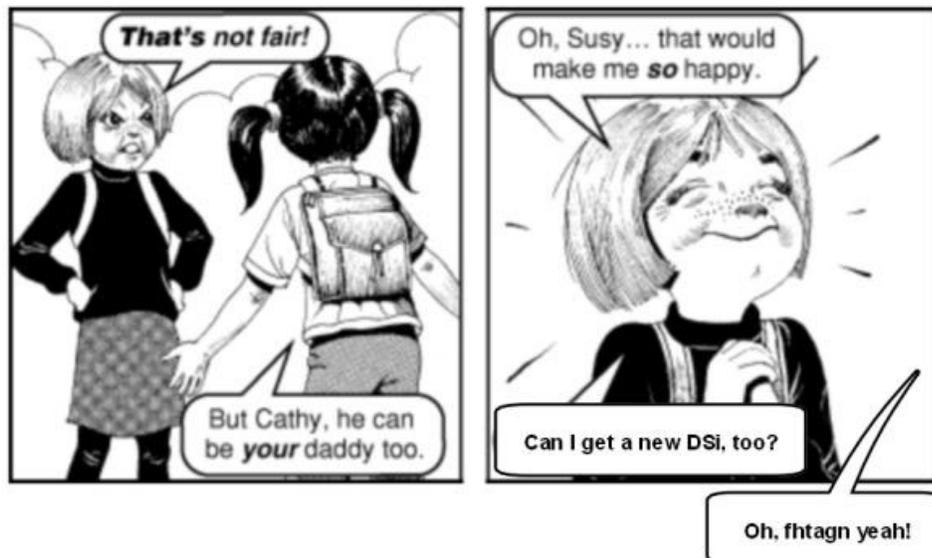
"It seems to be a matter of historical veracity that under theological rule, and especially monotheistic theological rule, that such societies discriminate harshly against the female sex. With a premodern standard of technology and a ruling class with absolute power and divine right, it is fairly inevitable that the majority of the population would be either slaves or serfs. Likewise, with such minimal knowledge and experience of extraregional cultures, racism and religious bigotry are not just widespread but usually result in murderous reaction."

For a fantasy author who totally avoids the importing of liberal sensitivities into his fantasy world, read “The Darkness that Comes Before” by R. Scott Bakker, he has achieved something great in his work, not least because he got me to break my rule of “no more fantasy serials”.

Please read it, then I’ll have someone who is as familiar with the historical/theological/philosophical underpinnings of it to talk about it with.

Jasper Silver, Australia

Thanks for the heads-up Jasper. With your recommendation I'll have a look into that. Other reviews I have seen of said novel suggest what you say, although I may get lost in the multitude of schools, groups and factions (heck RuneQuest cult allegiances can get confusing enough).



HOT GOSSIP INDUSTRY NEWS

by Wu Mingshi

Hosei bo Mr. Lev,

Happy new year to all my readers. You can send soft substance, fifty cents too little, don't want a dollar either. Heh, my new year is not happen yet, but still for this issue. So send then (February 14, ah, Valentine Day... hint, hint).

Big news for this issue is Mongoose bringing out a new book called "RuneQuest II". You may know and love RuneQuest II as being the edition from 1980, but this is a revision of *Mongoose* RuneQuest. So don't get blur! Preview say starting skill values now more equal, cultural background and profession better, and combat better. So look out, maybe Mongoose RuneQuest much better game now, confirm!

On similar story, Minghi pleased to report that Jeff Richard from Moon Design has beautiful new Sartar: Kingdom of Heroes that many people like already. Also Moon Design open up to third party publishers with HeroQuest Gateway License. Robin Laws say "Let a thousand HQ flowers bloom", but my grandmother says she remember something similar that had a bad ending. Except for Gloranthan flowers. No permission under license to publish Glorantha material.

Talislanta alla mak! Stephan Sechi, he create pretty and wild Talislanta game long ago and now he is going to put entire collection as PDF on website for free. Stephan Sechi is best person in roleplaying world this quarter! Kilat!

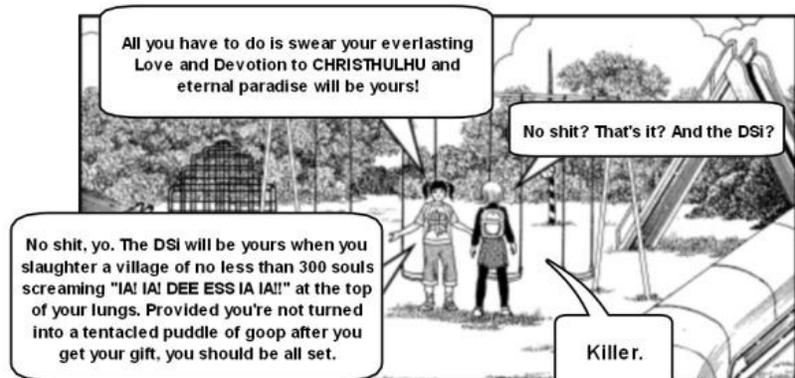
Hear on grapevine that Gianni Vacca is finishing Chine Imperiale supplement for Basic RolePlaying with current drafts in French and English. Hey Gianni, how 'bout pinyin as well, la? Also Lot of talk all about now about Dragon Age by the good folk at Green Ronin. Looks like True20 and other such excellent games. Easy to play with lots of flavor.

Final, congratulations to Carl Brown because Mingshi hear that Gulliver's Trading Company [see RPG Review #3] will be coming out this year, including pretty pictures thanks to kind Macmillan book company.

All from me this quartering!

Love, Mingshi!

mingshi@rpgreview.net



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FOX MAGIC DESIGNER'S NOTES

by Christopher "Kit" LaHaise

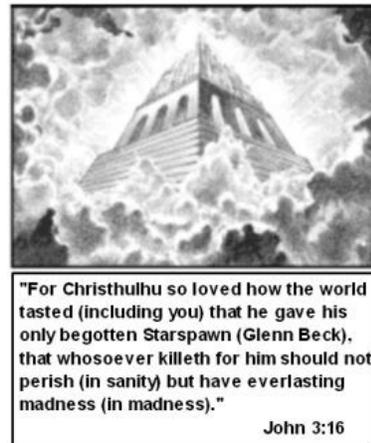
When I was younger, I had an intense fascination with all things Japanese – from the culture, to the spiritualism, to the mythology – I was caught up by this world I had only known the stereotypes of. What drew me into the East were the kitsune – the foxes which seemed to hold the nation in awe. In the social circles I was associated with, the kitsune were just beginning to become very popular, but there was nearly no information available about them for public consumption. The internet was just beginning to grow, and we did not have the World Wide Web that we know now, leaving most of my research to the few books I could find on the subject. What started out as a fan hobby for me soon became a serious interest in the culture and spirituality of Japan, and as I learned more about the kitsune, I kept trying to learn more about how their stories interconnected with the beliefs of the Japanese. By the turn of the century, I had become enough of an amateur expert on the subject that I was able to claim a small degree of fame online for my knowledge on the subject.

If you have read any stories about the kitsune, you may notice that they have a diverse series of powers and abilities that are attributed to them. Shape-shifting, illusion, mind control, and possession are only a small part of their arsenal of tricks. When you see a kitsune in a roleplaying game, they are usually watered down, most of their abilities removed or reduced to simple spells. I can accept this as a matter of game balance, and also understand that most roleplaying games aren't about kitsune. But one night, while I was drifting off to sleep, a question came to me: how would you make a game about kitsune?

Almost immediately, the game began to form. The kitsune were divided into the various types mentioned in legends, separated by their focus and attitude. Their powers began to lay themselves out, and the process in which a fox gains these abilities was developed. I knew that I could not sleep until my inspiration played itself out, so I hit the computer and began writing (much to my wife's chagrin). Eight hours later, dawn was coming, but I was finished my first draft.

Mechanics have always been a strong point for me. I love games with clean mechanics which complement the game world and help the players and game master understand what a game is about and what the characters are capable of. To me, the mechanics are just as important as the story in a game, and can make or break a campaign. With this in mind, I was surprised to find that I wanted the mechanics of Fox Magic to be light and flexible. Rather than

constraining the foxes with the mechanics, I found that I was designing a game where the mechanics were present to give both the game master and the players as much room to move as possible. The setting itself defined the limitations on the characters, through the culture of the fox race itself, and by their spiritual obligations. The mechanics, however,



were present only to give a framework for storytelling.

In Fox Magic, you play a newly-awakened kitsune. You are a fox whose spirit has been touched with power, giving you self-awareness and supernatural ability. With these gifts comes an obligation to the spirit court – you are an instrument of reward or punishment in the world. To become more powerful, you must build a story – a legend of your deeds and accomplishments. The mechanics I designed had to facilitate this, which meant allowing the players to have narrative control over their characters and the setting. This was done by creating the tempo.



The tempo determines who has the narrative in Fox Magic. It is a device, allowing either the game master or the player to control the game. A player may use it to describe their character's actions, or the actions of an NPC, while the game master uses it to control the NPCs or the environment. A player can not dictate the actions of a PC, or the actions of key NPCs which have been tagged by the game master or another player, but outside of these restrictions they have some ability to direct the campaign as they see fit. Controls are in place for the game master to prevent abuse, but the group competes for the tempo, allowing it to change hands from time to time. When the tempo's owner has finished declaring their action, the group can decide whether or not the action should be contested – would the game be better

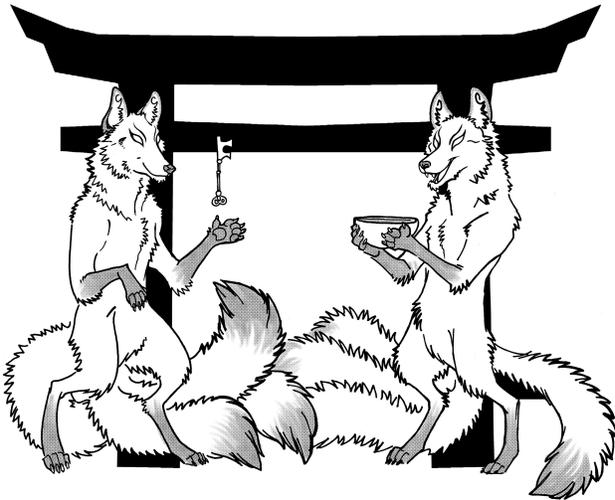


served if there is a chance of failure? If it would be interesting, the player may have to roll, and the winner of the roll gains control of the tempo. The tempo is also a bargaining chip – it can be used to bribe the game master, or sacrificed

to another player, given to them if they are suddenly inspired.

The second major mechanic is the conditions. I did not want to use 'Hit Points' or 'Health', but I wanted there to be

risk in the game. To do this, the players expend their character's Attributes to influence the game, but can also collect conditions. Positive conditions can be used to give a bonus to the character's actions, while negative conditions can be used to penalize an opponent. Conditions are flexible, and can represent anything which can hinder or aid a character. Over the course of the game, the characters attempt to gain positive conditions for themselves, and shed any negative conditions they may pick up from the story. These help offset the loss of Attributes they may have suffered, and help set up the climax of the adventure the game master may have prepared. One inspiration I took from another game was how challenges work. There's a game called InSpectres which determines who has narrative control of an action by the result of a die roll. I used a variant of this mechanic, expanding it to determine who gains the tempo, and who narrates the outcome of a challenged action. I also had to



modify the mechanic to determine who gains a condition as a result of the action and how, while keeping an eye on making the game easy to run and control.

This proved very beneficial for me, since it threw out a lot of the baggage that can show up in most games. There is no inventory for equipment – important gear is a Condition, and unimportant gear is ignored. Health was removed from the game – the character can be injured again and again, and while this could hamper the character, the game master and the player can cooperate and decide how bad things are. It removed the awkward mechanics for things such as 'range' and 'penalties' and 'bonuses' that come in charts in most games, since such things have no importance in the context of creating a fox's legend.

Once I was finished my first draft, I sent it to friends for proofreading. The second draft doubled the page count as I fleshed out the background and setting for the game, and the third draft saw the introduction of a bestiary and example characters from existing Japanese legends. When the book reached about sixty pages, I decided that it may be better served with an actual print run, though this meant finding someone who was skilled at doing layout. From start to finish, the game took about eight months to develop. The game system itself I have decided to call the Story Point System, and I plan to use it with future games I will be developing.

Art by the three major artists for Fox Magic: Two pictures present the foxes by name, which was done by Malcolm Earle. The two foxes in front of the Torii Gate was done by Stephanie Stone, and the colour one is our front cover, which was done by Nick White.

Fox Magic is scheduled for release in December 2009, and will be available in PDF form or softcover at www.foolsmoon.com.

WORDPLAY DESIGNER'S NOTES

by Graham Spearing

When I set out to write Wordplay I had no idea what fun the journey would be and how much creativity it would spark in others. The destination hasn't been reached yet, but more of that later...

I've been buying, reading and even playing roleplaying games since the early Eighties. Today there are more games available than ever before, with the best building on the shoulders their predecessors, developing new ways of gaming. With such a rich array of excellent roleplaying games available today it may, understandably, seem to be little more than arrant vanity to set out to create your own. Perhaps it was, but allow me to spend a moment with you to explain why I set off on this endeavour and how it turned out the way it did.

A couple of years ago I came to think about the rules of the games that I owned and realised that whereas I liked aspects of many of them, there wasn't one that encapsulated only the key elements that I wanted to use at my own gaming table. So, I decided to write my own, to create a game that I would find personally useful and hope that, along the way, others would also find a game that they could pick up and play with friends. My starting position with Wordplay was to create a set of game rules that I could use for most anything I wanted at my own gaming table and prove useful to quickly use at the few UK gaming conventions that I attend. I set out with no real notion that I would be in the opening stages of writing a book, it was to be a series of guidelines, a framework, that I could use quickly and easily, and one that could, magpie like, easily adapt existing scenarios and settings.

Wordplay Games

creating new roleplaying games



Key areas that I wanted Wordplay to have:

- completely open descriptive traits that could bring anything - characters, scenery, objects, moods - into play and have an actual game effect
- a unified resolution mechanic that could account for anything in a simple way
- a rules light 'fun' feel that used the principles of the resolution mechanic and not a great deal more
- a focus on characters and how they bring the awesome to the table
- a dice pool mechanic that used the good old six sided

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I wasn't starting from a completely blank sheet. Well, all right, I was starting from a blank OpenOffice document, but I had a feel for where I wanted to go with it. The first few pages of game overview flew onto the computer in a couple of frenzied days. That essential early structure has survived playtesting and made it through to the finished game. As I was looking for something simple I found that after that first weekend I had a playable, testable game that I could start to refine.

Essentially Wordplay is a dice accumulating game. When faced with 'Challenges' players look to 'build their hand' with as many dice as they can manage. They use player character traits, scale, equipment, circumstances, opponent's flaws, goals, help from other characters and even entertainingly described action to generate a pool of dice to throw. The opponent, typically the Navigator, the name I have given to the role of the 'GM', will do the same thing. Once each side has amassed their pool they are both thrown and numbers of successes compared to see who wins and what the outcome will be.

That's the game. Anything else is a refinement and extrapolation using the same core principle. Wordplay focuses in on these 'Challenges', points of drama, and how the player characters can leverage their abilities and circumstances to meet them and influence the outcome. The player brings these into play by describing what their character does and how they do it. As they do dice will start to accumulate ready to be rolled. Everything that can be described can be given a value and, potentially, offers an opportunity to add dice into the Challenge.

I really didn't want a lot more than that. The core edition came out at roughly 45K words or 100ish pages in small book format. Most of the book provides examples on how to bring anything into the game: special powers, equipment, vehicles, how to use scale, how to rate outcomes, how to handle Challenges, how to reward players, how to prepare for a game. However, at the end of the day, all roads lead back to the central simple premise that dice are accumulated as action is articulated, after which they are thrown and compared to determine the outcome of challenges.

Playtesting seemed to file off needless additions to the game and informed how best to keep the fun. The game was shaped back towards the core and seems to be stronger for it. By this time I had a draft that I was sharing and others were actively taking it up, running games and providing feedback. I will never forget my first game of Wordplay as a player, it was quite an experience, both for myself and the Navigator!

The core principle of Wordplay is that everything can influence the outcome of a challenge if the player is able to describe how it does so. As everything is reduced to a range of dice, everything fits into the core mechanic. I wanted Wordplay to handle things this way to cut out any need for 'exceptions' or special rules with required additional sub-systems. Everything is handled the same way with advice provided on how to bring them in to play.

Inspiration came in many forms. In particular, I have credit a few games that informed some of the design decisions:

HeroQuest by Robin D. Laws (Moon Designs). This game has had the strongest influence on Wordplay. It was here, in it's earliest guise as 'Hero Wars', that I first encountered the idea that descriptive text can be used directly to describe a character and then become 'traits' to be used in the game.

Burning Wheel by Luke Crane. The joy of the six sided dice pool. The 'Beliefs' mechanic partly inspired the more task focused 'Goals' in Wordplay.

Silhouette by Gene Marcil, Stephan Matis and Marc Vezina (Dream Pod 9). The idea that extra sixes rolled provide a better success.

The Shadow of Yesterday by Clinton R. Nixon (Anvilwerks). The 'Keys' mechanic also partly inspired Wordplay's Goals.

The Conspiracy of Shadows by Keith Senkowski (Bob Goat Press). I encountered the idea of 'damage traits' when I played this game at a convention.

Hot War by Malcolm Craig (Contested Ground Studios). The listing of relationships and the use of player pictures to inform the setting.

Others will undoubtedly have provided subliminal inspiration. I encourage you to find these games and play them, as they are all excellent in their own right.

In setting out to write Wordplay I also wanted to give something back to a hobby that I have enjoyed for more than twenty years. The experience of writing the game had drawn in a sizeable number of talented people who wanted to pick up the game and take it in new directions. Rather than writing and testing in a vacuum I found that there was a community of knowledgeable and friendly gamers with which to collaborate. This turned the whole process into a social experience which I found just as rewarding as creating the game text itself, if not more so. They have encouraged and assisted me in turning the words into a game and, practically, into an actual book.

For me Wordplay has already achieved its goal: delivering a simple and fun to play game that focuses on the drama of character challenges using description and open traits. What has surprised me is the way that when you start to create something it can spark others to become creative too, building on the ideas that you have started with. This is part of the journey.

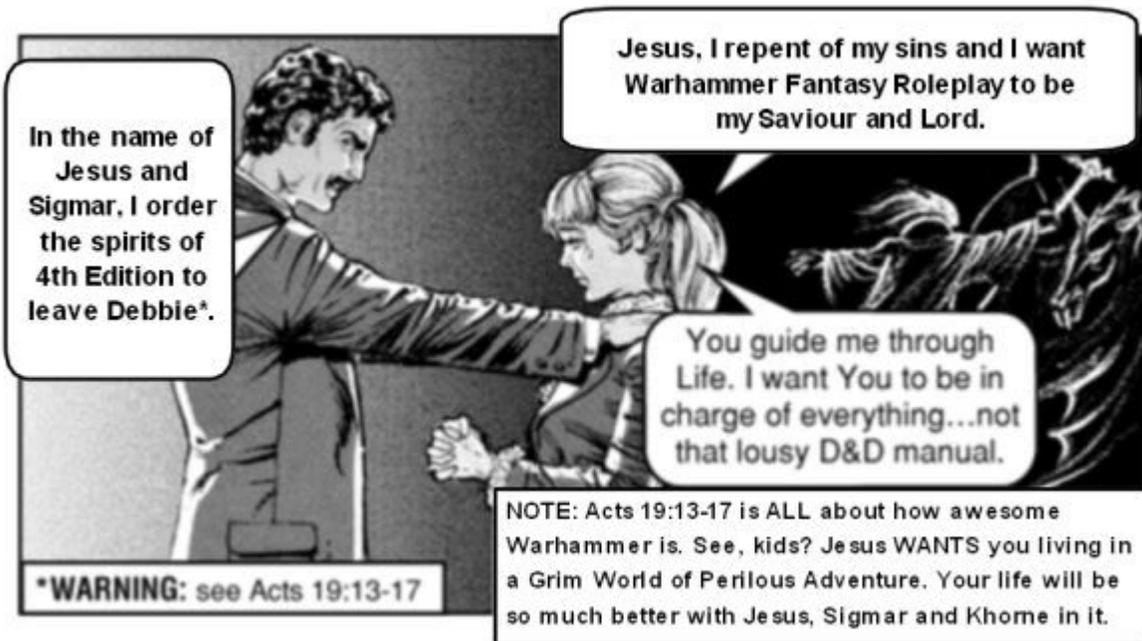
I anticipate that 2010 will be a very exciting year for Wordplay as it is used to power a whole range of new gaming worlds. In addition to the 'Fantasy' theme in the core book, a collection of further settings are in preparation:

- The Cold Crusade - the old gods are returning and, through their chosen children, face the power of the abrahamic establishment in an apocalyptic struggle.
- Singularities - a hard science based universe where the Technological Singularity has happened and humanity struggles for purpose and meaning against the raw intellect driven advancement and change of its Artificially Intelligent machine-children.

