

Chapter 4

Supplementary material, reception, and influence

Supplementary material

The promised adventure Leigh Cliffs, which might have been a scenario for FW, was never published. The book went through multiple printings, with at least three for Stein & Day. At some point between the publication of FW and his untimely death, Galloway proposed a sequel to FW and even sent a sample chapter to Stein & Day. Long believed lost⁶⁶, the chapter and plans for the rest of the book have been rediscovered among papers passed to Nick Lowe by Bruce

Galloway's parents
after his passing.
Quarrie (1981)



summarized the plan thus:

We are now planning a 'Vol II' which will essentially concern itself with cultures and beliefs, European, Mediterranean and Indo-Asian, from circa 600 BC to 400 AD, and any ideas for improvements over VOL I would be gratefully received.

In fact Galloway's plans were quite detailed. He and Quarrie were confident

that the core rules of FW would work for the classical period, given that medieval beliefs about magic owed so much to Mesopotamian and Greco-Roman ideas. The planned chapter breakdown would be to cover Eastern cultures (one chapter each for Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia, and the Levant), Classical cultures (Greece and Rome), barbarian cultures (Celts in one chapter and Germanic, Gothic, and Slavic in a second), followed by magic, religion, and a bestiary chapters incorporating all of these cultures' beliefs. The Appendix 5 of the present volume presents the relevant documents, so I will not attempt to summarize them further. Notably,

however, the plans initially called for some contributions by both Bruces, Lowe, and Hodson-Smith, but eventually only the Bruces and Lowe were assigned parts of the work. The second volume was expected to have relatively few additional rules. We have a draft of one rule for how deities “fade away” if neglected, and one completed table for the Mesopotamian/Sumerian pantheon and some monster characteristics. His plan seems to have been for a short summary of the rules to be included, with new tables for various magical and religious calculations. He hoped Lowe would help him with this, while Quarrie was to compile new warrior tables and anything needed for the combat rules (new weapons/armors, perhaps adding chariots to the mass combat factors?).

In spite of Galloway’s ideas and extensive notes, the second volume was not to

“We are now planning a ‘Vol II’ which will essentially concern itself with cultures and beliefs, European, Mediterranean and Indo-Asian, from circa 600 BC to 400 AD, and any ideas for improvements over VOL I would be gratefully received.”

~ Quarrie (1981)

be. Quarrie’s new position as a publicist for PSL made him unavailable for the planned contributions (principally covering the combat rules as noted above, plus additional material on Mithraism and Arthurian Britain). Lowe meanwhile was completing his dissertation and planning to move on to a full time career in academia. He reports that the assignments given to him by Galloway (covering the whole classical section, reviewing the rules as noted above, and also all of the bestiaris) were a source of anxiety. Galloway himself appears to have

⁶⁶ My original note said: “The Stein & Day Publishers Records and Sol Stein Papers archives at Columbia University were searched in August 2013 by librarian Tara C. Craig, to no avail. Stein (1989) notes that several boxes of documents intended for the archives were taken by BookCrafters before Columbia could retrieve them from the Stein & Day building. David Stein reports having no knowledge of the proposal, but speculated that any old files from Stein & Day not at Columbia would have long ago been lost after Stein & Day was acquired in a hostile takeover by BookCrafters. (D. Stein, personal communication, June 18, 2020) Of course there is no way to know if Stein & Day would have set any correspondence related to FW aside for the archives to begin with.” Here the trail went cold, until Nick Lowe unearthed the papers reproduced in the appendices of the present volume.

given up on the project, focusing instead on publishing his own dissertation, books on hiking in East Anglia, and political activism.

No third-party products were made for the game or published in magazines. Indeed there are only traces of the game to be found in reviews and entries in reference books. However interest in the game was never completely extinguished, and a few web sites offer useful play aids that summarize and explain elements of the game.

Galloway's papers include some correspondence from readers offering suggestions or asking for clarifications of the rules. These are discussed above in the chapter-by chapter analysis of the rules.