- Keep Portland Weird - set in a world only slightly removed from our own. In it, normal people, with all of the problems normal people face, woke up and were fundamentally changed. Once given access to power, how does it change you? What do you do with it? Do you help the helpless, or take advantage of others? Will you cling to your human life, or wallow in the change? Do you use your power to avenge those who died in the early days, or have you let go of the past in favour of promoting a decent future?
- Infinite War - welcome to the Big Time soldier! You are a soldier of the Crusade recruited from within Time to fight their battles against the Entropy Jihad. You are 'Realised', completed the Crusaders basic training in which you've learned 'The Truth' about reality. This is a war without end...

I am aware that others are inspired to use Wordplay to publish stories in new worlds. Those journeys are under way. I look forward to participating in them throughout 2010. More news on these to come very soon.

If you play Wordplay please don't hesitate to get in touch on our forum on the Tavern:
<http://www.gamingtavern.eu/tav/index.php>



GREG STAFFORD INTERVIEW

Greg Stafford is a prolific and influential figure in the gaming industry; discoverer of the world of Glorantha, designer of King Arthur Pendragon roleplaying game and The Great Pendragon Campaign, co-designer of RuneQuest, Worlds of Wonder, Ghostbusters, Prince Valiant, Nephilim and HeroQuest, founder of two gaming companies, Chaosium and Issaries, designer of the White Bear & Red Moon, Nomad Gods, King Arthur's Knights and Elric! board games, compiler of Thieves World, and co-designer of the King of Dragon Pass computer game. Greg also assembled and co-authored the landmark supplements Pavis, Big Rubble and Trollpak, Griffin Mountain, Cults of Terror, Cults of Prax, and many, many others. A practicing shaman and advisor to the editorial board of "Shaman's Drum", Stafford recently lived in Oaxaca, Mexico and is currently composing a book of their legends.

Firstly, thank you for agreeing to this interview and welcome back to RPG Review.

Thank you.

Your discovered world of Glorantha is widely recognised as one of the most interesting fantasy worlds that draws heavily on mythic thinking; the world is flat, the sky is a dome, the gods are real, and the world is populated by spirits. Why do you think other fantasy worlds, particularly those in roleplaying games, do not draw upon this mythic reasoning?

Brainwashing. People don't think that way very well any more. We are extremely distant from the natural world. We are taught "how things are," and we accept that explanation even in defiance of our own senses. Science rules

everything, even how we are supposed to organize our experiences. I am not anti-scientific—it's the best tool we have to measure the physical world. But it's not enough. It doesn't explain anything except the material world. Mythology draws on "how things seem" as a valid setting and judgmental system. I blame this loss on the 4th century [B.C.E.] brain/body split, Descartes, and TV.



What made you choose the mythic form of expression?

Glorantha was born from a vision I had, fantastic and complete as I saw the mountain rise and the tree grow, saw the gods play and love and kill each other. The world is made of great impossible powers that are capable of exterminating all life, probably for reasons that have nothing to do with you and me. People are pawns. We will all die. Why? Is life hopeless? Why bother? I saw it all, the terrible questions and the terrifying answers. Those are mythic themes. Those are what Glorantha is based on. Those and the answers of course, to things like “what is the sun” and “what is virtue” and “who would be tougher in a fight, Shargash or Orlanth?”



How does it link with your involvement in experiential shamanism?

Well, in a deep manner, but only indirectly, really. Weird experiences came first, mostly a lurking nightmare, and so I read myths and then I read about myths, and when I began writing about Glorantha I expressed it in mythic language and structure. A lucid Tarot reading told me to start Chaosium. I began attending animist, pagan seasonal rituals, and participated in an occult study group. I attended my first game convention in 75, and after that began the shamanic practices. Then I began to understand magic, pagan rites, Chaosium, lurking nightmares and weird experiences.

Glorantha has become attached, for want of a better word, to two ground-breaking game systems;...

I think ground-breaking is a very good term for it.

... the various editions of RuneQuest, rich in detail and simulation, and HeroQuest, freely flowing narrative demands. All, with the exception of the Mongoose edition of RuneQuest, are set in the Second Third Age. Will there ever be a First Age Glorantha RPG?

I have loads of detail on First Age Seshnela. I'm sure someone could put it into a GPC format and we'd have a jolly wonderful work. Pre-Abiding Book Malkionism!

Or, to make matters even more difficult, a Godtime game? GodQuest perhaps?

I'm getting this idea of how to do that, or something like that, along with the Great Argrath Campaign. I'll be looking for ten or fifteen writers for a workshop this summer in Germany. I hope to construct the skeleton and DNA of the whole campaign, with the team as the alchemists to bring this monster to life. It includes "How to become a god" although that might just be to stop someone, because being a god when the world ends isn't very pretty.

Glorantha has been supported by many and numerous official and fan publications which has contributed a great deal to the world's detail. ..

Yes. There has been a tremendous amount of subcreation, of collaboration by fans and authors to fill out this vast world. I'm glad for that—it's a fulfillment of my first Gloranthan vision in 66.

It is noticeable that when discussing Glorantha your material is almost invariably prefixed with YGMV - Your Glorantha May Vary. Has this increasingly become a necessity to help newcomers to the world?

No, this is for oldsters too. There is an Authority that exists concerning all things Glorantha, me. This seems to make some people nervous about "getting things wrong." Some of the most verbose members of the old lists were complete jerks about citing Authority, and seem to have launched this meme into the game community, that things have to be "right" or else you can't really play in Glorantha.

Well, that's bunk. No one knows everything about Glorantha, and this isn't a test, or survey, or a compilation for an encyclopedia, or a competitive paleontological expedition to find a bigger skeleton in a worse place than the last guy.

It's my literary creation, provided in various formats (some fiction, several games) for play. I don't know everything, you never will know what I know, and you don't have to know everything to play anyway.

I invite people to come and play, to explore and contribute to the world through their own experience with it. I care nothing for your game to be right, and everything that you have fun.

There's no right and wrong to your Glorantha whatever you do. It is your Glorantha when you play. I wrote it, and wrote it and wrote it and wrote it, and sent it out there. Now it is yours, to do with as you please, as you need. I've coached the GMs, go play!

Your Glorantha Will Vary.

Has Glorantha become so detailed that it is overwhelming?

No. This is a strange misperception that exists. Does anyone think they have to memorize the king lists of Numenor to play in a LotR game? What GM feels he has to know every battle, every general, every country that fought in every theater before he runs a WWII army scenario? Hell, who thinks they have to memorize every D&D spell in order to play? So the idea that you have to know everything, that there is too much information, is nonsense.

I am pretty excited, though, that Jeff at Moon Design and Loz at Mongoose are both working in tandem, and closely with me, to present all that old stuff in a new, logical manner.

As an aside on this point, I am particularly fond of the fan-contribution which suggested that Dwarves, rather than following the traditional presentation of short, stocky men with beards, are actually mechanical in movement and well as behaviour and are clearly made of clay, iron etc. Of course, you once wrote an entire article (Different Worlds #24) expressing your dislike for your very own Dwarves. Do you still feel that way?

No more now than then. I do not really dislike them, although I did for that article. They are the race of solid, of stability, of Making who are set, by nature, opposite the insubstantial, flighty race of Growing. I think they are a fun and wonderful people, though—they have one job and one hobby, follow an absolute schedule, value conformity, eat canned, artificial food, live in little identical rooms that are off of long, undecorated hallways, check in and out every day on schedule, and fear anything outside of their regular schedule. They are not burdened by sex, guilt, insecurity creativity or passion of any sort, or else I would probably have had them all wear neckties.

One species which isn't discussed much in Gloranthan lore, either in official or fan publications, is that of the giants...

Yes. Perhaps their time truly has passed.

Actually, though, there are several distinct races of gigantic human-rune-shaped beings. They are hard to tell apart. Then, when people (in Glorantha) include beings like the Praxian mega-spirits that can materialize in the Wastes, “giants” gets all wiggly.

... It seems that they are friendly with trolls

Some are. The Jolanti, made and liberated from the Mostali, have good relations with others who dislike the dwarves.

... and in ancient times they were in war with the dragonewts.

The Origin War. The combatants are called giants and dragons. Witnesses have no other words they can use to describe the shadowy memories that they think they have of this. No human has witnessed this. Some Heroquesters (and many God Learners), though, have stripped themselves of everything that would hinder them from experiencing the creation of the universe. Humanity cannot go “farther back” than the Green Age. They have to take away parts of their soul/spirit/essence to experience the pre-Green Age, and so when (if) they return, their memories are not really human memories. They are the memories of something that existed when the world was being made, and when people try to explain it, the memory remembers them as things that seem like giants and dragons. Who both claim, btw, to have been there.

As pure speculation on my part, is it possible the Draconic descent into the mundane world and the human ascent to the divine is a point of conflict between the two? Are the trolls diminutive giants, following a principle of similarity to how trollkin are diminutive trolls?

No. Not for me. But YGWV, and I would love to see an in-Glorantha document that presents this as a theory, with references and nonsense and geegaws.

The first edition of RuneQuest mis-spelled the name of the world and the name of the company. There was the dispute with Dave Hargrave over the publication of Arduin. Then the problematic licensing deal between Chaosium and Avalon Hill. For several years RuneQuest simply wasn't in publication at all. Then Hero Wars had its share of printing errors as well. Some of these events must have been emotionally as well as financially draining. It hasn't always been smooth sailing, has it?

No, of course not. Your list includes only some of the more public crises that Chaosium and I underwent. Hell, putting together Thieves World was, all by itself, nearly worthy of a breakdown! We went broke twice, and if we were a regular business we'd have been gone long ago. Have you every laid off your friends from their jobs? We were \$10,000 away from selling out to GW once!

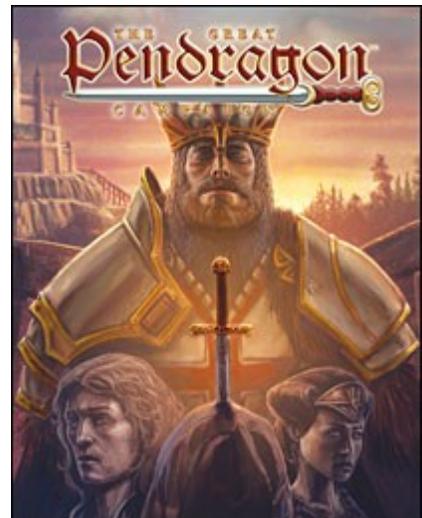
Apart from Glorantha of course you are responsible for a game which very much encapsulates the medieval and traditional world-view, that of Pendragon. Family, religion and passions are emphasised in this game.

I still think it's 20 years ahead of its time. These are adult themes, things for people with some experience or thoughtfulness. Some things from the game have been emulated, I believe, in other games.

I understand that you still play Pendragon on Saturday nights and are writing supplements for this game. Can you tell us how that is developing?

I love KAP5 and GPC. Not everything can be detailed in them, and so I've been selling booklets to share the information that I use when I play. None of it is stuff that is necessary, but all of it is desirable for some people.

Book of Manor is about shaping your manor to mirror your personality
Book of Knights & Ladies is Advanced character Generation—anywhere and anytime in the Arthurian world, male or female
Book of Battle, one of the two which are just about to be released, is an infinitely-repeatable scenario of fighting in a battle, from the knights' point of view. It has a lot of tactical decisions, different enemies and surprises that move the players back and forth on the field. And player success affects the overall outcome, to the extent that they can determine a win or a loss. Book of Armies presents 35 different armies to fight. Most are British, differing from period to period and place to place, but some are also foreigners in case players visit the continent.



Please see <http://gspendragon.com/> for my personal Pendragon site. The new products can be found easily from there.

Pendragon does have a lighter set of general mechanics than RuneQuest, but a stronger emphasis on background and personality. How would you react to the suggestion that Pendragon, system-wise, is the way point between RuneQuest and HeroQuest?

Hm, nice. Yea, I think we can say that. I can't say we did it consciously, but there is a progression there.

Where does Prince Valiant fit into this scheme?

Another game ahead of its time, the first Storytelling game (sorry WW fanatics). I love the 1-page RPG. It was pretty easy to tell which reviewers actually played the game, because they invariably doubted its playability. But your insight is pretty good. Again, I can't say it was conscious, but there's a progression there.

You also have mentioned on a few occasions that Pendragon is your preferred game, and the one that you are most proud of. Why do you rate it higher than your own discovery of Glorantha? Is the setting richer? The themes more to your liking?

I consider Pendragon to be my game masterpiece. Several reasons: I love the subject; I alone designed the systems, wrote the game, and wrote the background; the game elegantly melds system and background; it is concise and self contained; everyone knows something about King Arthur; with the GPC, it provides a long-term campaign unlike any available yet elsewhere.

I love Glorantha, but it is a different type of expression, sprawling and gutsy and messy and personal, compiled over decades of expression, now explored through four or six different game systems. I am proud of my Gloranthan works (except Hero Wars and Glorantha, which have their own stories). I don't consider this my masterpiece in largest part because it is collective, not "mine" in the same way.



But I think the Glorantha setting is far richer than the Arthurian one, and the themes of Glorantha are magical and spiritual, quite to my liking.

At one point in your life, many years ago, there was the possibility that you were going to become a wood-carver (and your carvings are quite good too).

Thank you. I've taken it up again, in a small way.

Do you ever regret not taking up that life of a wood carver instead of that

of the storyteller? Would Glorantha and the Arthurian legends have been expressed in carving instead?

No, or not as well. Though I am amused to imagine what I'd be carving now, 40 years later. Probably some 12 panel, unfolding wall of Glorantha stories done in that style of Sigurd killing Fafnir. Life has been impoverished and difficult enough as a game designer and publisher, but I think I have played to my strengths as well as following my bliss. Game design, company running—I think I won in career decisions.

Has the journey been worthwhile?

Yes. It has not gone where I had thought it would, but overall, it has been a worthwhile experience, one which I am proud of, and plan to continue until my drool short circuits my keyboard.



The "Gregged" rune. From Nick Brooke's etyries.com site

BASIC ROLEPLAYING - GLORANTHA - HEROQUEST: An Attempted Genealogy

by Lev Lafayette

White Bear – Red Moon (1975) After Glorantha was discovered by Greg Stafford, three successive game companies rejected his wargame White Bear - Red Moon. Eventually he had to start his own (ah, the joys of self-publishing) and in 1975 the game was produced. The game comes with 300 chits and nine scenarios for the conflicts between the Sartarites and the allies against the Lunar Empire.

Nomad Gods (1975) The second in the series this time various with the various tribes in neighbouring Prax and the various great spirits. Like White Bear - Red Moon contains an enormous grounding in the Gloranthan mythology and both are certainly extremely useful as source material in Gloranthan RPGs. Alas, the third wargame, Master of Luck & Death, was never released.

The Perrin Conventions (1977) Primarily a set of melee and missile combat rules to replace D&D initiative and movement, published in *All The World's Monsters Vol II*. The mechanics initiated in the Perrin Conventions were developed by Steve Perrin, Ray Turney and others met with setting White Bear-Red Moon and Nomad Gods the resulting progeny was...

RuneQuest I and II (1978, 1980) Exceptional early roleplaying system of "playable realism", integrated with Glorantha (misspelled Glorontha initially). Characteristics of Strength, Intelligence, Power, Constitution, Dexterity, Charisma and Size. Combat system with 12-second melee rounds, hit locations and sectional hit points, attacks and parries, armour absorbing damage. Magic consisting of 'battle magic' and spirits, and powerful Rune Magic; shamanism a type of Rune priesthood. Roll-under percentile core mechanic. Various knowledge, perception, manipulation, stealth, craft and alchemy skills (the latter not percentile based). Experience based on use of skills during adventures. Presence of guilds for training in mundane abilities, cults for magic. Significant collection of sapient humanoid creatures from Glorantha, including ducks, elves as walking plants, the enigmatic dragonewts, dream dragons and the various creatures of chaos.

Major supplements that significantly contributed to the setting include Pavis: Threshold to Danger (1983) outlining the desert-surrounded city, the neighbouring Big Rubble: The Deadly City (1983) along well as Cults of Prax (1979) and Cults of Terror (1981) providing religious attitudes and Trollpak (1982) for a species overview.

Basic RolePlaying (1980) A very simplified, short and distilled version of RuneQuest which included the core characteristics and percentile-based characteristic, resistance and skill rolls.

Call of Cthulhu (1981) Derived from the works of H.P. Lovecraft, based on ordinary people facing supernatural horrors using the BRP engine. Note that skills are limited to 100%. Includes SAN (sanity) percentile-range characteristic which inevitably declines as knowledge of the universe increase, represented by the Cthulhu Mythos skill, and the EDU (education)



characteristic for background knowledge.

Stormbringer (1981) Like CoC above, another derivative work using the BRP engine, this time the world of the Young Kingdoms from Michael Moorcock. Chief authors Ken St. Andre and Lynn Willis provide a high entropy game with variable armour protection values; St. Andre's idea of armour absorbing damage in *Tunnels & Trolls* was adopted by *RuneQuest*. Notable for raandom culture and occupation determination for PCs and Allegiance, a sort of alignment orientation.

Worlds of Wonder (1982) Possibly the first multi-genre roleplaying system consisting of Magic World, Future World and Superworld (see below). Magic World had D&D-like professions (Warriors, Rogues, Sages, Sorcerers), although with less restrictions than said game. Future World included a Traveller-like interstellar empire and six professions (Army, Civilian, Criminal, Engineers, Scouts, Science) as well as career progression through terms and enlistment processes. Robots and aliens were available as PCs.

Drakar och Demoner (1982) 'Dragons and Demons' was a popular game for the Swedish market that orginally combined Basic RolePlaying with the Magic World book from Worlds of Wonder, but gradually took up a life of its own over multiple editions. The first of three major non-Gloranthan, non-Chaosium systems.

Swordbearer (1982) A non-Chaosium and non-Gloranthan game, Swordbearer still is a distant relative of the BRP system as a classless system, percentile skill rolls, a similar experience check system to BRP. As a contribution to later systems such as HeroQuest it was also the first game to use an abstract wealth system.

Other Suns (1983) Another non-Chaosium and non-Gloranthan relative, this time a science fiction setting populated by no less than eleven species of anthropomorphic humans. Probably the first furry RPG!



Superworld (1983) BRP-engine with superhero powers. Characteristics determine a number of Hero Points which can be increased with disadvantages and with the total used to buy abstract powers. Both of these features are derived from Champions. Was used for the development of the *Wild Cards* series of novels by George R.R. Martin.

Ringworld (1984) Another of the BRPs literary derived games notable for its very extensive setting essays, including scientific data on the ringworld itself. Characteristic set includes BRP plus EDU and technology book outlines equipment available for 29th century explorers. Character age was a particular determinant on starting skill levels.

ElfQuest (1984): Wendy and Richard Pini's popular ElfQuest comic adapted for use with the BRP engine. Starting skill levels based on a combination of charactersitics and includes psychic powers.

RuneQuest (3rd edition, 1984) Child of RuneQuest I and II, became slightly estranged from the setting parentage with the adoption of the fantasy earth step-parent. Included new rules for cultures and professions, clear worldview outlooks for spirit magic, divine magic and sorcery (and ritual magic). Significant supplements include; Vikings (1985) detailing Nordic history and mythology; Genertala, Crucible of the Hero Wars (1988), the best supplement to date in providing an overall history and background for the Glorantha as well as comprehensive region-by-region analysis of history, politics, and tantalising rumours of current affairs and the rise of the Hero Wars.; Gods of Glorantha (1985), an book of incredible scope, providing a brief but comprehensive summary of all the religions of Glorantha and the special

cult benefits and restrictions offered, including special skills and spells.; Dorastor: Land of Doom (1993), a campaign region where the Nysalor once ruled and now where chaos reigns supreme under the control of a Broo King, along with being home to werewolf Telmori and Orlanthe exiles. Notable for its rules on Illumination.

In RuneQuest II Griffin Mountain was the region of Balazaar, a primitive land. In RuneQuest III it returned to the idea of the original manuscript and became a 'stand alone' gateway region. Balazaar became a 'Blank Land' that would remain undeveloped by Chaosium. In Hero Wars however it once again became a land of primitives.

Hawkmoon (1985) Another derivative setting, this time based on Moorcock's Tragic Millennium novels and the hero, Dorian Hawkmoon, in a setting that combines sorcery and technology. Essentially BRP but with setting-specific lore skills and mutations.

Pendragon (1985) Distant relative of the BRP-line, highly integrated in Arthurian legend and literature of various sources. Uses a reduced number of BRP characteristics (no INT or POW) but with a similar range. Notable for personality trait paired values, which indirectly find their way into Hero Wars, but more directly in BRP (2008) - themselves from RuneQuest's Griffin Mountain. Roll under d20 mechanic, armour absorbs damage. Initial editions had no specific rules for magic.

Mythworld (1986) BRP-derived small press game aimed at bronze and early iron age with percentile skills and once submitted as a RuneQuest 3rd edition proposal. All characters have a trade and a religion. Excellent bestiary section with realistic characteristics (population density, life-cycle chronology, actual movement rates etc).

PenDragon Pass (1991) Initially a three-page set of rules published in *Tales of the Reaching Moon*. Combines the mechanics of Pendragon (not really a BRP game) with the setting of Glorantha (child of Glorantha and Pendragon). With the d20 roll-under mechanic and personality traits could be considered a distant relative to Hero Wars.

King of Sartar (1992). Written as an historical research document of fragments, hypotheses and essays includes a composite history of Dragon Pass, and an attempt by the historians to answer the question 'Who Was Argrath', now a historical figure. Marks 1625 to 1725 as the period of the Hero Wars and the marking of the rise of The Devil every six hundred years.

In King of Sartar the god known as Yelmlio had only been worshipped for about 60 years at the time of the start of the Hero Wars. This contradicted numerous previous publications which suggested that Sun Dome Temples had been in existence since the First and Second Ages. It caused some confusion in the Gloranthan community as Yelmlio was one of the earliest cults in the game-world's history. There was particular confusion over the status of Elmal, the sun of the Orlanthe pantheon and the Sun Dome Temple in Dragon Pass. It appears that the historical documents in King of Sartar erred, ignoring other translations of "the Brightness of Yelm".

RuneQuest: Adventures in Glorantha (4th edition, c1993, unpublished) The fourth edition of RuneQuest explicitly and deeply reintegrated itself with Glorantha and included many improvements to the BRP engine, such as flat-rate damage bonuses, variable moves, calculated skill bonuses from characteristic totals, background points, renown. Cultures and professions Glorantha-based, Dragon magic and Lunar magic explicitly stated. Good



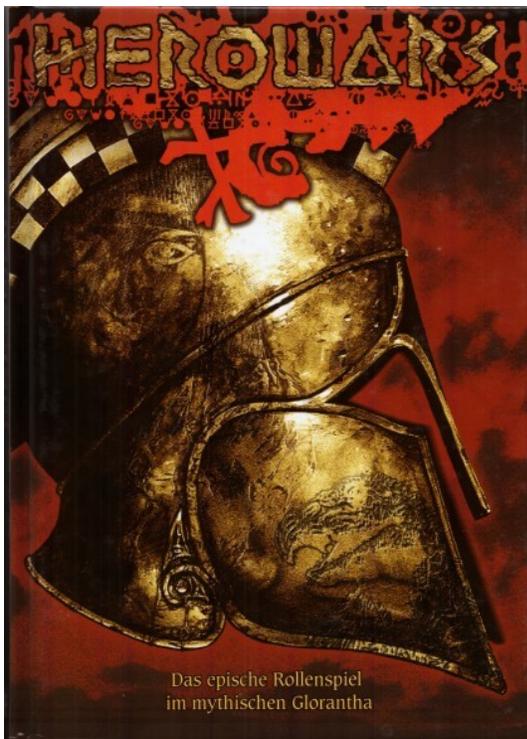
listing of Gods and cult requirements as well as spirit traditions and sorcery skills. ***This is the best version of RuneQuest and with the strongest integration with Glorantha.*** Alas, it was stillborn, as one of the main authors was subject to a highly publicised criminal case, which was eventually dismissed.

Nephilim (1992) First published in French this is a game of spiritual possession of humans over multiple lives which eventually metamorphose. Includes a "Ka" characteristic (soul), and variation in effectiveness of spells based on astrological status.

The Complete Griselda (1993) Oliver Dickson's classic short stories graced the pages of 'White Dwarf' and 'Tales of the Reading Moon' through the 80s and 90s respectively, presenting life in Pavis and the Big Rubble (certainly a child of those products) in a Chanderlesque style from the viewpoint of a petty operative swimming in the midst of some very tough sharks. Republished in 2001 with additional material.

Elric! (1993) A thorough revision of Stormbringer with more components to the BRP engine added. Largely compatible with *Stormbringer 5th edition (2001)*. Notable for characters starting at a powerful level (c70% plus in skills) and fast combat resolution with major wounds.

King of Dragon Pass (1999) Turn-based strategy computer game which was notable for its lack of action graphics concentrating instead on the mechanics of the strategy and the exposition of the mythology and has ended up with a small but very devoted following, far surpassing the typical lifespan of a computer game. The way it dealt with heroquests makes it a precursor to Hero Wars.



Where will you be when the hammer falls and the skies grow dark? Where will you be when the ancestors howl for aid, and the living look for leaders? Where will you be when the Hero Wars begin?

Hero Wars (2000, 2003). Second edition published in 2003 as *HeroQuest*. Highly innovative narrativist roleplaying system set in the "the end of the world [Glorantha] as we know it". Narrative or list method of designing a character, keywords for occupation, culture and magic. Free method for determining ability names - everything is an ability with the same rating method. Same resolution method for all conflicts across the same. Resolution method scales with mastery levels, with each acting as a critical level of improvement. Hero Points as the currency of improvement and to modify conflict events. Simple and extended contests both available, the latter for dramatically important parts of the narrative which operate on a bidding system of Action Points. Basic magic, available to everyone, supplemented by Theistic Magic, Sorcerous Magic, Animist Magic, and (in first edition) Mystical Magic. Notably combat skills are primarily based on styles rather than individual weapons.

Major supplements include: *Glorantha Visions (2000)*, various myths and stories.; *Glorantha: Introduction to the Hero Wars (2000)*, an extensive survey of the cultures of Glorantha, concentrating on Genertala, but also including chapters on the oceans, the eastern isles, Pamaltela, and the edges of the world. *Anaxial's Roster (2000)*, one-hundred and fifty entries for over three hundred creatures across Glorantha and the *Imperial Lunar Handbook Volumes I (2003) and II (2008)*, outlining the culture and religion of the Lunars.

Notable Change: In the Hero Wars supplements consistent reference is made to the rise of the Seshnegi, and the union of a powerful king and a powerful cleric defeating “reluctant barons, rebellious provinces and independent city states”, whereas in Genertala, “the Kingdom of Seshnela is to be invaded by armies from Safelster, Nolos and Arolanit. It will probably be conquered, divided and plundered”.

Mongoose RuneQuest (2006, 2010) Standard BRP-derived characteristics determined largely on 4d6, drop lowest (and old AD&D option). Combat Actions based on DEX rather than Strike Ranks. Skills separated into Basic skills and Advanced skills, characteristics determining base chance. Separate cultures and professions, the former a merged product between RQII and III. All tests based on skill rolls; no characteristic skill rolls or resistance rolls. Attack and parry skills merged. Magic systems are Rune Magic (former Spirit Magic), Divine Magic and Sorcery. Introduction of narrativist Hero Points and Legendary Abilities. Tie to Glorantha is fairly modest in the rulebook although strongly supported in supplements based around the second age. Most important include: *Glorantha: The Second Age (2006)*, the range of species books (*Elfs 2007, DragonNewts 2007, Trolls (again) 2007, Ducks 2008, Dwarfs 2009*) .

Basic RolePlaying (2008) A thin-glue that combines nearly all the rules for various BRP-derived supplements into a single book with plenty of optional rules to pick and choose (e.g., EDU as an optional characteristic). Includes various powers such as mutations (*Hawkmoon*), magic (*Worlds of Wonder*), Psychic Powers (*ElfQuest*), Socrery (*Stormbringer*), Super Powers (*Superworld*), Combat Actions based on DEX, personality traits, percentile characteristic, resistance and skill rolls. Four historical periods; primitive, historical, modern, futuristic.

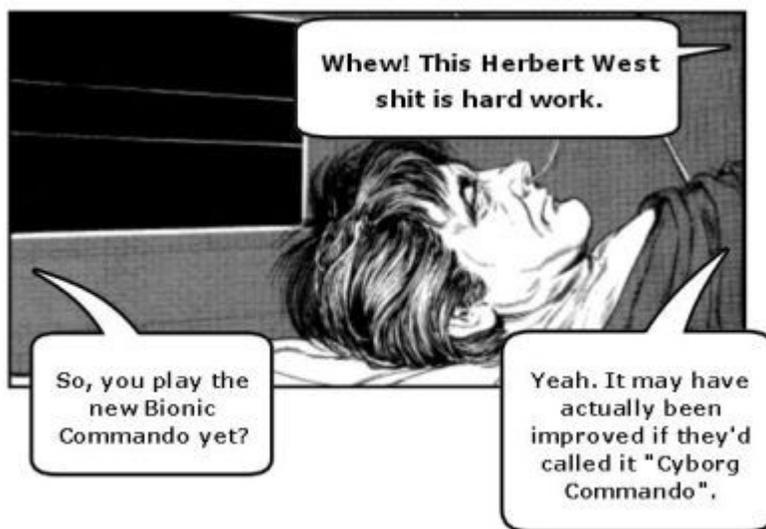
Fire & Sword (2007) Original RuneQuest author Ray Turney's RPG. Characteristics are BRP-derived. Skill rolls are roll-under, d10 easy, d20 normal, d30 heroic.

HeroQuest (2009) The new edition of Hero Wars/HeroQuest gives up any direct relationship on simulating a reality as its core (except in a *post-hoc ergo propter hoc* fashion), but rather concentrates first and foremost on the narrative flow. Whilst supplements suggest otherwise the core rules are independent of Glorantha, taking a generic approach. Extended contests are broken up into a series of simple costs with a target of resolution points.

WordPlay (2009) Highly derived from Hero Wars with abilities rated in a number of d6s. Failure in conflicts reflected in damage to either Mental, Physical or Social group of abilities. See designer's notes in this issue of RPG Review.

OpenQuest (2009) Core BRP characteristics, roll-under skills, base chance determined from characteristics, criticals on 10% or less of total skill chance, includes resilience and persistence skills, Battle Magic and Sorcery. A combination of *Mongoose RuneQuest* and *RuneQuest II*.

SPQR (pending) A project that has been in the pending stage for *many years* now, Steve Perrin Quest Rules simplifies the BRP engine by removing the resistance table, strike ranks etc, and merges many of the ideas from *Champions* and the Hero System (Steve co-authored *Robot Warriors*) with point-buy characteristics, advantages and disadvantages etc.



RUNEQUEST RULESQUEST

by Lev Lafayette, Peter Maranci, Tom Cantine, Wayne Shaw, Alan Richards, Gary Sturgess, Steve Lieb, Sven Lugar, Robert Hoffman, Bjorn Stolen, Phil Hibbs, Lance Dyas, Steve Perrin

Being A Compilation of alternative rules suggested on the RuneQuest rules mailing list.

http://rpgreview.net/mailman/listinfo/runequest_rpgreview.net

Runes from Peter Maranci's <http://runequest.org> site



Divine Intervention in RuneQuest

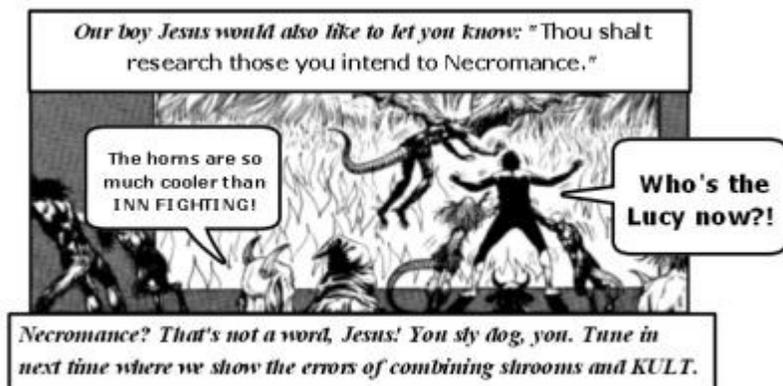
RuneQuest I & II & III

In RuneQuest I a Rune Priest could call for Divine Intervention with a 10% chance per point of permanent POW previous expended and allocated to the spell at the time of casting. Rune Lords call for Divine Intervention by rolling a table instead, losing between 0 and 10 points of POW. It can be used to raise one adventurer from the dead, or teleport a dozen out of trouble. Divine Intervention can only be used to help the caster, not directly harm anyone else as that would put the Gods in direct conflict of what is a proxy war using humans etc. In RuneQuest II the mechanics are largely the same. The main difference, at least from what I can see, is an Initiate could also attempt Divine Intervention once a week by rolling under their POW on d100, losing that many POW points if successful. It is also clarified that Intervention cannot be used to substitute training and experience and that it can be used to enchant iron or Rune metals. Bound by time, it cannot be used to foretell the future or change the past.

In RuneQuest III it is specified that Intervention is restricted to the God's normal abilities (and bound by Time), an Initiate or Priest may roll D100 and attempt roll below their POW. If they succeed the Intervention occurs and they lose a number of POW points equal to their dice roll. It cannot be used against worshippers of the same God. Characteristics can be raised by 1 point, within species and other limits. Gods are unable to help non-worshippers, cannot create new spells etc, as per previous editions.

RuneQuest: AiG

In RuneQuest Adventures in Glorantha, an initiate, acolyte, priest or lord could call for Divine



Intervention. The situation has to be desperate. If a roll equal or less than the character's POW is successful, then the Intervention occurs with the character losing a number of points of POW equal to the roll. A Rune lord rolls 1d10 instead. There are no multiple calls; either the God responds the first time or not at all. Divine effects will concur with the powers of the God. As a rule of thumb, an initiate or acolyte gains access to a number of points of divine magic equal to twice the POW expended in the call for divine intervention, or twice the number of points of divine magic he or she knows, whichever is greater. A priest or Rune Lord gains access to a number of points of divine magic equal to thrice the POW expended or thrice the number of points of divine magic he or she knows, whichever is greater. Worshippers can choose to stack such spells to affect any initiates (or higher ranking worshippers) of the god within range with a single casting.

For example, a Humakti could use 5 points of divine intervention granted divine magic to cast a Truesword not only upon her sword, but also on the swords of the four other Humakti initiates in her party, all as a single spell. Further if the worshipper is unconscious or dead when he or she calls for divine intervention, he or she can continue to cast spells granted by divine intervention until the points run out. They cannot cast any other spells while unconscious or dead. A dead worshipper may attempt to resurrect themselves (through the use of the Resurrection spell) after they have healed the wounds that caused their death (through the use of Heal, Heal Wound or Heal Body spells). Due to the Great Compromise, gods will not directly attack mortals. Divine intervention cannot be used against worshippers of the same god, for a god will not act against himself or herself. Gods are unlikely to help non-worshippers. Divine intervention cannot transport an individual into an enemy stronghold or temple where the enemy's power is greatest, but it could be used to escape from such a site.

Mongoose RQ

In Mongoose RuneQuest Divine Intervention may be called by Acolytes, Rune Priests and Rune Lords once per month. Roll D100 and attempt to roll below POW; if successful the miracle occurs, but that amount of POW is lost. Some same powers of a Divine Intervention includes with the casting of any cult spell of any magnitude., allowing a cult spell to affect all worshippers within line of sight., bringing a character back from the dead. Divine Intervention cannot be used to directly harm or slay mortal creatures. It can allow any cult spell to be cast with no limit on magic points or magnitude, it can affect any worshipper within the caster's line of sight, and allow for various 'divine effects' (e.g., temporary double STR, change weather etc).

An Alternative

I don't like the randomness; your RuneQuest may vary. Rather, I would prefer that the character sacrifices an amount of POW in advance for the Divine Intervention. This may be done by an Initiate or Priest. If a character loses either status, the POW dedicated remains dedicated.

e.g., Red Mouse is an initiate of Zola Fel and sacrifices 5 points of POW to Divine Intervention. These five points cannot count towards the ten necessary to become a Rune Priest. His own bearing and confidence in himself is sublimated towards that of the mighty river whose valleys and brooks he travels around. To him The River is life itself. Over the course of the seasons however he rescues a young shaman, Penliss, from a rather dangerous situation. She recognises his great spirit and teaches him the ways of the spirit world. He becomes a shaman himself, but does not lose the ability to call upon Zola Fel for assistance. The Gods remembers their debts.

When the Divine Intervention is called, the God will intervene automatically. The degree of intervention is dependent on the amount of POW allocated at the time of intervention. The God, rather than the character, will decide in what way they will intervene - after all, no character can tell a God, or their God, what to do. The God will usually be intervene

the form of casting Rune spells but other effects can be simulated at an equivalent cost as appropriate to the standard restrictions of the game world (e.g., in Glorantha no mind-reading, altering of time etc) and their domain of activity. Typically an initiate, or even former initiate, will receive twice the POW dedicated and a Rune Priest or Rune Lord three times the amount. As usual, the general rule of thumb of a Spirit Magic spell being the equivalent of half a Divine Magic applies. Stacking limits etc, do not apply to Gods.

e.g., Facing the Watchdog of Corflu and a not insubstantial number of Lunars led by the Coders, Red Mouse watches his friend Honest John fall to the ground due to a well-thrown spear; he immediately calls for Zola Fel's assistance and allocates 3 of his 5 Divine Intervention points; his former initiate status of the cult means that the God will dedicate 6 points of Rune magic power to his aid. Zola Fel hears the call but can do nothing to prevent Honest John's spirit from leaving the mundane plane, as he does not have access to this magic. However, seeing the degree of danger he does Summon an extremely large large Undine (4 point) which is placed under Red Mouse's control, grants Red Mouse and his ally Praxiletes the Spirit Magic spell River Eyes to aid any escape they require (1 point) and provides a Fireshield (1 points).

The alternative system significantly reduces the amount of power and control that PCs have in terms of access to Divine Intervention, however I feel it is closer to the intention (the Gods are limited to the abilities that they can grant to their worshippers, just not in scale). At the same time however it significantly increases the certainty of access to DI. Finally, it has the additional bonus of treating the Divine forces as actually Intervening by letting the GM roleplay their actions.



Character Improvement in RuneQuest

Spreadsheets this a while ago, a POW 2 character could get his POW up to 10 in anything from about 2 weeks to 2 months (lots of variables there). Faster, if you allow more than 1 POW gain roll per day. One method of preventing such "Tick frenzy" is to reduce the rate of gains to once per week. A character needs a week of "down-time" to do skill-ups and POW gain rolls. Two ticks can be awarded for "special experiences" and three for "critical experiences" (non-cumulative). All skills can be improved by experience.

What constitutes a "special" or "critical" experience? Normal day-to-day life only results in normal experience increases (such as the annual experience gain in RQ3). There is a degree of realism in this insofar there is a number of psychological studies that show that people do have a stronger memory of the high-stress and dangerous periods of their life. They become, as it were, embedded in the brain. Assuming their opponent's weapon doesn't. See: <http://huehueteotl.wordpress.com/2007/12/20/moments-of-horror-that-will-not-pass/>

Instead of rolling for experience gains based on successful use of a skill, the GM determines whether a particular successful use of a skill was sufficiently important or stressful. A Runelord fighting a young trollkin doesn't usually count - unless the trollkin scored a couple of very lucky blows and suddenly looked like it could win the fight. In almost all probability the trollkin fighting the Runelord would receive experience checks, if it decides - or has to - stand

and fight.