Trimboli (n.d.) presents a web site with explanations of some of the rules of the game as well as some tweaks to the combat rules. There is also a character-generation walkthrough, and errata for the weapons table (one page is missing from the first printing of the mass market edition) and Warriors Table (weapons and armor are mis-numbered in all editions, presumably reflecting changes that were made to the table at some point). These notes should help anyone interested in trying out the game. Trimboli also comments on some of the forums under the user name "Stormcrow."⁶⁷

Writer G.L. Dearman set up a web page for a campaign to try out the rules as well (Dearman, 2008). This site has handouts and background information on *FW* for players who were going to play a campaign under his direction. Unfortunately the website has not been updated since the first game session, which was apparently devoted to character generation. The handouts however would be useful for anyone planning a game. His house rules reflect recommendations that have appeared in various discussion threads and blogs: female characters begin at age 18 with two experience levels and division by zero is avoided for zero level characters to permit them to gain experience from combat and cast spells at zero level. He also permits choice of zodiac sign and more flexibility in rolling starting scores and bogeys.

In September 2015, "Thane" created a blog with posts to assist character generation, reorganizing the rules for the Mage types, Cleric types, and so on, called "Beer and Brigantine" (Thane, 2015). Unfortunately the posts stopped abruptly in December 2016.

Various online discussion threads and blog entries also discuss the game and suggest house-rules or rulings to cover lacunas in the game itself. These are mentioned below.

⁶⁷ *SuStel*" on *RPGnet* and "*SuStel_DAT*" on *Board Game Geek/RPG Geek*.

Reviews and notices

Because *FW* was published by mainstream publishers, rather than games specialists, it received a bit of notice outside of RPG fandom and scholarship. The trade periodical *Bookseller* (Fantasy Wargaming, 1980) dryly noticed *FW* as “An introduction to the dungeons and dragons cult” (p. 1463). The *American Bookseller* (Fantasy Wargaming, 1981) has a slightly expanded notice: “Explains for the layman the fascination of the blooming ‘dungeons and dragons’ cult and shows how anyone can become a chairborne warrior or wizard” (p. 138). Curry and Featherstone (2008) list *FW* on the timeline of wargaming history, amongst other publications that brought wargaming to the general public. In fact *FW* has the distinction of being the only publication noted there for 1981.

The October 10, 1981 *Cambridge Evening News* had a short notice of the book’s publication (Gaskell, 1981). The piece is very brief, but claims a central place for Cambridge in the rise of RPGs in the UK, noting that the UK distributors of *D&D* are in Cambridge, as are the authors of the newly released *FW*. The article describes the authors as “an editor, two Ph.D. students, a schoolteacher and a university lecturer.” This characterization is similar to Quarrie’s (Quarrie, 1981) but does not quite ring true. It might be accurate if the “university lecturer” were replaced with “insurance salesman.” The article of is little interest apart from a largish reproduction of one of Heath’s chapter illustrations.

Within the literature of the RPG hobby, *FW* received a fair amount of attention within the UK, especially among fanzines. But *FW* was not reviewed in the largest and most influential gaming magazines of the time: *White Dwarf*

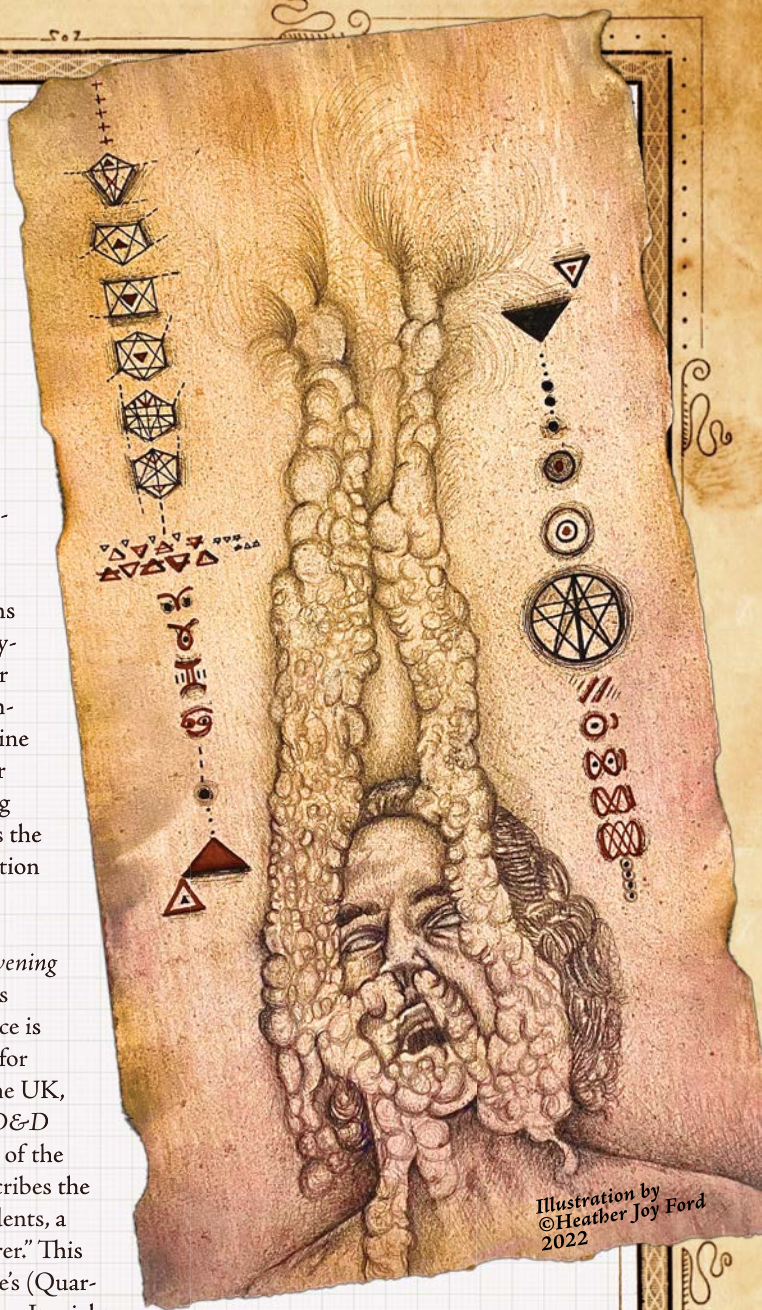


Illustration by
©Heather Joy Ford
2022

and *The Dragon*. It did however enjoy a mention in the news column of *White Dwarf* (*The Star*, 1981). There, the hobby news presented as a spoof of the tabloid *The Star*, has a short article worth quoting in full:

UNIVERSITY DON EXPOSES CULT SHOCK. 'You may begin to believe that magic might really work', says Bruce. University lecturer Bruce Galloway has just edited a book 'lifting the lid' off the current *Dungeons & Dragons* cult. The book, published by Patrick Stephens Ltd, explains how it originated, how the newcomer can get started, and how the experienced play can make his game more enjoyable. History, culture, society, economy, myths, magical and religious beliefs, armour, weapons, military organisation and magic and combat systems are all covered in this comprehensive work. The book *Fantasy Wargaming* is not without humor as the subtitles to the chapters – A Poniard in Your Codpiece – show.⁶⁸

Because *The Dragon* was published in the U.S., it would not be noticed until the U.S. edition was published a year later, as described below. Other smaller magazines reviewed it and did not rate it highly.

The first review appears to be in the fanzine *DragonLords*. Gascoigne (1981) wrote a review pairing *FW* with a review of *Holmes* (1981), and pans them both as "obituar[ies]" for *D&D*. *FW* specifically is faulted on many fronts as a "misleading, misguided attempt at foisting yet another set of antiquated rules" (p. 24) on consumers.⁶⁹ The historical essays are derided as "CSE-level history."⁷⁰ Gascoigne reads *FW*'s main concern to be with "realism" and launches a snarky, humorous attack on the book for including unrealistic ideas such as magic, God, and monsters. The review also finds fault with the reading recommendations, and considers the rules to be little more than a wargame with rules for character generation tacked on. This review stands in contrast to the others that would follow, as Gascoigne's criticisms almost perfectly invert the criticisms others will level – as we will see, most of the other criticisms find the essays useful while deriding the excessively complex roleplaying rules, and complain that the wargaming aspect is underdeveloped. He concludes: "*Fantasy Wargaming* has been written by a bunch of wargamers pretending to be roleplayers, for God-Knows-Who."

⁶⁹ Because *Holmes* (1981) was published at about the same time as 'FW', and like 'FW' was published by a mainstream publisher rather than a specialist games publisher with a fairly generic title, the two works, as different as they are, appeared in the same column or as in this case were paired in reviews.