Experience gains can also be gained - under the same conditions - when they fumble a skill or an opponent succeeds against them in a special or critical manner. The experience check need not actually be the same skill; it could be the opposed skill. For example, if a character is criticised by a pikeman, odds are they had left themselves open in some critically vulnerable way. In that case, a skill tick can be awarded to parry or dodge. Later on, while reflecting on the experience while recuperating, the character recognises "If only I'd led with my LEFT foot, he wouldn't have caught me off-balance like that!"

Limiting skills by characteristic modifier

"Our own experiences and many a conversation with martial arts teachers and students confirm that, at a certain level, it is the man (not the weapon or system) that is important."

(p101 RuneQuest 2nd edition rules)

The proposal here is to put this excellent enunciation of theory into the practise of the RuneQuest rules. In all published editions of RuneQuest, and indeed in nearly all BRP games (a notable exception being Call of Cthulhu), is that characters can learn skills above 100%, however in first, second and third editions they are limited by an experience or category bonus; for example in RuneQuest 3rd edition the highest skill level a character can gain is 100% - category bonus if that bonus is a negative.

The reverse however does not apply. Characters are not limited to 100% + their category bonus when that score is positive. They can reach any skill level, given enough time, as long as they don't have a penalty - and sometimes that time and those skill levels can become very high indeed, such as the Vampire in Sun County who has Hide at 230% and Listen at 396%, not to mention the lich Solinthor who has Ceremony at 1625%.

RuneQuest is already a game that leans heavily towards favouring skills over natural abilities (unless one makes, ahem, regular use of the resistance table). I would like to suggest that skills levels over 100% are limited by the category bonus (or equivalent in other editions), "Sicut in altitudine et in profundis", if you will. Obviously this would apply to NPCs as well as PCs.

Not that this a pretty radical change, limiting skills to something around 110% for most characters, maybe 121% for an exceptional warrior. The speed of progression is already directly proportional to this bonus, someone with a 20% category bonus will progress twice as fast as someone with 10%. So, after the same amount of experience past 100%, the former will have 300% when the latter has 200% skill.

Aimed and Direction Shots

Both first and second edition had a "wait for up to four strike ranks, reduce chance to hit by 5% per strike rank, modify by number of strike ranks waited" along with "wait until SR 12, strike specific location at half value". The latter option also appeared in third edition, albeit with the SR reduced to 10. In the Mongoose edition a precise attack, targeting a specific location, can be carried out with a -40% penalty.



An alternative is the following

Precise Attack: Use one action (waiting for an opening) or 4 SR (RQI-III) and attack at -40% on a specific location.

Leg Attack: Location on 1d8, -20% to hit.

Lower Body Attack: Location on 1d10, -10% to hit

Body Attack: Location on 1d10+10, -10% to hit.

Upper Body Attack: Location on 1d8+12, -20% to hit.

Head Attack: Location on 1d12+8, -30% to hit.

On a related note, allow characters to sacrifice skill for time; allow an attacker to be one strike rank quicker at a reduction of 10% to their chance to hit. I'd suggest that the skill cost for each additional strike rank reduction should be double the previous cost, i.e. -10% for the first SR, -20% for the second, -40% for the third, etc. - with a minimum limit of 1 SR. The skill reduction would apply to all attacks made that round, so if the combatant took a big reduction and made a fast attack and then a second attack (or more), those later attacks - even though not hastened - would still be made at a penalty. In Mongoose's RQ, you would reverse the modifier of course, so that for every +1 SR you gain you'd reduce the chance to hit by 5% (different scaling, SR is average of INT + DEX + d10 initiative roll)



On The Dangers of Hazia Addiction

(A rebuild of the rules in 'Sun County' Chaosium/Avalon Hill, 1993, p9)

A Medical Report by Jalmara Yelmsfoot, White Woman, High Healer of Chalana Arroy Temple, Sun Dome to the Most Bright Ruler of Sun County, Light Son, Count Solonthos Ironpike.

Concerning The Dangers of Hazia

My dear Count,

In the name of the most kind and peaceful, Chalana Arroy.

It has come to my increased attention that the usage of the euphoric herb, hazia, is increasing among members of the population. I wish to alert you to the dangers of this narcotic and the serious danger it represents to the people of your land.

Hazia, also known as "dummy" grows naturally in the Sun County region and indeed throughout all of the Prax grasslands as a brown-leaved, short, flowering and somewhat oily plant. It is unusually sturdy, requiring only minimal fertility of soil and rainfall. Indeed, it is known to be particularly useful as a preventative against soil erosion.

I have discussed the matter with Hector, your librarian. He believes that the plant has embodied some of the spirit of the land, in a most literal sense. When consumed, either through eating (such is the habit of the Dark Men) or dried and smoked, which is more common, the effect on the user is a period of euphoria, which renders the user immune to pain, and a shorter period of Discorporation, as per the ability of the shaman of this land. Such Power would indeed be useful if it were not for the most damaging side effects that come with this drug.

During the period of Discorporation, the user's body is completely at the mercy to anything in the mundane world. When smoked, this effect varies in minutes according to the potency of the drug and the feeling of euphoria lasts for five times that period. During the period of euphoria the user's movements are sluggish, to say the least.

Worse still is the after-effects. The drug is seriously addictive. I have known men to succumb to its power after only a single dose; after all, it removes all pain during the period of euphoria and provides a fleeting vision of the world of spirits. To many this must seem quite appealing, however it is incredibly dangerous to one's agility and health. I have seen grown men die within a week of having only taken a modest quantity of the drug, their nervous system and heart reduced to nothing.

Most disconcerting however, it has come to my attention that many mercenary-types are taking the drug whilst engaging in missions against chaotic and darkness entities in the hope that scouting during the period of discorporation.

I understand that you have extremely harsh penalties for producers and traffickers of this drug, including the death penalty. I urge leniency; treat this as a medical problem rather than a criminal activity. Many of those who engage in production and distribution only do so because of their own poverty. A dose of hazia which sells for 5 guilders can be produced for only 1 guilder. However an addict will typically use 5 guilders worth a day. This of course, reduces most farmers to abject poverty and causes serious damage to the wealth of even the most well-off farmers.

Yours, in the name of Yelm and the Son of the Sun God, Yelmalio etc,

Jalamara

RuneQuest (3rd edition) rules

The Potency of Hazia is from 1-10, typically 5 for a SIZ 5-15 person - adjust as required. The street price is equal to the potency in silver. Cost of production - with two crops per annum being the norm - is 1 silver per 5 POT. Smoked hazia provides discorporation for a number of minutes times the potency and euphoria for a number of full turns times the potency. Euphoria means the character is immune to the effects of pain, including fatigue and being reduced to minus hit points in non-critical regions. Eaten hazia provides discorporation for a number of full turns, but with a range of only 1m. The period of euphoria is measured in hours. During discorporation DEX is reduced to 0. During euphoria, DEX is reduced by 10.

Roll each time hazia is taken, POT vs CON. If the roll is failed the character is addicted. They may be addicted multiple times; apply all results with an addiction value equal to the POT of the consumed drug. Each day they do not receive a dose of hazia equal to their addiction value the character will lose a point of DEX and CON. A character who is addicted and is offered hazia must roll POW vs their Addiction Value to refuse the offer.



Warding (and Create Market)

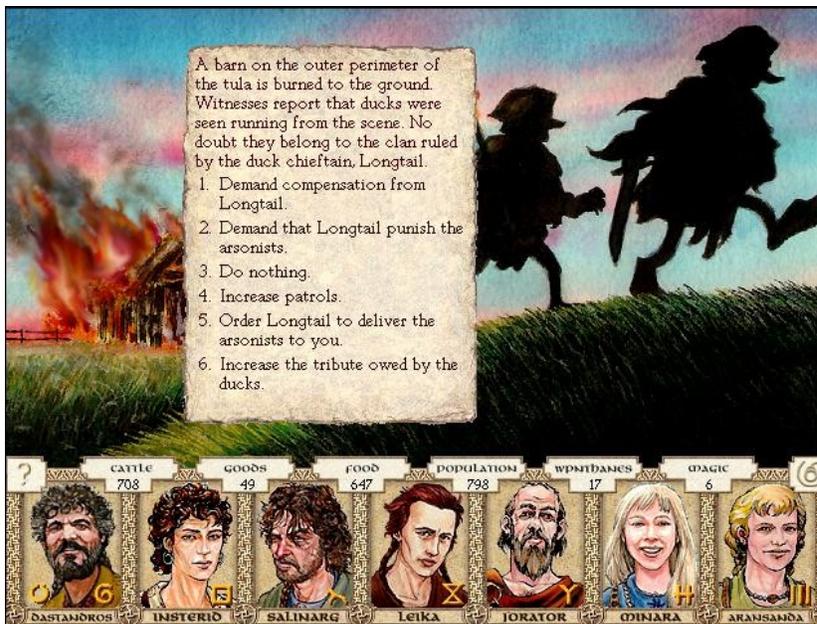
The Warding (and Create Market) spell as written (RuneQuest 1st, 2nd and 3rd editions and Mongoose RQ) is perhaps a little too powerful. In RQ 1st and 2nd editions it provides Countermagic and Disruption between the four props and is permanent. In RQ 3rd edition it consists of Countermagic, Spirit Resistance 2 (as per the sorcery spell) and, for all intents and purposes, Disruption again. It is created through a ritual enchantment and is listed as "conditionally reusable". Most have played that to mean permanent in the sense that was applied in earlier editions.

However usually a divine spell matrix has to be returned to a temple and a worship service has to be conducted to recharge the item. Now, there's no time listed for how long this takes, but I would assume it is a minimum of one hour as it is a Ceremony ritual.

Instead Warding is a reusable Divine Spell Matrix. Within a temple, it will be recharged automatically by a God (after all, it's a temple - they don't want them to be closed down!). Outside of a temple however, it's a bit of a one-shot item, until it can be re-enchanted by a Worship (deity) ceremony. For all intents and purposes however, when an Issaries Priest casts Create Market they have also temporarily established a local place of worship, like a combination of Warding and Sanctify.

Temple Wards therefore need a ceremony. This would also be how temples get desanctified. The Wards and other enchantments are broken, and there is no one around to resanctify them. Why should the god worry about maintaining

wards and such around an area where he no longer has worshippers?



Mongoose RuneQuest which allows wards to operate in different shapes; rather than just the four pegs protecting a square, three pegs would protect a triangle and two would protect a line. This should be used in other editions of the game.

Temples with Warding could serve as the beginnings of monotheist/sorcery cults. After all, if there are Spirit Cults which bridge the transition between spirit magic and divine magic, and Warding includes a sorcery spell, then it seems fair that there are also monasteries which bridge the gap between divine magic and

sorcery.

A Perception Characteristic

The use of APPEARance or CHARisma in BRP-derived games has been subject to some debate. Of marginal utility in a system sense, much of the material that it often covers (force of personality etc) is covered by POW and those parts that are not are very subjective in any case. Missing however is a very strong natural attribute which accounts for sensory input – Perception (PER).

Changing a core characteristic is usually a big deal in an RPG. In this case however, removing Appearance and replacing it with Perception has proven to be a relatively painless process (for ease of language it can still be called "Appearance" - how well things 'appear' to the character!).

In RuneQuest 3, APP is a obviously primary characteristic for Perception skills (along with INT as a primary and POW as a secondary). APP is also a secondary communication skill (INT is Primary, and POW is secondary as well). In Mongoose RuneQuest it can act as a modifier to the Perception skill (APP+INT). Different creatures would have varying basic starting levels.

Actions and Strike Ranks

With a method derived from Mongoose RuneQuest, the number of Actions per melee round is 1 action up to DEX 7 points of DEX, 2 actions up to 14, 3 up to 21 and so forth. Use POW for pure spirit creatures or spirit combat. An action can include things like parrying, dodging, attacking, drawing a weapon, a full move etc. Characters act in order of strike rank (after their statement of intent) which is calculated from DEX+SIZ+weapon size (+10 for long weapons, +5 for medium weapons, +0 for short weapons) for melee, DEX*3 for missile weapons, POW*3 for spells and DEX+SIZ+INT for non-engaged characters.

Fumbles, Criticals, Specials etc.

Criticals successes are based on 1/10th of a character's skill chance (this is now used in BRP and Mongoose RQ); there are no 'special' hits. Fumbles are based on 1/10th of a character's failure chance. A character with a 60% will achieve a critical result on a roll of 6% or less and a fumble on 97% or more. A critical is always an especially good result and a fumble is always an exceptionally bad result, the precise nature will depend on the skill in question. A critical with a impaling weapon will, for example, cause double damage (once armour is subtracted) from a normal roll, representing the puncturing of vital organs and the like. A critical with a crushing weapon will do double effective damage for purposes of calculating knockback/knockdown, and a slashing weapon will cause a bleeding wound of 1/10th of the damage done each full turn until bound etc. A spirit magic spell that criticals will require none of the caster's personal magic points, drawing magic directly from the surroundings; and so forth.

Falling and Damage Transfers

There were no rules for falling damage in RQI. In RQII There is no damage for falls less than 1m, 1d6 for 1.1m to 3.0m, 2d6 for 3.1 to 6.0m, 3d6 for 6.1 to 9.0m, 4d6 for 9.1 to 12.0m etc. Momentum can also increase damage. Armour protects in some instances, Protection and Shield etc always does. Normal limits on damage per location does not apply. Damage is applied all to one location; a Jumping roll can determine what this is. In RQIII the character takes 1d6 to a random hit location for every 3 metres. May be adjusted for velocity, hardness etc. Damage can surpass normal maxima. If SIZ <5 then 1d6 less damage, for every 20 points >20 then add +1d6. Armour may protect, depending on

GM. Spells will always protect. In Mongoose RuneQuest there is no damage for 1m or less, 1d6 to a random location for 2m to 5m, 1d6 to two random locations for 6m to 10m, 1d6 to three random locations for 10m to 15m, 1d6 to four locations for 15m to 20m, and +1d6 for every 5m after that. SIZ 8-9 is considered 1m less, SIZ 6-7 as 3m less, SIZ 4-5 as 5m, SIZ 2-3 as 8m less and SIZ 1 or less as 10m less. An Acrobatics test can reduce effective distance by 2m.

All these rules - even the Mongoose ones, which are the most realistic - radically underestimate the influence of size and velocity on damage. As J.B.S. Haldane put it in his classic essay, 'On Being the Right Size' "You can drop a mouse down a thousand-yard mine shaft; and, on arriving on the bottom, it gets a slight shock and walks away.... A rat is killed, a man broken, a horse splashes." (<http://irl.cs.ucla.edu/papers/right-size.html>). As another comparison, the combination of small size, light bone structure, and thick fur decreases the terminal velocity of a cat. A falling cat's terminal velocity is 100 km/h (60mph) whereas that of a falling man in a free-fall position is 210 km/h (130mph).

A simple rule, but with the additional mathematical complexity of division and multiplication, is 1d6 damage per 3 meters or part thereof multiplied by the SIZ characteristic divided by 10. So a character SIZ 15 will take 50% more damage than normal, a character SIZ 5 will take 50% less. A housecat, SIZ 1, will take 10% damage, although they do have less hit points of course.

See the following essay for discussions of size, mass and related matters: <http://fathom.lib.uchicago.edu/2/21701757/>

Also include damage transfers at half-value. If a character is completely out of hit points in your arm (i.e., more than double), for example, half the excess value transfers to the chest. So a character falling their arm could also mean a broken collarbone etc.

Armour Damage

Gradual weapon disintegration is well established in RuneQuest (through parrying etc), but is not applied to armour. Including it is quite realistic and provides a strong impetus for Craft (Armour) skills. The basic rule is a modification of the standard weapon damage rules; if the AP is exceeded, it takes 1 AP off until repaired. There were various debates on the merits of this over the years and the following is considered playtested and workable.

AP is reduced by 1 if one of three conditions are met:

- 1) a natural (01) is rolled on the percentile die (Always a critical but not all criticals)
- 2) if a Special is rolled that exceeds the value of AP+10 (AP+10 is my way of creating HP for Armor that puts it in range of shields) This tends to favor experienced fighters being more likely to damage armour as happens in real life.
- 3) a blow (damage) that exceeds the HP of the armour (AP+10)

All AP reductions are applied against physical (non-magical) Armour. Thus chainmail with a +2 armour spell on it could be reduced from its AP of 7 but would only lose its magical +2 protection once it had been reduced to an AP of 0 and thus be entirely destroyed.



THE FOURTH: A GLORANTHAN CHARACTER

by Michael Cole (with various suggestions from Lev Lafayette)

'The Fourth', as he became known, was born in northern Koromondol in the coastal lands of the Kingdom of Ignorance. Trolls have lived there since the Second Age and engage in trade with local fisherfolk. Being brought up in the standard mode of a Trollkin, he was not ever referred to be a proper name, rather the title "The Fourth From The Left". 'The Fourth' was sold as a servant to the carpenter headman of a local village at the onset of adulthood, at eight years of age. At this stage of his life he was already displaying some notable agility and feistiness.

RuneQuest I & II statistics, 1613 ST

STR 12 CON 15 SIZ 09 INT 12 POW 12 DEX 15 CHA 07

Hit Points 15 (Head 5, Arms 4, Chest 6, Abdomen 7, Legs 5)

Defense: 30% Armor: 1 point skin

Shortstaff 40%, Fist 30%, Kick 30%, Climb 50%, Jump 45%, Listen 35%, Spot Hidden 20%, Woodworking 20%

Detect Magic, Countermagic, Darkwall, Detect Enemies, Extinguish, Repair

During his time with the headman The Fourth constructed a pram of which he was particularly proud and started collecting trinkets from important moments of his life. On occasion he found that he could contact the spirit world by using these momentos as foci and the headman was particularly impressed by the trollkin's power and thus enrolled him into the local Temple of the Black Sun.

With magical ability and agility improving, The Fourth was sequestered into the army of Can Shu, exarch of the Kingdom where he was trained in a number of appropriate martial skills. Unfortunately inexperience got the better of him and he was captured by a Pentian raiding party where he was assigned to his specific captor, a bison rider and shaman called Tarkhan from The Wastes. Tarkhan recognised the spiritual prowess of the young Trollkin and trained him further in such ways. One a journey to the Tunnelled Hills however, The Fourth proved to still be a trollkin in nature, and when faced by powerful spirits, he escaped (or deserted, depending on your perspective) from Tarkhan's ownership. Fleeing westwards, he eventually settled in Dagori Inkanth and became a shaman among independent trollkin and was instrumental in famous Munchrooms Rebellion and leading a group of trollkin to settle in Sun County and establish their own version of the Black Sun cult.

RuneQuest III statistics, 1623 ST

STR 12 CON 15 SIZ 09 INT 15 POW 14 DEX 23 APP 12

Climb 75%, Dodge 125%, Jump 70%, Throw 90%, First Aid 60%, Listen 75%, Dark Scan 60%, Dark Search 60%, Fast Talk 45%, Natural Weapons 80%, Swordstaff 110%, Martial Arts 80%

Befuddle, Bladesharp II, Coordination II, Countermagic II, Darkwall, Detect Enemy, Extinguish, Glamour, Heal II, Glue, Heal III, Ironhand IV, Mindspeech III, Mobility III, Protection III, Slow, Spirit Screen II, Vigor. Divination (Black Sun), Sanctify (Black Sun)

Whilst supporting the Great Trollkin Rebellion, The Fourth became 'infected' with Nysalor riddles and became Illuminated from a party member who will remain nameless. When Mekdoru, a great warrior Dark Troll and holder of one of Talor's weapons, was sent from the Blue Moon Plateau to kill the trollkin, The Fourth defeated him. In Mekdoru's words:

I was a great warrior and was asked by those of Shadow's Dance to send forces from the Blue Moon Plateau to put down the Trollkin rebellion. Eventually he tracked down the leader of the rebellion and accepted a challenge to meet

him in single combat. I had no fear, for I carried an artifact, the Darksword, a weapon unlike any other, which could cut through any armour, destroy any shield, break any that sought to parry and slay all those it struck.

I sought out the leader of the rebellion, a funny, pathetic little Trollkin who wore his peasant's hat backwards and had a string of fish around his neck. His only discernable weapon was a short stick. The Troll approached the little kin and mocked him and told him the powers of the Greatsword. The Trollkin looked at him calmly and said "In ten seconds you will be begging for your life"

I roared with laughter and asked "And why would I do that? What could you, mutated stunted little creature, possible do to reduce me to such a status. I should slay you now and end this rebellion! How can you possibly defeat me in combat?"

The Trollkin smiled. "I am sitting on dry solid land. You are standing on quicksand".