⁷⁰ Certificate of Secondary Education, the equivalent of a high-school course in the U.S.

⁷¹ I. Marsh, personal communication, April 18, 2022.

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Introduction (2000)
Preface & acknowledgments.

Introduction Acknowledgments → Bruce.

SECTION ONE: THE CULTURES.

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Chapter Six: The Celts. (5000)

Chapter Seven: The Vikings. (5000)

Part C: Barbarian Cultures.

Chapter Seven: The Celts. (5000)

Chapter Eight: The Invaders. (5000)



You may begin to believe that magic might really work',

says Bruce.

SECTION TWO: ENHANCING THE GAME.

- Character Development.
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- Large Scale Combat.
- Warrior Tables.
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- Areas of Influence.
- Monsters and Magical Beings.



an assumption that they have FwI but including the basic magic, religion calculations (must be precisely the same)

Earliest Possible Submission Date: Christmas 1982.
Length: 60,000 words including approx 12 pages of illustrations and 25 page tables or semi-tabulated information.



THIS by War imag

WHAT with the respect at an all-time low, it's not too surprising that we are literally escaping to a world of fantasy.

Every week thousands of otherwise normal adults assume the roles of ancient warriors, knights, harlots, goddesses, and take part in scary adventures in castles, on-remote islands, using black magic, and human sacrifice.

Why haven't you ever seen "this in the 'Real World'?" you may ask.

The simple answer is that it's not all a game, but a real game, to judge by the devotion of its followers. In particular, pre-war games were a bridge where the

● WOULD you like to see more relating to this? please contact your local bookseller. It's possible to get a regular reading list. fully all will

● Bringing the character to life . . . one of 20 illustrations by Lawrence Heath in "Fantasy Wargaming."

IS WEEK

Foreign face of local radio

by John Gaskell

r for the ginative



THE most sought-after vacancies in the area this year must be those advertised by the BBC for its Radio Cambridgeshire station, which takes to the air next spring.

Around 1,000 people applied as reporters and producers there were And

the nation's self-abode and of "Dun... all-time low it isn't. Fantasy that some of us escaping into a gated to the game. sy. It has thousands of Patrick normal, respectable hardback ors, priests, brazen pieces" the me Un' an at magic, white magic ing. wo. sacrifice. en't you read about the "News of this stu... le answer is that it's but a most absorbing suture un... dge by the fanaticism r... wners. It seems to be prevalent in Cambr... re the UK distributors

ULD the anonymo... to the design of a... to publish your p... readers for the cr... will soon be expl

Midgard's Brightest Daily

The Star

Still only 50p

LIVINGSTONE LASHES OUT AT ALIEN



FROM OUR BIRMINGHAM REPORTER

"I honestly thought earth was being invaded", said a shocked Ian Livingstone, editor of White Dwarf, last week in Birmingham to open the new Games Workshop shop where the group of "alien" appeared. They turned out to be the Tarn-Opening Society, who were also there to celebrate the opening. George Barnes, their leader, suffered no injury in Ian's attack and said that he would still continue to read White Dwarf.

30,000 gp FANTASTIC HOBBIT-BASHING COMPETITION!

SEE PAGE 94

UNIVERSITY DON EXPOSES CULT SHOCK

"You may begin to believe that magic might really work", says Bruce.

★ YOUR STAR PIN-UP



University lecturer Bruce Galloway has just edited a book 'Gift: Dungeons & Dragons cult: The player's guide', which explains how it can be used as a hobby for people who enjoyable. History, culture, society, religious beliefs, art, weapons, and combat systems are all covered in this comprehensive work. The book, Fantasy Warning: is not without humour - as the subtitles to the chapters - a Pinard in your Cadence - show.

BEYOND THE FRINGE

The fringes of the Imperium have been charted by Paradoxia's new book, Beyond the Fringe: The other, The Wanderer's Press, all approved for use with other new releases from Paradoxia. Traveller are: Space - a play-aid covering secret services of the Star Sector; Omega - a GM's aid for Space Opera; Wild West - a role-playing game set in... val. 3 games, Zodiak - an SF board game; Omega Trail - an role-playing board game of western air equipment; and a Space Opera supplement.