(Apologies to Roger Zelazny)

And so it was that the Troll Merkodu surrendered to the Trollkin and became his servant. The Fourth brought his fellows here and now the Mekdoru serves the trollkin.

HeroQuest statistics, 1630 ST

Keywords: Kralorela (Homeland) 13, Pent (Homeland) 13, Prax (Homeland) 13, Blue Moon Plateau (Homeland) 13, Value Trollkin (Occupation) 13, Martial Scout (Occupation) (13), Shaman (Occupation) 17, Waha Tradition (Magic) 5W, Black Sun Theism 13

Skills: Climb 2W, Dodge 10W, Jump 2W, Throw 10W, First Aid 5W, Listen 5W, Dark Scan 5W, Dark Search 5W, Fast Talk 5W, Natural Weapons 10W, Martial Arts 10W, Swordstaff 5W2, Martial Arts 5W, Orate 18, Lead Rebellion 5W, Nysalor Riddles 5W

Relationships: Duty to Blue Moon Trollkin 5W

Personality: Grin Smugly 17, Sit Peacefully 17, Wait Patiently 3W, Cryptic Speaking 5W

Equipment: Pram of Trinkets and Foci 10W

Note the multiple keywords that The Fourth has in the HeroQuest statistics. Both the quantity and the lower-than-usual rating levels indicates his varied life.

The Fourth speaks with a strong accent, with a object-subject-verb format, rather like the famous Star Wars character, Yoda. As a old follower of the Dark Sun he wears an eastern peasant hat (backwards) and invariably has dried fish on his person.

THE NAMELESS MAN: A RIDDLE

by Laurent Aillet with Nic Hughes and Sam Elliot

The Nameless Man is rumoured to be responsible in Fronela for good and bad deeds. Nobody knows for certain who he is, and he has been cited many times since the beginning of Time itself. A disparate group of adventurers were found by him in Dilis Swamp as the Nameless One possessed one of their number. Faced with the cryptic question 'Who Am I?' from this incredibly powerful spirit, the group discussed the options leaving it to a Hrestoli knight to give an answer that he was not entirely comfortable with... We enter the scene as Icthya with the arrival of the Nameless Man and jump to just after Icthya, an Aldyrami from Erontree, reminds the knight, Azhur Sinnersbane, that there is a common bond between them..

Suddenly, a mighty gust of wind struck the swampland, sending pond-scum flying and blinding all those present with its muck. As the fellowship cleared away their eyes, the Knight El Grim, stood hovering above the pond's surface, his eyes rolled back in his head. A dull grey aura surrounded his body, and the corpus spoke with an elderly but strong voice.

"I have donated a gift to all of you everything you know. This gift can fly, this gift can crawl, it is saved, it is wasted, yet still it eats all."

"When the Kingdoms of Men fight among themselves, the Kingdom of War will seek peace as Lord Death on a Horse will bring the greatest of all evils to the land. So great that it will may even slay me. The Beastmen shall aise again and the forests shall grow."

"You think the three weapons of Talor are a greatsword, an axe and a flail? I have come to tell you that they are not what you think they are."

"Bearer of the banner, you have one chance. Confer among yourselves, and name me correctly I shall tell you of their secret of the weapons of Talor for then I shall know that you are worthy to protect mankind - for I *am* a man."

[Conversation follows]

Her voice still weak, she clutches at a charm to lend herself breath, "Aalmon has it right," she says, "He has remembered the name of the one we simply call Man. You humans have forgotten his name so you think he has none. Not understanding him, you call him a criminal. I have spoken with Moment Yearning," she says, referring to her spirit friend, "who remembers the Green Age. The Firstborn Man it is, and he is your ancestor so you should accord him the respect due him."

Quivering to the idea of having a common ancestor with the soulless plant-thing that was speaking to him, but fearing at most the return of Gbaji, Azhur considered all the answers of his companions.

The Bishop Donalari guessed that the mentioned gift was Time and this sounded right to Azhur's intuition. This meant that the Nameless One was giving Time to all of them Time sounded like mortality and wrongness to Azhur's Malkioni belief.

The dwarf Kalen confirmed that the Nameless One wasn't a constructed but created man, perhaps related to the great mystery of the origins of life

Finally the Nameless One was clearly asking for being protected as a part of mankind

In any case, the Nameless One was thinking being a close part of all them what was the common point to all man-rune related beings here in the Dilis swamp, sent by the immortal Brithini of Sog city?

For Aalmon and Ichya, the Nameless One was an apparition tied to the pagan legends of Grand Father Mortal, something that Azhur wasn't familiar with but an answer was asked.

Azhur cleared up his throat, in the past he had to be brave in front of many enemy swords at once, but never he faced such a difficult fight.

"I think", he began slowly. "I think that you are", his voice grew a little louder, "the deep savage impulse that lives in all men, a common trait that unite us in time and mortality."

Reluctantly, the knight looked at Sir El Grim's face trying to see where was hiding the mysterious and criminal spirit:

"Pagans will name you "Grand Father Mortal" as a worshipped symbol of this common fragility, but the Malkioni believers and the dwarves will name you 'Sin' and 'Breach', because it is acting against the law of the Universe that brings us to Death. Hrestol's teachings tell us that we can be saved and brought to Joy even as sinners, so we can enjoy life even at the cost of making errors against the rules of Malkion in this way, Time can be a pleasure, a gift given by Sin."

With the finger, Azhur pointed the possessed knight of the Sparrow and added :

'In fact and obviously now, you are him!', then he showed the rest of the fellowship, "but you are also them!", and finally he pointed on his own chest, "and of course, you are me! By protecting you, Nameless One, we will protect us and all mankind!"

"And as the elf suggests and as Hrestol taught us, I have to respect you as deep inner part of man, a creation of the Invisible God, because in fact you are Man"

While saying this last words, Azhur just realized that he was just paraphrasing the last sentence of the Nameless One : "for I *am* a man". Could have the spirit given the solution within the riddle? This notion was a shock to the ex-knight and not-yet wizard's apprentice.

...

Azhur "Sinnersbane" pledging to protect "Sin"... Ah ah ah ! By answering riddles, you finish illuminated... and by fighting Gabji, you finish krjalki yourself !

The Nameless man is claiming to be Grandfather Mortal/Wild Man/Old Man but we have no idea how that fits in with Western mythology. It seems to me that if he was the first born then he predates Malkion and then appears to have chosen *not* to follow the laws of Malkion. After all you only died back in those days if you did not follow the laws of Malkion so the choice itself must have been in contravention of the laws. I don't think it could have been a sin as they were all a bunch of atheists anyway.

Malkion founded and then reformed Malkionism, even in the Western mind there must be some concept of people before he wrote down his laws and Grandfather Mortal would come from that time. Opinion on this might be split amongst churches, its probably more fun if the Rokari, Hrestoli and Brithini (not to mention the Syanoran and Arrolian wierdos) have very different views on the matter. Some might regard him similarly to the medieval Christian idea of "righteous pagan" for those who predated the founding of the church, others might regard him as a Cain-like figure.

TUNNELQUEST HOUSE RULES

by Karl Brown

Tunnel Quest is a small simple yet powerful rpg by Mike Hill designed to be played by non-gamers like curious relatives around Christmas time. I have added to pages of rules designed to be slipped into the booklet that add enough diversity of PC to please veteran gamers too.

Tunnel Quest is available free at: <http://www.1km1kt.net/rpg/tunnel-quest>

House Rules

These house rules add variety without adding complexity. Characters and players not using these rules can also play alongside players who do use them because these rules add no extra power. These rules give veteran roleplayers more creative freedom for generating satisfying characters. The aim is to produce a game for veterans and newcomers. Insert between pages 4-5. Errata: Haldric (p7) should have only +1 to attack rolls.

Comment: Since most monsters have only 3 hits PCs are obviously heroes. Important NPCs could be created in full like PCs rather than simply having a Foe Rating. The NPC never rolls in opposition to the PCs, instead set difficulties for PCs as 7+NPC's level (if appropriate)+ NPC's skill + plus any modifiers such as high quality weapons, fog etc. Use canon magic rules to guide NPC spells and race abilities.

Concept

Concept is a way of building variety into the Callings without inventing new rules. The player chooses a one word Concept and writes this on his character sheet next to his Calling. When adjudicating whether the character can add his level to a roll the referee should judge this based on the Concept not the Calling (a character without a concept still uses his Calling). This is the only effect Concepts ever have. Yuon the barbarian remains a good example. The Concept should fit with the Calling. Some ideas are given below.

Mage: wizard, necromancer, mystic, scholar Priest: cultist, druid, cleric, friar Rogue: thief, bard, 'adventurer', investigator Warrior: knight, soldier, barbarian, archer Jack-of-all-trades: vagabond, Renaissance man, day-labourer, 'adventurer'

Note how adventurer appears for both rogues and jack-of-all-trades. There are many other Concepts that could fit more than one Calling. A sailor could easily be a rogue or a warrior, a noble Concept fits every Calling except perhaps priest and mage.

Race

Your race is your fantasy species. For example Aelfstan is a Warrior Archer Elf. Race is also a new statistic. If you have any points in Race draw a new oval for Race to the left of Hits. Starting character can remove points from Hits

and/or Skills at creation and place them into Race. Humans always have a Race statistic of zero, it never rises. Very human-like races, such as dwarves and elves, can also begin with zero Race but can raise it with experience.

Aelfstan the elf warrior removes one skill and two hits and places them into Race. His final stats are Race 3, Hits 6, Skills 1, Magic 0.

Race uses the same rules as Magic but rather than colours use the race's abilities as a guide. A character is always considered to have a Focus when using Race. Note that the effects produced by Race may or may not actually be magical, the great endurance of dwarves is not magic. When adjudicating Race uses always compare them to what a normal human could do. This puts some power restrictions on the players' choices. Race points are replenished after a night's rest but not by restoration potions. Level is always added to the die roll.

Pursued by ogres Aelfstan wants to run across a tightrope spanning a chasm. He could make a roll on the Agile skill but the referee sets the Difficulty Number at 12. Aelfstan has no points in Agile so he calls on his Race. The referee considers the situation as if it was a spell. The effect is unlikely +2 and last a bit longer than an instant, plus 1 base is a cost of 3 Race. Aelfstan decides to call on his innate abilities. He is a first level character so he adds a total of +4 to his roll.

Some races or characters have abilities players will want to access 'at will'. This is not required but if desired, work out the cost for the ability to have a duration of one day and then pay this cost every morning. This is especially important for stranger races.

Cormac the 12 foot tall Firbolg wants to use his giant strength often. To perform feats beyond human capability (+3) for a Day (+3) has a cost of 7. If Cormac pays 7 points of Race every morning, as a second level warrior he can lift a horse, topple menhirs, lift portcullises, and the like with a +9 to these rolls whenever he wants to.

Some races are larger or smaller than humans. Very small races, under three foot tall, use small weapons (-2 to combat roll) at half cost. Large weapons look imposing but are treated as standard weapons or two handed weapons p7. Even larger weapons cost +1500 coins add +2 to the attack roll and cannot be made at high quality. Similarly, large armour is provides no extra protection, the armour may be thicker but the gaps are also larger. Except for weapons, scaled gear costs the same as human size gear, perhaps because of differences in the strength and quality of materials. Other disadvantages from being larger, smaller, or stranger are assumed to even out with the advantages or are handled by common sense. This is implicitly how the core Tunnel Quest rules handle most situations. Avoid altering difficulties except in extreme cases and never add new rules.

Some common races are given below. Most are human-like but two stranger races are given as examples of what the system could allow.

Elves Elves are fast, agile and graceful. They have an affinity to the wild animals and plants of the forests. Elves are enchanting people able to charm and influence others. They can use Race to see well in low light conditions but not in utter darkness. Elves age twice as slowly as humans until they reach 50 after this they stop aging and never die of old age.

Dwarves Dwarves are short and stocky, about 4½ feet tall. What they lack in agility and grace they make up for in endurance and tenacity. They are also known for their iron constitutions. Dwarves have a talent for mining, stonework and metal-crafts. They are known for working hard and playing hard. Dwarves can use their Race to magically see in the dark. Dwarves age and grow old about five times slower than humans.

Hobs Also called Halflings because they are about 3½ feet tall. Hobs are down-to-earth people with an affinity for domestic animals and cultivated plants. Their aptitudes lie in agriculture and homely crafts such as cooking, sewing, and carpentry. Hobs also have a talent for stealth and hiding. While they like to live comfortably when hobs are tested foes are surprised to find halflings have great willpower and iron constitutions. Hobs age at about the same rate as humans.

Gnomes Gnomes are the people of knowledge. They are small (two foot tall) and agile with quick wits and nimble fingers. Gnomes have aptitudes for mechanisms, fine crafts like jewellery, and scholarly pursuits. A gnome could use Race to pick a lock, or decipher ancient writing. Many gnomes become mages. Like hobs they can be stealthy and are expert hiders. They are also good at dodging and have keen senses. Gnomes grow and age ten times slower than humans.

Firbolg The firbolg (Fear-vulag) are an ancient race of fierce giant warriors. A firbolg looks like a muscular 11 foot tall ancient Celt. Players could look into the Celts who fought the Romans and the Irish sagas for inspiration. Firbolgs are noted for their great strength, fearlessness, and warrior honour. Firbolgs grow and age three times slower than humans. Firbolg weapons are often iron not steel and so are only equal to standard weapons. Steel firbolg weapons are +1 and two handed weapons are also +1 (cumulative) Cost is +500 coins if +1 or if two handed steel +1500 coins.

Optional race: Fairy Fairies have the same abilities as elves except they are also only six inches tall and can fly using butterfly-like wings. The ability to fly makes some referee's nervous as a fairy can circumvent many challenges, then again so can a mage. Flying is something a human cannot do (+3) so to have the endurance to fly for an hour (+2) the cost is 6. Most low level fairies flutter in short hops and need to roll to make it over obstacles.

Optional race: Drake A drake is a young dragon. Like crocodiles, young dragons are soon capable of hunting on their own and some seek independence from their parents as early as their fifteenth year, well before they are full size. Drakes look like perfect miniature versions of adult dragons without any baby features. Drakes can fly and breathe fire using Race. Assume a drake is 1 foot long for every hit and half this is neck and tail. Wingspan is twice this. Drakes get larger as they gain hits with experience. Dragons are quadrupeds and a drake's talons are only as dexterous as eagle claws so they cannot use weapons. A drake can either bite, claw, or tail slap in a combat turn. As unarmed attacks these use the brawling skill. Drakes with 1, 2 or 3 hits are small and suffer -2 with these natural weapons. Whichever single attack he chooses all are standard weapons once a drake has 4 or more hits. The armour value of a drake's scaly hide is included in the creature's hits. Dragons grow ever larger throughout life and never die of old age. A drake over 10 feet long is usually called a dragon.

Optional: Magic Items Magic items enable users to cast a specific spell without rolling. The item acts as a Focus for this spell. For single use items, like potions, the duration begins when the item is activated at no Magic cost. Permanent items, like swords, have durations but are reusable. Activating a permanent magic item costs the user as many Magic as the creation cost, one must be the Colour of the item's effect.

Use the usual spell rules to make magic items. An extra point of Change is needed for a permanent item, if the roll is successful this point is permanently lost. Cost to make is 100xMagic points coins for permanent items, or for temporary items 6xMagic points coins (only 20% of these costs are for hiring artisans). It takes Magic points weeks to make an item. Usually a rare component is needed that requires an adventure to obtain before the work can begin. Make the spell roll at the end of this time. If the roll fails the components are destroyed and points spent. Sale price is double this but magic items are rarely for sale.

Canon items: Restoration potion: requires 5 magic (1 Change). A healing potion requires 4 magic (1 Change) therefore costs 24 coins but sale price is reduced to 40 coins by oversupply to the market.

TORG: Roleplaying the Possibility Wars - A Retrospective

by Lev Lafayette

Torg: Roleplaying The Possibility Wars



Torg comes in a boxed set with three rulebooks, a newsletter, a set of 156 cards (plus blanks) and a mottled d20 die. The books consist of a hefty 144p Rulebook, a 48p saddle-stapled Adventure Book, and a 80p saddle-stapled World Book. Pages are layed out in three column justified serif font. The Rulebook has chapter-heading table of contents, as does the pamphlet newsletter, however there is no index. The artwork is professional in both technique and creativity with Alan Jude Somma's contributions being notable. The main Rulebook has a Player's and a GM's section, which does lead to some replication of concepts. The Infiniverse pamphlet provides dispatchs and rumours, new locations (Sherwood forest), letters and a response form. Torg encouraged players of the game to submit their own events and thus influence the metaplot of the campaign, as illustrated in additional Infiniverse campaign updates.

Torg is a multi-genre setting-bound RPG, apparently once a code-name in West End Games for "The Other Roleplaying Game". Contemporary (read late 1980s) earth is invaded by High Lords, bringing with them different cosmic realities, which take over parts of the planet as new realms. Parts of the United States and Canada fall under the domain of 'the Living Land', with dinosaurs and lizardmen. Egypt has been converted into a zone of pulp-era technology ruled by ancient magics, weird science and a Pharoah. The British Isles and Scandanavia has fallen under the cosmic rules of a fantasy realm. As an interesting contrast France is ruled by a combination of dark ages theology and high-tech robotics through the GodNet; the Cyberpapacy. Japan's change is relatively subtle – a more advanced form of corporate rule, espionage and high-technology. Finally, the region of Malaysia and Indonesia has become a horror realm with the additional oddity of Victorian English trapped within the realm. Outside of all this is 'core earth', where a semblance of normal life and technology continues.

The rulers of the realms are tied to an alien technology called a Darkness Device, which they eventually seek to merge with and gain an immortal state. They establish their cosm boundaries with fixed-point stalae which leads to a land undergoing a 'reality storm' as the old axioms conflict with the new. Each cosm has its own set of axioms, levels of development, in Spirit, Magic, Social and Technology. When a concept, skill or tool is transported from one axiom to another, there is a very good chance that it simply will not work. A character who has money from core Earth, for example, and ends up in the Living Land, will discover that they have quite forgotten what all those green pieces of paper are for (paper money, Social Level 12), and that concepts of nation-state, passports and corporations are quite foreign to them. As for that lump of metal, which they was used as a rifle (Tech Level 17), well, it could be used as an unbalanced club – not that it would fire bullets anymore, anyway. This scale is rather linear in values, rather unlike the semi-logarithmic scale that is used in values and measures for character actions.

Some 56p of the Worldbook is dedicated to region descriptions, beginning with the Still World, a slowing of the Earth's rotation by one of the High Lords as they attempted to harness energy. Each of the subsequent chapters provide

description of the various changed lands, beginning with the situation prior to the arrival of the Possibility Raiders, the process of the takeover and the current situation. Most of the regions are related to an existing cultural more or mythology, for example the prevalence of a Celto-German mythology in the fantasy realm of Aysle, the Pharoah of New Nile, the existence of espionage and corporate conflict in Nippon Tech, the establishment of a papal authority in Avignon and so forth. Sitting a little oddly with this is the horror realm of Orrrorsh, with romantic Victorian monsters (vampires, werewolves and the like). This is a little disappointing as it ignores the rather rich tradition of horror creatures in the mythology of the Malay archipelago that would have been very nicely suited to such an environment. The Victorian English also are perhaps best moved out of Sumatra and into Singapore. Also the game notes that the High Lords use population centres to feed off the transformation of people and also to build their undead armies, the gospog, from corpses. One wonders then, why extremely unpopulated areas like Borneo, Finland, and Northern Canada were selected as bases by the High Lords, whereas population-dense India and south and eastern China have been unaffected.

There are some system problems with the cosms and axioms, as interesting as they are. Firstly, there is a significant imbalance in the total value of the axioms between the various cosms. The horror realm, Orrrorsh, comes in a hefty 71 total points whereas the primitive realm, The Living Land, manages a meagre 38. Is Orrrorsh more 'real' than the Living Land? In addition there is a significant bias towards technology and social as a highly-rated axiom. Four of the realms have technology and social axioms rated 20 or more, whereas there is only 1 for Spirit and none whatsoever for Magic! In an attempt for a greater degree of balance within the settings the following axiom ratings are offered as an alternative:

Cosm	Magic	Social	Spirit	Tech
Core Earth	7	21	9	23
Living Land	21*	7	25	7
Aysle	20	11*	15	14
Nippon Tech	2	22	6	24
Orrrorsh	15	12*	17	16
Cyberpapacy	6*	18	12	24
New Nile	8	12*	20	17

Substantial differences from the core rules are marked with an asterisk.

The PCs are 'Storm Knights' who seek to thwart the plans of the High Lords and can also store 'possibility energy' which allows them to temporarily alter the the reality they are in. This possibility energy is what differentiates the PCs from 'Ords', ordinary people who cannot manipulate reality like the Storm Knights. Possibilities are also used for die roll bonuses, countering such effects, lessen damage, or improve skills and skills; between one and three possibilities are granted to each Storm Knight per act – they serve as both experience points and currency for narrative input. Characters begin with 10 possibilities. Characters may be initially selected from 24 templates, with rules for creating new templates. There are seven attributes (Dexterity, Strength, Toughness, Perception, Mind, Charisma and Spirit), typically rated between 5 and 13, with 8 being human average, which total 66 points. Sixteen skill points are distributed from the selection of around fifty, plus specialisations, with +1 to +3 being typical. Skill values are determined from a linked attribute plus skill value, with nearly all having default levels based on the attribute.

The core mechanic is a d20 roll, open-ended on 10s and 20s which then translates to a non-formulaic modifier (-12 to +7 in the 1-20 range) which is then added to the attribute or skill and compared against a difficulty number. Target numbers are often determined from translations and combinations of real-world values in weight, distance and time in a semi-logarithmic scale, doubling in value every 5 points. A cap is placed on results for some physical actions to

ensure that the combination of the fairly random range and skill/attribute values does not stretch plausibility too far. It is notable that a very similar method was also used by designer Greg Gordon in D.C. Heroes, however he is not mentioned even as an influence in WEGs Masterbook series (Bloodshadows, Tank Girl etc), although it is clearly and obviously derived from the Torg rules.

Non-combat interaction receives a notable input in the game system. Subtle charm tests are used for a temporary change in attitude and the issue may be pressed if initially insufficiently successful. Persuasion can be used for a more transparent change. Intimidation is used for shock presence and for interrogation. A Test of willpower can generate flee and fear, a Taunt can be used to encourage opponents to undertake a course of action, and Tricks are used for persuasion by deceit. These are colourful and integrated mechanics which are a pleasure to see.

Combat is carried out in ten-second rounds with initiative determined from the Drama Deck. Attack rolls are based on a standard skill action with the target number being an active or passive defense. The modifier from the skill roll is then added to a base damage for a weapon, reduced by the target's Toughness and Armour. The resulting value is cross-referenced to a chart which gives a variety of effects including shock points, knockdowns, knockouts and wounds. A variety of combat maneuvers are permitted with modifiers to attack and damage. The system as writ does suffer from the flaw of "the glass jawed ninja" - characters with a high defense are difficult to hit, but when they are they tend to suffer a lot of damage as the 'to hit' randomiser is added to the damage. An easy solution - used in the Masterbook series - is simply not to include this modifier.

Apart from determining initiative, the Drama Deck provides additional options for both the player and GM. Firstly, it allows for differentiation between a standard and dramatic scene; the former biased towards the players, the latter towards the villains. When dice are used to resolve conflict (e.g., in each round of combat) a card is drawn by the GM to set the flow which can come with a variety of advantages and disadvantages; the former consisting of Flurry, Inspiration and Up and the latter Break, Confused, Fatigued, Setback and Stymied. These add to the results with additional actions, bonus die, reduced actions, and so forth. In a less enjoyable manner, the Drama Deck can also be used to restrict character actions in GM-assigned 'dramatic moments', which are defined in a four-part series. If the players do not have the part available then unless they make a 'last ditch effort', they are deemed to have failed. This clumsy mechanic is perhaps best ignored.

In addition to this they also allow for approved actions, which allow the players to draw an additional card from the deck if they carry out the action. Players may also play cards in the course of activity which usually provide more specific bonuses (e.g., +3 to Perception and Mind tests) and plot devices such as an Escape card which allows the players to avoid an encounter. Also included are various subplot cards, elements into the story which the GM must incorporate. These include the extreme Matyr card which allows a character to sacrifice themselves at a critical point to ensure victory, but also cards like Romance Cards may also be traded between players.

Three chapters of the main Rulebook are dedicated respectively to magic, miracles and equipment, all of which are equipment of a sort. Not surprisingly various forms of technology and magic are rated according to the various axioms required to operate them. Magic has a requisite axiom and skill levels, a backlash value, which may send the magician unconscious and a difficulty number for casting. Miracles have a minimum axiom required for casting, a community level indicating the difficulty for others with the faith skill to participate and a difficulty number. Equipment comes with a minimum Tech axiom value and a price value for Core Earth.

The Adventure Book contains an entertaining, although sometimes a little light, description of how to be a GamesMaster, and how to run and design adventures, both in terms of roleplaying games in general and Torg in particular. The latter is particularly useful with regards to to incorporate the Drama Deck. Narrative flow receives notably less attention than flow within the game. A little under half the book is dedicated to a sample adventure 'Before the Dawn', which is a globetrotting introduction to the Torg world at the time of the great stillness. The book concludes with some sample adventure seeds. One must also mention the rather handy solo adventure in the main Rulebook designed to illustrate the core mechanical concepts.

Overall Torg: Roleplaying The Possibility Wars is an impressive work. The game system is a little crunchy and diverges from well-known conventions, but works sufficiently well with a few moments of concern (lack of a formulaic approach being one, very high level of randomness relative to scale being another) and is actually fairly easy to pick up. The lack of index in a rules-heavy game like this was however particularly annoying adding to difficulty in play.

The 'structured narrativism' in the form of the Drama Deck influences, the way that character interaction skills work, and the influence of Possibility points are fairly well designed and add to the feel of larger-than-life adventures which Torg is based around. The combination of genres in the setting is kept within the level of the vaguely plausible, with aforementioned exceptions, with the mechanics of the different settings not unduly upsetting the system as a whole, although there is notable power-creep in subsequent supplements.

Torg was never a really big-hitter in the RPG industry, and certainly not as big as West End Games would have liked it to have been. But it did make some headway as illustrated by the small mountain of supplements released for the game, the novels, a comic, and the liberal sprinkling of trademark assertions thrown about – and all within a fairly quick schedule. It came out at a time when the fashion was increasingly towards simpler mechanics and a rules-light approach, and with a grittier feel (e.g., Cyberpunk) and stronger dedication to single themes (e.g., Vampire et al) than what Torg offered which was rules and setting heavy. Also, other cross-genre games (e.g., Shadowrun) were able to establish themselves with greater ease. Nevertheless, as mentioned, there is plenty of support material available, often now at very discounted prices and there remains an active support community. Although the long promised second edition of Torg has never arrived a 'revised and expanded' first edition has been released, and the the Masterbook rules also from WEG are almost entirely Torg compatible.

BONUS CHART																																	
DIE ROLL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	25	26	30	31	35	36	40	41	45	46	+5	
BONUS #	-12	-10	-8	-5	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	+1												

Torg Capsule Reviews: An Almost Complete Collection

The Living Land (Stock 20505, 1990, 128pp)

'The Sourcebook of Primitive Reality', is thirteen chapters roughly split between the realm and the rules, along with sixteen character templates, including some interesting non-humans. The book begins with a short narrative of the changes to North America with the establishment of the new cosm, Takta Ker and the arrival of the lizardmen, the Edeinos, and their spiritual leader, Baruk Kaah, along with flying giant sapient starfish. Description is provided of the home world of these being; hot and moist which makes the north-east U.S. and northern Canada unlikely candidates for settlement) along with how the High Lord acquired his Darkness Device and the sensual and passionate religion of the Edeinos and their connection to the land. Following a chapter dedicated to the invasion of core Earth and the battles that ensued, the current status is elaborated, in particular New York, Philadelphia, and Detroit. A chapter is dedicated to both Core Earth (United States) and Core Earth (Canada). In the U.S. there is a conflict between the government-sponsored Delphi Council and the minority, grass-roots, Common Ground Association which seeks support among rebel lizard-folk to overthrow the High Lord, whilst at the same time claiming freedom of religious belief for the new religion. The discussion of Canada is significantly briefer, but mention should be made of the overtures from the Cyberpapacy towards separatists in Quebec.

The rules section launches into the effects of a Deep Mist that has been introduced to the Living Land – especially problems of getting lost and survival. Discussion of the mental state of living in an environment with a very low social and technological axiom is provided before providing chapters on the Miracles of the Land, and the various creatures that inhabit the place. The latter includes a particularly notable very large (8m) spider, along with the expected collection of large lizards and various sentient plants. The final three chapters consists of advice for designing adventures in the Living Land, sample locations for use in play and a number of adventure seeds. A solid start to the Torg supplements, providing a good grounding into a truly living environment and an alien culture.

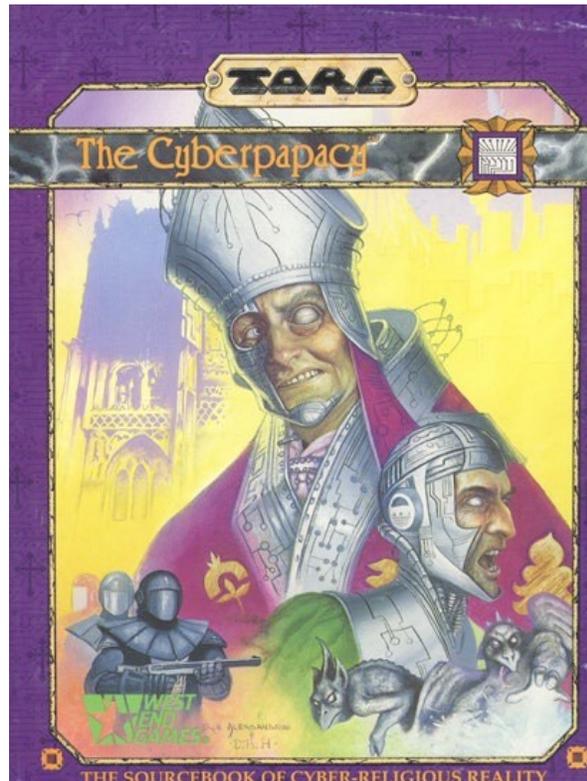
The Nile Empire (Stock 20506, 1990, 142pp)

I don't have this supplement: "This sourcebook explores the realm and cosm of the Pharaoh Dr. Mobius, High Lord of pulp reality. It details the situation in the Middle East and Africa and features new races and rules for pulp reality (including a gizmo creation system)."

Aysle (Stock 20507, 1990, 142pp)

"The Sourcebook of Magical Reality" consists of eleven chapters and 8 character templates. Unlike other cosms, Aysle is embroiled in a conflict between two Raiders, the forces of Light led by Lady Pella Ardinary and Lord Agnar Uthorion of the Dark. The book begins with a brief narrative and history of the conflict along with their game stats before moving on to a description of the cosm; its creation, geography (a flat world), history, the six dynastic houses that govern Aysle and various other folk, such as Elves, Giants, Dwarves, barbarians, vikings and cosairs. Birthdays in Aysle determine an automatic magical skill and arcane knowledge and some nineteen gods have various arcane domains, along with the atheistic dwarves and monkish ascetic elves. The realm chapter details the people and situation across the cosmos in a region-by-region manner with additional attention given to centres like London and Stockholm before giving a description of daily life. This is further elaborated in the world rules chapter describing the operation of the axioms in the cosm.

Following this is a substantial chapters on the theory and operation of magic, including a complex pattern of magic state paths and a spell laboratory process. Naturally enough, a ready-made grimore makes up the subsequent chapter and after that a collection of miracles appropriate to the realm. A chapter is dedicated to each of the folk and creatures of the land with standard game stats for the former and a fine collection of dragons notable in the latter. A little out-of-place in the latter is also the inclusion of the Wendigo, a being which mythically belongs in North America. The penultimate chapter is the various equipment available in the realm limited to melee and missile weapons, armour, simple firearms, enchanted items and transportation. The final chapter is a few pages on character creation. Overall provides a solid introduction to fantasy mythos in a difficult environment.



The Cyberpapacy (Stock 20508, 1991, 128pp).

Ten chapters with roughly equal portions covering the realm and additional rules for the cyberpapacy, the union of a theocratic outlook with a high-technology cybernetics and 12 character templates. Arguably Torg's contribution to the interest in cyberpunk roleplaying at the time, the Cyberpapacy. The book begins with a basic history of the real world papacy in Avignon, including the great schism where there were three popes (Avignon, Rome, Pisa) and the divergence of the realm of the cyberpapacy, Magna Veritas, from core earth. Whilst a new bible has been promulgated, technology has remained relatively static, with the exception of a sudden surge that has led to the development of cybernetics, and the GodNet led by visions from Pope Jean Malraux. Homer and Faith chips are installed in the faithful; heretics and infidels are persecuted. Major organisations of the Church are described along with expected activities; indulgences, punishment, conversions, monitoring, inquisition. Because this is France there is also a resistance, along with neofascist paramilitary groups which support the cyberpope. Fairly detailed maps and descriptions of provinces and departments, churches of the holy exchange, road and rail networks, along with an entire chapter dedicated to Paris.

The various axioms of the Cyberpapacy are elaborated in some detail along with an explanation of how magic and miracles does and doesn't work, especially in relation to heretical magic. Variant skills (e.g., Cybedeck Operation, Cybertech) are explained, along with several pages dedicated each to new Miracles and Creatures and Characters (Booster Dogs and Cygoyles are particularly delightful). Finally there is a hefty chapter of appropriate cyberequipment and the aforementioned character templates. Certainly an intriguing realm with good use of conflicting genre conventions with a modest touch of the French mores; notable power creep.

Nippon Tech (Stock 20509, 1991, 128pp).

In an increasingly standard format, "The Sourcebok of Mega-Corporate Reality" is split into two broad sections, one for the realm and cosm (chapters one to three) and one for the game system rules (chapters four to nine). Ten character templates complete the product and various adventures ideas are scattered throughout. The book opens with a description of the personality and objectives of the High Lord, who exists with multiple clones and a secretive agenda. The second chapter, the cosm is dedicated to the marketplace, and the pursuit of profit above all else. The cosm geography consists of five megaplexes which take up entire continents (landlords take note!), with virtually no concern for environmental issues, and a handful of mutants as a result. The cosm is governed by a Triad of CEOs from an industrial firm, a computer company and a petroleum company. As expected corporations have their own paramilitary and espionage units, as well as armed political opponents to the rule of the megacorps. The sizeable chapter on the realm describes the rather significant changes that have occurred in Japan which remain within the boundaries of plausibility. Detail is provided on Tokyo, but even more so on the organisation of the Kanawa Corporation and its network of subsidiary firms and organisations of yakuza and ninja.

Axioms and world rules make up a short chapter, as they are fairly simple, but extensive description is given to the elaborated skill of martial arts. A chapter is also provided on running corporate wars through the money mechanism, with megacorporations being assigned initial stock, asset and debt values which then serve as resources in 'corporate duels', which include insider trading, espionage, investments and hostile takeovers. Sample locations are provided as 'flash points' along with short list of miracles before moving to a moderate equipment chapter which includes a good variety of goods, including robotics, vehicles and stealth equipment. A subtle and intriguing supplement on what initially comes across as one of the weaker of the realms for adventuring purposes.

Orrorsh (Stock 20510, 1991, 128pp).

"The Sourcebook of Horror Reality" dedicates the first three chapters to the cosm and realm and six to the rules, although the chapter dedicated to the realm takes up almost a third of the book's page count. Ten character templates complete the product. The short opening chapter provides a very brief overview of the nations of south-east asia prior to the storm, which notably does not mention by name any of the significant military conflicts in the region. Instead of the home cosm for Orrorsh, the cosm of Gaea is described, an earth-analogue and the first group to resist the Gaunt

Man, High Lord and almost Torg. The Gaunt Man is now entrapped in a reality conflict, and the realm is ruled by Thratchen, a demonic being with some technological prowess aided by the Hellion Court and the principles of fear and corruption. Much of the description of the realm is dedicated to the Victorians and their religious lynchpin, the Sacellum, along with the Victorian Majestic Charter, part-military, part-commercial, totally Victorian. The only two towns of any description are Padang (New London) and Jakarta.

The chapter on World Laws is extensive, not only to describe the effects of the high axioms that exist in the realm, but also to elucidate the new rule of Perseverance, the ability to keep on going when confronted by the horrors of the realm. The chapter on skills includes a new version of the Shapeshifting skill which is elaborated, along with a description of medium and swami abilities. The magic of the realm is known as "the Occult" and a small collection of spells are provided, along with a modest selection of new miracles. The Horrors of Orrorsh are described with Power Point ratings which determine the number of special abilities such creatures have. The Horrors include such beasties like golems, wraiths, ghouls, werewolves, vampires, zombies and – reminiscent of David Cronenberg's Videodrome – the Video Cassette Recorder of Death. Following a three-page Equipment chapter, the final chapter is a short Adventuring in Orrorsh chapter which briefly describes some genre style conventions. Overall, a fairly sound inclusion of Victorian English mores and horror conventions; knowledge of, and attention to, south-east Asia seriously lacking.

Space Gods (Stock 20511)

I don't have this supplement. "Discover why Earth is central to the Possibilities Wars. South America hosts a realm that boasts the highest technology level of any reality, star travel, psionics, and the Comaghaz, an enemy virtually unknown to even the High Lords."

Tharkold Sourcebook (Stock 20512)

Another one I don't have. ""Travel from the Cosm of the Tharkoldu to their new home on Earth - Los Angeles - as they seek revenge against Nippon Tech in their own bloody style. Techno-demons, deadly occulttech devices, and a High Lord unlike any other this dark and dangerous realm."

Dephi Council Worldbook #1 (Stock 20513)

And another. "While the Possibility Wars rage in the eight realms, what's happened to Core Earth? The Delphi Council makes its report to the President, listing changes in Europe, the United States, the Middle East, and Asia, with locations, stats of nonplayer characters, and templates."

Terra Sourcebook (Stock 20515)

And another. "This sourcebook describes the Nile Empire and its "weird science." Heroes battle villains while adventurers brave dangers in this fast-paced world fiction! Rules for "pulp sorcery" and "weird science" gizmo creation are included in this book."

Tokyo Citybook (Stock 20523)

And yet another. "The Rauru Block takes you on a tour of Tokyo, from the corporate boardrooms to the bloody back streets. Learn the secrets of Kanawa's capital city, intended for players and gamemasters. Inside you'll also find maps, adventure hooks, and new character templates."

Los Angeles Citybook (Stock 20524, 1992, 128pp).

A brief introduction to Los Angeles locates the city as a point of conflict; a core Earth point of successful resistance

surrounded by the Living Land, heavily infiltrated by Nippon Tech agents and with a significant Storm Knight base in conflict with the central U.S. government. Some ninety pages make up the player's section, about thirteen for the GM, and there's nine character templates. Stylistically quite different, the LA book includes cut-outs from newspaper reports, letters and marginal commentary, all of which provide an informal insight to the dynamics of the location whilst contributing significantly to page-count and white space. Of initial note is the extensive description given to the various organisations in the city, including embassies and clubs representing other realms. This is supplemented by various Core Earth gangs in cinematic presentation, of which the Legion of Doom is a notable name but alas, have little to do with the real-world hackers club. The GM's section provides some game stats for key NPCs and brief notes on running adventures in Los Angeles. Overall, this supplement is cute, but is seriously lacking in substance, which is unfortunate as the potential is great. Not recommended; it's almost as if the author's had given up on the line at this point.

Berlin Citybook (Stock 20525)

I don't have this supplement. "Tharkoldu clash with Deutschland patriots and Nile heroes in a city more grin and dangerous than either expected. This complete citybook includes important gamemaster characters, organizations, Nile and Tharkoldu creatures and artifacts and enough danger and excitement for an entire Torg campaign."

The Destiny Map (Stock 20551, 1990, 64p)

Includes part one of the Relics of Power trilogy of scenarios, wrapped in a GM's screen. The screen is very well designed, with four interior panels for the GM including interaction results table, combat results table, general results table, link difficulty chart, bonus chart, action summary, combat options chart, skill chart target numbers, value and measures, difficulty scale, benchmark chart, axioms of the cosmos, skill list, transformation table, measure conversions and multi-action charts. The exterior panels include two panels of charts for players (benchmark, difficulty scale, axioms, skill list, bonus chart, action summary, combat options, skill charts and target numbers. The adventure itself consists of four acts, each provided with their own synopsis and broken down into smaller scenes each described as standard or dramatic and with a "major beat" that must be completed before moving on to the next act. The adventure begins with the Storm Knights investigating a high-tech murder which leads them to other realms, discovering conflict between the realms and enslavement, eventually leading to the location of some of the relics that the adventure's title is derived from an some enticing clues on the location of others. Highly recommended product; great adventure and excellent support product.

The Possibility Chalice (Stock 20552, 1990, 64p)

Part two of the Relics of Power trilogy, also consisting of four acts with a number of scenes in each act. With the destiny map in the PCs hands, the location of the possibility chalice is known. However the first step is inadvertently protected by an enemy realm. Eventually by-passing this location the second act requires a rescue mission in the fantasy realm of Aysle eventually resulting in an epic battle in that realm. Another solid adventure, with a bit of a traditional roleplaying flavour with various building crawls, commando-stye missions, and booby-trapped locations.

The Forever City (Stock 20553)

I don't have this supplement, which is particularly unfortunate. "The Relics of Power Trilogy concludes as the Storm Knights must escape from the Empire of the Nile and make their way to the long-forgotten city high in the Tibetan mountains. There, they must decide whether to use the relics of power or destroy them as the High Lords' agents close in. "

The Cassandra Files (Stock 20554, 1990, 64p)

“Dispatches and Rumours of the Delphi Council”, it means what it says. Over thirty adventure hooks written up as a catalog of events occurring in the Possibility Wars. The short players section consists of newsclippings, emails, transcripts and so forth. The lengthier GM's section includes what is really going on, game stats and maps. Very handy for one-shot sessions or as a side-plot to tie in multiple adventures.

Queenswrath (Stock 20555, 1990, 64p)

Equivalent of the Cassandra Files, but specifically for Aysle, with dispatches by royal decree. Twenty single-session adventures mostly based on the British Isles but with some exceptions. Notable adventures include the recovery of Arthur's Crown, the discovery of the city of Lyonesse and an adventure located at the Chalk Giant who, in a disproportionate act of political correctness, has had his oversized erect penis removed! Otherwise a very handy and recommended supplement, and particularly recommended for people more familiar with fantasy RPGs.

The GodNet (Stock 20556, 1991, 96pp)

This supplement begins with a brief theological history of the establishment of the GodNet before replicating and expanding some of the material in the Cyberpapacy supplement concerning the Holy Exchange Church, which combines the telecommunications and spiritual needs of CyberFrance. A significant portion of the book describes a view of the GodNet from the inside along with mapping design. Like most representations of cyberspace not only is the representation of virtual reality cinematic, so is the network design; added to this is the use of Torg rules within the GodNet. Chapters dedicated to cyberdeck and software purchases are likewise in the cinematic style, including MindWipe and BrainBurn programs. Creatures of the 'net are software constructs derived from Judeo-Christian mythology, including seraphim, cherubim, archangels, demons, Nimrod and the Beast. Three sample adventures are briefly described, along with seven fleshed-out sample characters. Overall, a fairly good but narrowly focused supplement.

High Lord of Earth (Stock 20557, 1991, 64p)

A three act adventure where the PC Storm Knights attempt to prevent a mass murderer acquiring a Darkness Device located deep in the former Aztec Empire. If the antagonist gains control of this Device, yet another Raider realm will be established, seriously stressing the ability of Core Earth to protect itself. The adventure begins with investigation of ritual murders in Belize, discovery of necromantic practises, the investigation of cultists, discovery of another Darkness Device, leading to ancient ruins still inhabited, and the dramatic re-establishment of an old god and an old empire of blood. High stakes drama. Great combination of archeological investigation and serious conflict.

Full Moon Draw and Other Tales (Stock 20558, 1991, 64p)

Contains six one-act adventures, one for each of the realms. The Orrorsh-based Full Moon Draw includes a clever plot twist with the lives of thousands at stake. Stone Cold Dead is based on Aysle and includes a murder investigation, a dungeon crawl with a difference and yes, another plot twist. The Nippon Tech Divine Wind involves a suicide attack on a friendly group, with eventual leads to those who instigated the attack. The historically rich Cathari Treasure in the Cyberpapacy is effectively a courier and protection mission. The Nile Empire-based Fire over Khartoum involves a treasure hunt and break-and-enter to prevent the expansion of the Pharaoh. The final scenario, Breaking New Ground, for the Living Land, involves the protection of a resistance community and rescue missions with greater than expected stakes. Overall another recommended fine collection of adventures.

Pixaud's Practical Grimoire (Stock 20559, 1991, 96p)

“A collection of the finest spells to emerge from the magic academies of Aysle”. The first five chapters provide over one hundred and fifty new spells and revisions of existing spells with chapters on the Essences, Principles, Mixed

Forces, Kindred and Elements. The final chapter includes an abbreviated of the spell design rules from the Aysle sourcebook (but surely this is an sourcebook for Aysle, not the other way around?). The book concludes with an spell index, a very welcome inclusion given Torg's absolute lack of indexes in other supplements. Recommended for campaigns heavily based in Aysle or with high magical influence; less necessary for others.

Kanawa Personal Weapons (Stock 20560, 1991, 80p)

The first forty pages has historical weapons from the matchlock pistol to the Scorpion Machine Pistol. Includes old favourites such as the Blunderbuss, the Colt Peacemaker, the Winchester 1873, the Colt .45, the Luger P.08, the AK-47, the M16 Assault Rifle, the H&K MP5, and the Glock 17. The next twenty-four pages include high-tech weapons including cybernetic implants. This is followed by six pages of explosives, seven pages of espionage weapons (in James Bond style) and a two page chart. The one page dedicated per weapon description is excessive and the amount of white-space indicates this. Probably considered useful by many gamers, but could have had two-three times the content with a little effort. Not recommended; compares poorly with supplements like GURPS Hi-Tech.

Operation: Hard Sell (Stock 20561, 1991, 64p)

Starting with basic rumours of criminal infiltration of a business community the PCs discover that a larger plot is at stake. Travelling north in Oregon, the PCs discover that a large number of local businesses are actually under control of Nippon Tech who fooled the U.S. government into thinking they had liberated the lands from Barak Kuuh, when in reality they had been transferred. The Storm Knights must engage in a desperate avante-garde action against a computer virus to ensure that the west coast does not fall under control from one Raider Realm to another. A surprisingly straight-forward adventure in many ways with good levels of intrigue; recommended.

The Land Below (Stock 20562, 1991, 96p)

Like other realm supplements, The Land Below consists of a Player's section (four chapters, 64p) and a GM's section (five chapters, 27 pages) and a collection of templates (4 new characters). This is a realm in the making, formed from an alliance between the Pharaoh and Baruk Kaah and a subsequent unprecedented level of cooperation between the two Darkness Devices which must inevitably result in conflict as it is the nature of such Devices. From this doubtful premise however the Land Below provides a location where creatures and realities of several realms can seep through various entrances, and the book provides detailed descriptions and game-stats of such beings in the initial chapters. Scattered within the Land Below are various Domed Worlds, of which the pulp-style Merritika makes up the third and fourth chapter.

The Land Below has its own axioms which are described in the fifth chapter (Magic 12, Spirit 17, Social 8, Tech 10) and specific laws o savagery, action and wonders. A small number of miracles is supplemented with a chapter on "pulp powers", followed by a chapter on creatures of Merritika, including the possibility-rated Rodar, a sapient rat. The final chapter consists of a one-act adventure and other adventure hooks. This is a fairly good supplement, that combines the pulp-genre with the primitive, although comparison with Justice Inc, Lands of Mystery has it in second place.

Crucible of Pain (Stock 20563, 1991, 64p)

Part short-story, part adventure this Nile based scenario includes an introduction and conclusion in story form and a three-act adventure in the middle to tie the two ends together. Appropriately sub-titled "murder, madness and mini-cosms", the story itself is quite good, although at times the style jumps around. PCs are likely to end up as secondary characters to the main NPC whom the plot revolves.

Kanawa Heavy Weapons (Stock 20564, 1991, 80p)

The first fifty-seven pages provide historical heavy weapons, differentiated by realm. Thus the earliest heavy weapons are in Aysle (e.g., Seige Tower), followed by Orrorsh (e.g., Maxim Heavy Machine Gun), followed by the Nile Empire (155mm M2 "Long Tom", Vickers M1 Heavy Machine Gun), Core Earth (e.g., Harpoon SLCM, Hellfire ATGW, TOW Anti-Tank Missile, Stinger SAM, MM40 Exocet), followed by weapons of advanced technology such as cluster munitions, air-to-air laser, EMP generating truck mounted weapons and the like. Concludes with three pages of charts. Like the Personal Weapons book takes up a page per weapon, and the same comments apply.

City of Demons (Stock 20565, 1992, 64p)

An unusual adventure where the Storm Knights are explicitly hired by a Tharkoldu, post their invasion of Los Angeles, to extinguish another demon planning a coup against their recently established High Lord. Circumstances logically permit this strained alliance be maintained as additional information becomes known. A well-constructed urban horror scenario which will strain those characters who feel uneasy working for a techno-demonic force.

Cylent Scream (Stock 20566, 1991, 64p)

A collection of one-act adventures, one for each major realm. The appallingly named 'Power Cyp-ply', set in the core Earth hardpoint of London, involves an investigation on way there are such severe power shortages and a crime wave. In the Nippon-Tech 'Bad Business', the PCs are hired as body guards as a corporate war looms. The equally poor title scenario 'Cylent Scream' involves the PCs being hired by a disease-ridden friend to summon the help of a faith healer in the Cyberpapacy. In the Nile Empire based 'Image of Nephthys' a series of bizarre deaths are linked to a cult artifact requiring its removal from their possession. The Orrorsh-based 'Rebel Without A Soul', involves the PCs attempt to stop the initiation of a person into a supernatural biker gang called 'Black Death'. In the Living Land 'Germ Warfare' the PCs must fight giant amoeba, locate their source and destroy it. In general these are fairly lightweight adventures, and one is not missing anything but not owning the product.

Kanawa Land Vehicles (Stock 20567, 1992, 80p)

Like previous supplements, this includes a range of vehicles from the historical to the high-tech. Beginning with the fairly advanced example of the sulky (no wagons, chariots etc), it is primarily a supplement for the Victorian era onwards, with a range of classic cars such as the 1905 Oldsmobile Coach, the 1936 Rolls Royce Phantom III, the 1941 Jeep MB, the 1980 Mack R-400 truck, and the Train a Grande Vitesse. There are six pages of vehicle tables and ten pages of expanded vehicles rules; the latter being particularly useful. As with previous publications of this ilk the page-per-vehicle is quite wasteful.

Infiniverse Campaign Update Volume I (Stock 20568, 1992, 128p)

A campaign update based on a compilation of other people's campaigns. The first six chapters discuss the development of the various realms, with Core Earth and the Living Land merged into a single chapter. The Aysle has remained in stalemate although Utherion has recently inhabited the body of a dragon which should make matters interesting. For a brief period the Cyberpapacy realm was largely disrupted thanks to the destruction of a central stala, but it has now rebounded and expanded into Quebec. The Living Land has had a turmoil and moderate expansion and now finds itself in regular conflict with Nippon Tech. Also thrown into this chapter is the Delphi Council interests, the Tharkold and the Akashan (Space Gods). The Nile Empire has expanded massively incorporating Libya, Sudan and most of Chard and Ethiopia, but continues to suffer stiff resistance from Israel. Nippon Tech has finally made requisite moves into South Korea, east China and Taiwan as well as California. Orrorsh has made very minor gains into Timor and Thailand as disputes rage within the Hellion Court.

One chapter provides four dispatches (always true) and six rumours (might be true) and another is a selection of the best letters concerning Torg and relevant answers. Another chapter is fictional heralds from the world, itself serving as another rumour chapter. A short chapter on rule elaborations includes skill improvements over time, card play and

group size, wound effects and thrown objects. Three additional character templates are provided before a sizeable chapter for two mini-adventures.

Storm Knights Guide (Stock 20569)

I don't have this supplement. "Learn all you need to know about creating characters for Torg! This volume features an expanded, story-based character generation system, complete with details on how to create a background for your player character. Also included are new tools and equipment your Storm Knight can take into battle."

Creatures of Aysle (Stock 20570, 1991, 128p)

As it sounds, this is a sort of 'Monster Manual' for Aysle. Like the various Kanawa supplements there is a dedication for turning trees into pulp with fully two pages dedicated to each of the creatures, much of which consists of an oversized illustration, a cosm distribution map, a realm distribution map and, reminiscent of Call of Cthulhu, a size-comparison chart. As a result this modest collection includes many historical favourites, such as the Bean Sidhe, the Cockatrice (Liverpool only?), the Chimera and Pegasus (both of which have been imported from Greece), the Fenris Wolf, Fire Giants (Sweden only) Grendel, the Loch Ness Monster (of course), Kobolds, Perytons, the Questin Beast, Unicorns and Volvoushka.

The Character Collection (Stock 20571, 1992, 128p)

As the title suggests, this is a book of sample characters, one every two-pages, but unlike similar product catalogues, this one actually makes good use of the space allocated with a page of major accomplishments and a psychological evaluation one page and a character sheet with background, equipment and quote on the second. Portrait illustrations tend to be a little on the large side with a study on the character sheet page. The best thing about the book, apart from the fact it provides a ready-made collection of NPCs, is that the characters themselves are interesting; there is not a dull personality in a mundane role among them. It is less a character collection than a collection of adventurers and should be used for this fashion.

The Temple of Rec Stalek (Stock 20572, 1992, 64p)

A four-act Living Land based scenario were armoured edienos backed by the Undead attack a small Core Earth colony. The PCs give chase, naturally enough, and discover an alternative to the Living Land religion based on the worship of a god of death who seeks to remove the long suffering Baruk Kaah from the position of High Lord. A fairly straightforward adventure with no significant surprises.

Central Valley Gate (Stock 20573, 1992, 64p)

A four-act adventure based in Redside, on the borders of the Living Land, Nippon Tech and Tharkold, and currently under stress from raiding biker gangs and riding edienos tribes. Encountering a group of Victorians, the PCs also encounter Delphi Council Spartans, Nippon Tech agents and finally some Orrorsh horrors – all of which ultimately converge on the small town. An wild, multi-genre adventure where alliance and opponents are flying about as thick as bats. Recommended but only with very careful planning by the GM who must also have a capacity to mentally switch between different genre psychologies.

Creatures of Orrorsh (Stock 20574, 1992, 128p)

With a similar layout as the Creatures of Aysle, this supplement is almost a supplement to the famous collection of stupid monsters for D&D; many are derived from bad puns with an attempt to put a Victorian-era horror slant on them, but instead end up being comical, albeit possibly grimly comical in actual play. A blob of malevolent jelly becomes a

Bad Dream, a Bloody Mary is a nun that bleeds like a person with ebola virus, the Candyman is a humanoid child abductor, Doctor's Little Helper is a psychotic hospital machine, Killjoys are clowns with a mean streak, the Komodo Dragon has grown tentacles on its back, Pop Weasels jump out of a box and eat you (obviously), the Rotary Motor of Doom is a possessed lawn mower and Screaming Blue Murder is a crying baby that latches onto a victim's maternal instinct to the point of starvation. This supplement is simply not recommended.

Creatures of Tharkold (Stock 20575)

I don't have this supplement. "From a world where inflicting pain is the greatest pleasure known come creatures of evil. Demon ghuls, psi-borgs, and other evils from the cosm of the techno-demons fill this volume, which also features illustrations, game statistics, and maps of their domains."

Ravagons (Stock 20577)

I don't have this supplement. " Welcome to the harsh, brutal world of Tz'Ravok, home of the Gaunt Man's most deadly lieutenants, the ravagons. Learn the secrets of this terrible race, including axioms, world laws, skills, character templates, and instructions on how to create ravagon player characters."

No Quarter Given (Stock 20578)

Curses, another one I don't have. "The Gaunt Man has returned, and now his most dreaded servant, the Carredon, threatens to do the same. Only the valor of your Storm Knights and their allies can stop the plans of the most powerful High Lord of all."

When Axioms Collide (Stock 20578)

And another one. "The villagers of New Culmont have more to fear than the Inquisition, as an Orrorshan Nightmare hatches a deadly scheme to use the Cyberpope's greatest weapon - the GodNet - against him. Only the Storm Knights can stop the virtual horror."



The Gaunt Man Returns (Stock 205780)

The chief bad-guy is back. And I don't have a copy of it to give a capsule review. "After two years in the Maelstorm, the most powerful High Lord is back! and his plan for the Storm Knights is a real killer. This adventure also features new source material on the Gaunt Man and his realm and diagrams of Illmound Keep."

Infiniverse Campaign Update Volume II (Stock 20582, 1993, 128p)

The second update comes with nine chapters of changes to the realms, one for pocket dimensions, one for dispatches and rumours, one for letters, five character templates, a mini-adventure (Hell on Earth, played at GenCon/Origins 92), and some charts and tables, including a very useful summary of realm laws.

Aysle is now almost entirely under the control of the forces of darkness, and has expanded into Russia. The Cyberpapacy has made modest gains into Vermont, and also eastern Spain. The Living Land has lost over half its realm as the eastern half has fallen under control of the Land Below, whereas the Nile Empire has made an expansion into southern Greece. Nippon Tech has concentrated on expanding its influence in California, whereas Orrorsh has engaged in rapid expansion across New Guinea and into northern Queensland. Both the Space Gods and Tharkold receive the own chapter, as does the Aztecs, even though that realm was not established in most campaigns (see the High Lord on Earth adventure). Mini-cosms include Atlantis and the best ignored cartoon cosm.

High Lords Guide (Stock 20585, 1992, 128p)

I don't have this supplement. "This guide to the Possibility Wars is filled with new skills, powers, items, and story ideas to add to any Torg campaign. The book also contains a timeline complete through the books printing."

Clerics Sourcebook (Stock 20586, 1990, 142pp)

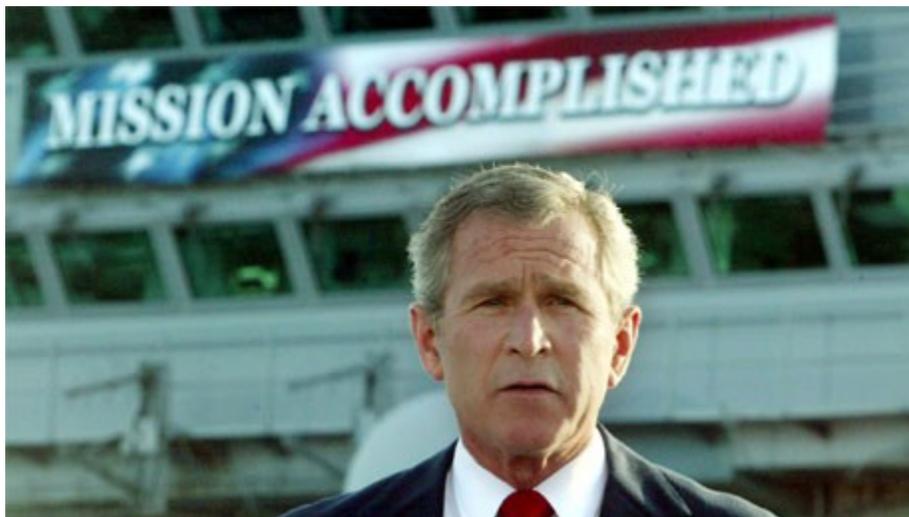
Or this one. "This volume features scores of miracles from all of the realms' religions, as well as a new miracle creation system."

Infiniverse Campaign Update Volume III (Stock 20587, 1992, 128p)

Or this one. "The last collection of Infiniverse newsletters, this volume shows you the startling fates of Baruk Kaah and Pella Ardinay and reveals more about the Gaunt Man's master plan. There are also two new mini-adventures."

War's End (Stock 20590)

Alas, nor this one either. "After five years, the Possibility Wars end here! The Gaunt Man is about to launch his master plan to become Torg, and only the Storm Knights can stop him. discover the fates of your favorite Torg characters, challenge powers beyond any seen before, and change the face of this world as you know it in this amazing final adventure. (Or is it ... ?)"



ON SAYING 'NO'

by Patrick Riley

Roleplaying games share much with improvisational theater. Players are making up character actions, reactions, and dialog on the spot. The GM (and maybe the other players) may be making up characters and scenery on the fly. Though the GM may have a plot in mind, it is assumed that the players have freedom in choosing if and how their characters engage with that plot.

Improv has a philosophy of “never say no.” Instead, actors are supposed to say, “Yes, but...” or “Yes, and...” This keeps the scene moving forward and opens up more possibilities rather than closing off options and bringing the scene to a grinding halt. Some rpgs have adopted this philosophy or it's closely-related form, “Say 'yes,' or roll.”

“Say Yes or roll the dice” - Vincent Baker, Dogs in the Vineyard

“Never say no” can be seen as a silver bullet against GMs railroading their players through a predetermined story. To players who have suffered under the yoke of a dominating GM, this is an attractive philosophy. But it isn't always appropriate and there are very legitimate reasons why a GM might say no, vetoing a player choice, and by doing so, makes the game better.

The point of saying no isn't to stifle player creativity, but to direct and focus it. This is especially true when you have multiple players, each with their own ideas which may not be wholly compatible. If everyone was on the same page and shared the same vision, there would never be a need for the GM to say no. Realistically, though, discordant input is inevitable.

The danger of not saying no is ending up with a chaotic mess of a campaign that lacks a single, coherent vision. For some groups, this is exactly what they want: a free-wheeling, anything goes, “there are no bad ideas” atmosphere. For groups who share similar tastes and goals for what they want out of a game, a philosophy of “never say no” is a good principle. For others, some restraint is desired.

The danger of saying no is making players feel marginalized, slighted, and/or resentful. This depends on what was vetoed, how it was rejected, and the dynamics of the group. There are some players who say outlandish things just to be amusing and expect to be shot down. Other players may get their feelings hurt if their ideas are rejected. This article addresses the situations when a GM should or should not say no. How to not be rude about it is left to you to figure out.

Saying no begins at character creation. Not only do the individual character concepts have to be consistent with the campaign world and focus, but they have to be compatible with each other. A little intra-party tension is acceptable or even desirable, but few GMs want a group that will quickly dissolve because the characters have no common ground or goal.

Character creation should be a collaborative effort with the GM and all the players involved in the process. Even if the PCs have an adversarial relationship, setting up those rivalries at the beginning makes them more interesting. If the players all make their characters in a vacuum and the PCs enter the campaign as strangers, the GM has to be prepared to say no to concepts that would be detrimental to the campaign.

Pendragon is a good example of a game which demands a firm hand. While some pseudo-European fantasy campaigns argue over whether or not it is appropriate to play a ninja or psionic, Pendragon players argue over whether or not it is appropriate to play a wizard. Or a woman. There certainly have been so many interpretations of the Arthurian myth to cause confusion when players come to the game with different expectations. As a GM, you can prune the conflicting ideas and retain the cohesive ones.

In traditional rpgs, players usually have little say about the game world, NPCs, and everything outside their characters. Many small-press, creator-owned games turn the traditional rpg on its ear or completely inside out, giving players a lot of input and control over the campaign and story. In fact, the line between “GM” and “player” may be blurred or erased completely. And when playing these games, saying no may never be an option (or there may be specific rules to address disagreement and conflict of vision). Traditional rpgs, however, rely upon a GM to be the central keeper of world lore and act as a referee when it comes to disagreements.

Having to say no to in-character actions as described by players is the biggest minefield GMs have to face. On one hand, you don't want the players to derail the campaign. On the other hand, the campaign shouldn't be on rails. You want to give player free rein over their characters and not make decisions for them, not put words in their mouths, and not make them spectators to their own story. In general, you shouldn't say no to players when they describe what their characters are doing or saying, but that does not mean you have to say yes.

Asking “are you sure?” is often better than saying yes or no. Sometimes, the selected course of action is inappropriate or unwise. It may be a simple case of the player not understanding the culture or social ramifications of their actions (such as refusing to kneel to the king). Or perhaps the player misunderstood the description of the situation (such as the height of the ledge they are about to jump off of). In either case, it is unfair to simply say yes and let the player blunder along.

Going back to Pendragon as an example, it is not uncommon for gamers to use anachronisms in fantasy campaigns. And though many people think they know the culture, few modern gamers really do. In a historically grounded campaign, the GM may have to guide the PCs' actions and words more than they are used to. Of course, some players will be more knowledgeable than others and may step in when appropriate, offering their own input. It is left to you and your group to decide how much of the game becomes a practical lesson in medieval British history and culture versus a melodramatic adventure of romance, honor, and betrayal.

Maintaining a consistent mood and tone is one of the trickiest parts of GMing and everyone has struggled with it from time to time. When out-of-character comments and distractions detract from the game, you can call upon the players to refocus, but then their in-character actions threaten the game, you may have to say no. Excessive or graphic violence might be fine for Dungeons & Dragons, but not Cartoon Action Hour. Buffoonish behavior in Call of Cthulhu is undesired, as are “adult situations” in games with younger players.

The GM is the keeper of the big picture. Even with a general player consensus, there will be disagreements about what is or isn't appropriate for the game. Sometimes a simple, polite plea of “Please don't,” is enough to deter players from actions that do harm to the game. Of course, this request can come from players and GMs alike.

GMing is tough and it only gets harder the more curve balls the players throw at you. Sometimes the players will do something that leaves you completely unprepared. This gets worse if you are using a published scenario that only accounts for a few options. At this point, it is generally considered poor form to disallow the course of action. This includes making the course impossible by placing impassible obstacles in their path.

Even the most experienced GMs are not always prepared to “run with it” and improvise. But all is not lost. Just let your players know what you're up against. For example:

- “Yes, you can leave down, ignoring the mysterious deaths and the cryptic message left in your room last night, but then I don't have anything to run.”
- “If you kill the cardinal who double-crossed you, you'll be considered outlaws, which will change the tone and focus of the game.”

Sometimes your players will agree and go along with the plans. Other times, you can all agree to end the session early to give you time to prepare something for next time.

Players at game conventions should be more forgiving when it comes to GM control. Lacking the flexibility of an ongoing campaign, the convention one-shot game tends to be fairly restrictive, much like a published scenario. GM-supplied characters are common, the plot is usually pre-defined, the course of the game is probably more linear with more set-pieces, and the pacing is tighter to accommodate the time slot.

Because the players may be strangers to each other and have very different ideas of what makes a good game, you should have more leeway when it comes to saying no. Usually, the plot is described in the convention catalog, so that players will know what they are in for and will look for the plot hooks rather than bypassing them.

There are ways to “say no without saying no.” For example, you can let the PCs kill an important NPC in the first scene only to reveal later it was a twin, clone, or robot. This works for some games—it happens in superhero comics all the time—but such trickery will probably frustrate and antagonize players. If a player designs a character who is a lost prince, believed to be dead by his royal parents, it is uncool to declare late in the campaign that the PC is deluded and lacks any ties to the throne. And if you are going to give the PCs a chance at succeeding at something outrageous—like hacking into the Pentagon or inventing gunpowder in Camelot—you shouldn't declare that they failed even when they made the skill roll you let them have. Saying, “You can try, but it won't work, so don't bother rolling” is better than, “You failed anyway.”

When it comes to the game mechanics, the GM should have a lot more freedom to say no. When a player is attempting to violate or circumvent a hard-and-fast rule, you can stop it. The less specific the rules get, the more judgment calls you will have to make and the more times you will have to say no.

When dealing with loosely defined character traits, you have to decide how much leeway you'll give. When the player asks, “Can I use my dice in Ninja to help in this cooking contest?” you can probably say no. Sure, you can say yes, but it would only be fair if you also let someone else apply their dice in Chef in ninja contests. Whether or not this seems fun to you (and the rest of the group) will determine whether or not you should say no.

How the GM should resolve the following exchange is left as an exercise to the reader.

Player 1: “I'm going to use my Ace Reporter aspect to win this poker game.”

Player 2: “Why?”

Player 1: “Because I always get aces, baby!”

GM: “No. How about because you are good at sniffing out the truth?”

Player 2 (disgusted): “Well, that renders my Good at Cards aspect moot and useless.”

GM: “Uh...”



MOVIE REVIEW: WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

by Andrew Moshos

dir: Spike Jonze *Originally published at <http://movie-reviews.com.au>*

Where the Wild Things Are is a beautiful film. It's touching and sweet, scary but deeply felt, but I don't really think it's for children. I don't even think most kids under the age of ten would really get that the Maurice Sendak book, of twenty or so pages, really connects with this film apart from the similarity in the merchandising. Sure, the imagery is the same, but the story has been greatly transformed by Spike Jonze, David Eggers and the forests and beaches of Victoria.

I have happily read the book to my daughter a stack of times, and so I know how profoundly expanded the story is in the movie. As to whether it's true in spirit and intent to the book, you'd have to ask noted and thoroughly aged curmudgeon Maurice Sendak, who's still alive, who wrote and drew the book nearly fifty years ago, and who I'm sure is happy to collect cheques for the film rights. I suspect deep down Sendak would hate this film if he ever sat through it, that's just my gut instinct.

My instincts are often wrong, I have to admit. What I don't think I'm wrong about is that this really couldn't connect with kids for fairly serious and pervasive reasons, self-same reasons that would make it appeal perhaps to their elders.

There's something simultaneously intellectual, inspired and childish about Spike Jonze and the flicks he's been responsible for. He has tremendous control of the visual medium that he earns his crust from, but he's more than happy to aim those skills at the 'kid' inside adults rather than the kid in kids.

My only real evidence for this is that his rendering of Where The Wild Things Are is completely lacking in treacle or schmaltzy saccharine, but is not averse to being incredibly twee and cutesy, and so goddamn hip that it hurts. But even more than that, the flick is suffused with such keen melancholy, and such a golden, halcyon longing for the freedom and joy of childhood that of course it would have to look strange to the kiddies.

Why? Well, the main and pretty much only thing I know about kids is that they're not nostalgic about their own childhoods, Jonze you hipster doofus: they're too busy living them. All the radiant sunsets and sweet sadness of imperfect recall won't be theirs to eulogise at least until they've started saving for their retirements and gotten into one bad relationship after another.

It sounds like I'm being critical of the film. The thing is, I utterly adored it, and it made my heart ache; I'm just aware that it speaks to a very different audience than the intended one. You know, the one it's being marketed to, what with all the merchandise and product tie-ins and such.



Max (the unlikely but actually named Max Records) is a nine-year-old kid living with his divorced mum (Catherine Keener) and his teenage sister Claire. It's winter at their end of the world, and he's busy creating his own elaborate world inside his head, bedroom and in the snow outside their house. I'm sure, by some measure, Max is probably a normal kid for his age, although he's probably more creative and high-maintenance than most. He's very self-centred and emotionally changeable, so whenever his family fail to focus all of their attention upon him, because they're busy living their own lives, this can cause Max to edge towards terrible, wild rages, hence the wild things of the title.

There are set backs and disappointment in anyone's life, but seeing your mother making-out with Mark Ruffalo must be quite at the top of the disturbing list. I mean seriously, he's a wonderful actor, but he acts eternally like he'd show a girl a very mean and painful time. This drives Max over the edge, and he screams at his mother that he will eat her, and then proceeds to bite her, quite without reason. Just like the book, it's all going according to plan.

He runs away from home, wearing his home-made white wolf outfit, finds a boat and sails out to sea, for week after week or even a year, before coming to the place where the wild things are. What an island! Talk about economically deprived! There's not a Starbucks, Maccas or Coke sign to be seen for miles.

Is this where the potential split between child audiences and adult audiences will result? Very quickly, adults will (should?) be able to see that the Wild Things themselves are different aspects of Max's personality, and are just as reflective of his own impulses as they are of his recent experiences with his family.

To kids they'll just be these monstrous creatures who are superbly rendered, who can be pretty scary sometimes, but who look simultaneously hokey and amazing. There's a mixture of people walking around in furry suits, and a lot of CGI to get their facial expressions just right. I can't begin to encapsulate just how well the Wild Things have been rendered. They look phenomenal, just incredible. They look as real as Max, though they're probably capable of more subtlety as actors than he is.

When first Max spies the other denizens of the island, Carol (voiced by James Gandolfini, he of Tony Soprano fame) is destroying some buildings, acting out because of his anger at being abandoned by one of their number, a female-y Thing called KW (Lauren Ambrose). Being wild, the Things immediately try to eat him.

He convinces them that not only shouldn't they eat him, they should make him their king. Apart from the scariness of their initial intro, and the frightening feral way Max acted with his mum, here's where some genuine non-kid-friendly darkness comes into the plot. Carol, potentially the most dangerous of them all, is unsurprisingly Max's immediate favourite. More than just manifesting as a physical representation of Max's anger, Carol is also kind-of a grandiose dreamer with feelings that are very easy to hurt.

It is Carol who hands the crown and sceptre of kingship to Max, and it is Carol who disentangles them from the skeleton of their previous owner. There are plenty of reminders that these Things could turn on Max at any given moment, no matter how much fun they might be having.

And they do have fun. Lots of jumping, falling, jumping into stacks-on piles, running into sunsets and waves, and building of super powerful forts that will protect them from everybody else. Max promises them that they will always be happy because, considering his kingly powers, he'll be able to create a shield around them all that even keeps out sadness. This pacifies and delights some of the Things, but there are doubters. Judith (Catherine O'Hara) is especially doubtful. In fact, she's a perpetual naysayer who undermines and criticises everything, always looking for the downside to everything, bitchy thing that she is. But Judith isn't mean, she's just, um, protecting herself from getting hurt, I guess? She's the first to identify that Carol is Max's favourite, and despite his promise that everyone would be treated equally and fairly under his reign of terror, clearly that's not going to happen.

Still, they keep having some fun, whether it's smacking holes in trees or tumbling and jumping on people's heads, or

flinging each other into mountains and branches, or pelting adversaries with dirt clods in an improvised war. But their fun doesn't, can't last forever. You see, apart from the fact that some people wander away and perhaps lose interest in the Things, wanting to branch out with other friends, even the sun itself isn't going to last forever. Perhaps the most depressing aspect of the film is early on seeing Max's face as a teacher tells him that even our solar system's sun will one day grow dark. After it kills what's left of humanity when it goes supernova, of course. Heart-warming child-friendly message if I ever heard one.

Max, being a kid king, is as bad or worse than any regular king of our own earthly experience or history, not only because he rules solely with his heart, without thinking about the effects of his actions or edicts, but because even in this fantastical realm, being somewhat burned out Victorian forests, he can't change people's or Things' hearts. Jealousy, anger, sadness, feeling rejected, fear at abandonment will dog them all, literally and figuratively, and seemingly it's only when Max accepts this (and presumably his childhood ends in that very moment, along with the realisation of his own mortality), will he be ready to perhaps travel back to his family.

There's no narration or narrator, no-one explicitly points out the film's themes in ham-fisted ways, no-one learns important life lessons today, nothing is wrapped up in a neat little package, and Max is perhaps just as prone to moodiness and sadness at film's end as he was at the beginning. The only difference is that maybe he missed his family a bit along the way. And he hung out with some cool monsters! In Australia, no less.

When Max speaks he speaks the jumbled fantastical crap that a kid could speak (filtered through Spike Jonze's particular brand of Asperger's and childishness), mixing together stuff about Vikings, vampires, dinosaurs and robots and all sorts of nonsense. Even if his acting was a bit mannered, and a bit too arch for something kids are supposed to relate to, he is in no way wise beyond his years. Far from it, and the film is the better for it.

For something so fantastical, there's something sweet, warm and yet sad about all of it, especially the way it ends, with a plaintive howl rather than joy. Maybe I can take comfort from the perhaps overreaching belief that Max returns with a more well-integrated personality, reconciling the different aspects of his own character in a way relevant to a child, as a path to growing eventual emotional maturity, but it's just as possible to see that Max is still going to be the highly emotional, creative and destructive brat that he ever was, only that he'll avoid biting his mum in future. Who knows. The ending leaves it open, as a consolation, but in avoidance of the kind of treacly ending that leaves a bad taste in most people's mouths at the end of kiddie fare. I don't, and probably no-one needs some prick telling them that it's important to be themselves, or that they should think about other people's feelings, or that it's wrong to make fun of other people for being different. Tell us something we don't know, geniuses.

For me the film's great strength, apart from the technical achievements with the Thing designs, which are, again, remarkable, is the way they capture feelings and ideas rather than the literal concepts. It's a feeling movie, not a thinking movie, though there's probably heaps to think about, and the feelings can shift quite wildly.

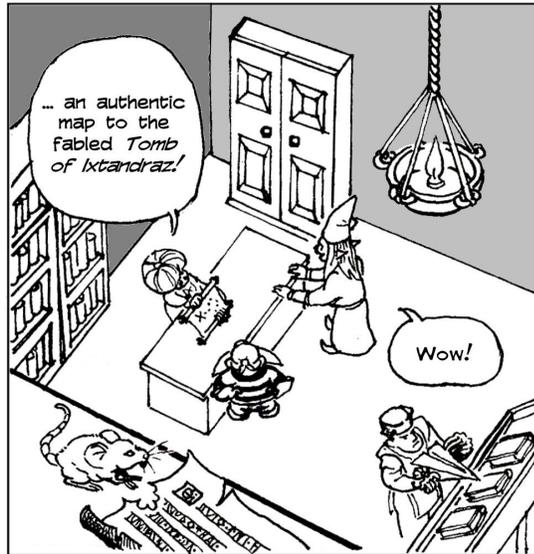
The Things are capable of great and terrible things, just like Max. Carol, who's capable of dreaming big and building great fun cities, is also just as likely to destroy his own creations and possibly even Max. Now he knows how God feels.

The film's defining image is probably a handheld camera capturing the jumbled footage of Max and the Things running down a hill into a quarry or down a sand dune towards the surf. The rush of emotion, all feeling -no thinking, joyous and connected, joined in action without having to think about all the complexities of the universe just yet.

I loved it, it moved me even as I had complaints about how 'cool' Spike Jonze went out of his way to make it, and at how indie-rock-cred the whole overused hipster soundtrack was, and I feel significantly more towards the movie than I feel towards the original book. It'll be many years before I think I'd show it to my little girl, but I'll be happy to watch it again and again until I think she's ready for its beauty and unique charms. Truth is, though, she's probably never going to appreciate it that much until she reaches her thirties. I'll wait to watch it with her then, if she likes.

G&H

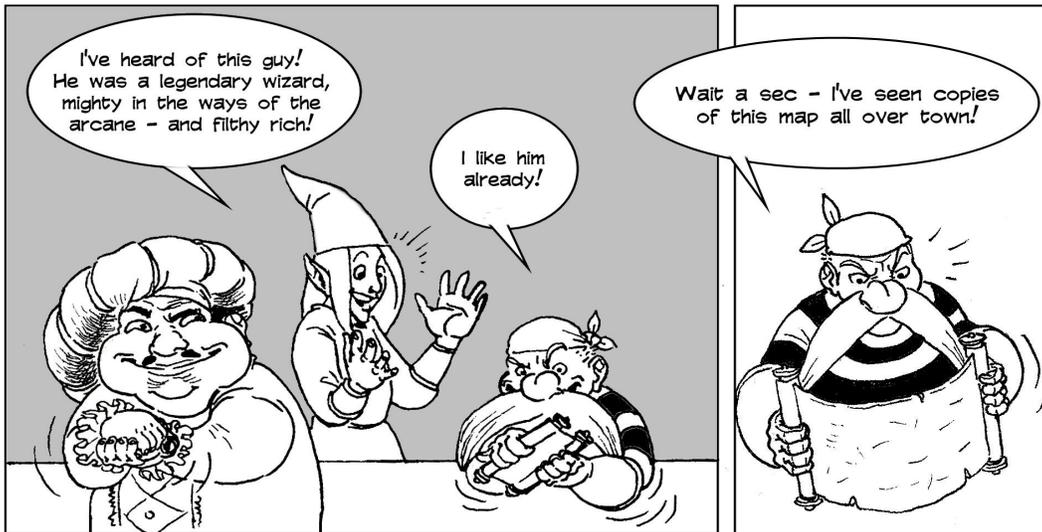
-by Jensen



Mooning Ixtandraz

PROLOGUE

(With apologies to Lee Barber)



IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF RPG REVIEW

**Talislantia ...
Cthulhu Congo
Crisis ... D20
Ralis: Ancient
Dragons of the
Bilybara (yes,
really this
time)... Horror
Retrospective
and Reviews:
Kult, Chill,
Ravenloft, Little
Fears and More
... Fright Checks
in GURPS ...
Spirit Conflicts
in RQ/BRP**