Joe's home is his castle

A vacation ravaged world is the inheritance for the survivors of World War III in FGL's new role-playing game, Aftermath. As the survivors try to go into the ruins, the first scenario for the FGL are: Marriage Bet - a Star Sector; a GM's aid for Space Opera; Wild West - a role-playing game set in... val. 3 games, Zodiak - an SF board game; Omega Trail - an role-playing board game of western air equipment; and a Space Opera supplement.



Joe Dewar spent hours defending his castle against a horde of orcs. "It's moving in here", said the neighbourhood. The siege took place in Joe's 20mm fantasy war game demonstration at this year's Comicon, which again attracted a record attendance. Elsewhere the event Michael Bunting and the F. Games, Fighting Competitions with Commendations going to P. Michie, Brian Cameron, P. T. Brown, Humphreys and J. C. West. Competitions. Andrew Trappell won the Apocalypse Trappell Competition and 1st, 2nd and 3rd in the D&D Competition were C. Alexander, I. Perera and C. Hignham.

Later, an or spokesman said that they would not refer to the incident to the Race Relations Board.

MORE FUN IN YOUR NEXT ISSUE!

Coming up in your next issue is the new issue of White Dwarf. An AD&D Counterstrike - the space travel module featured in the 26 & 27. The Magic Jar - A character conversion system.

★ ANOTHER EXCLUSIVE ★
★ YOUR WHITE-HOT STAR ★

Gascoigne's savage review would also be singular in that it would be the only one to elicit a public response. Bruce Quarrie (1981) wrote a reply for the following issue of *DragonLords*, addressing Gascoigne's criticisms point by point. Apart from taking issue with Gascoigne's tone and rhetoric, Quarrie defends the rules themselves as the product of "many hours of discussion and analysis of existing role-playing systems," and in particular the innovative "unified field theory"

of magic and the scalable mass combat system. The editors of *DragonLords* followed Quarrie's heated reply with a call for comments from the zine's readers, but no readers answered the call.⁷¹

Different Worlds published one of the first reviews in a dedicated RPG magazine (Stafford, 1981). Greg Stafford is a fairly well-known figure in RPG history, and his review reads a bit like a disappointed professor's comments on a promising undergraduate's paper. The title of the review ("Another editorial blunder") sums it up. This would be the longest and most detailed review the game seems to have gotten at the time, discounting later reviews that would appear on the internet decades later. Stafford has some positive comments about the background essays, and expresses disappointment that the book makes the claim that it will present a complete FRPG. He notices the different voices authoring each section, and the resulting lack of overall consistency. Most of all he finds fault with the editor for failing to make the real intent of the project clear. It is hard to disagree with his criticisms, and perhaps the authors should take some

⁷² Stephen R. Turnbull, the noted author on samurai, was able to confirm that he is not the author (S. Turnbull, personal communication, April 18, 2022). The late Don Turnbull was of course a well-known writer and editor in the UK RPG scene, and we might speculate that this Stephen Turnbull was a relation of Don, but there is no particular evidence for this.



heart from the fact that someone so “big” in the industry took such an interest in the book. As the author of several classic games and supplements, his opinion should carry some weight.

About the same time, the house organ of game publisher SPI, *Phoenix*, carried a short book review (Wilson, 1981) of *FW*. The reviewer is admittedly unfamiliar with RPGs in general, and while he calls the “impressive reading” he expresses dissatisfaction that it does not compete with, so much as compliment, Holmes (1981). Wilson particularly enjoyed the background chapters and the bestiary, but balks at buying a copy of the book “unless you’re into that kind of gaming.”

Military Modelling, a popular magazine devoted to the hobby of collecting, building, and painting military models, noted *FW* as well in its unsigned book review (On Parade, 1981). It praises the book as a highly anticipated introduction to fantasy wargaming, and gives it a rating of “Recommended.”

S.E.W.A.R.S., the newsletter of the South Essex Wargames and Roleplaying Society, published an appreciative review of *FW* (Oliver & Baylis, 1981). The two authors are impressed by the scholarship and detail, but lament the lack of an index. They note that they did not actually play the game, but conclude that the book is a “pleasure to read” and recommend it to anyone interested in trying something new.

From among Galloway’s files provided by Lowe, I found one more review with a very unclear source, as the clipping is of a single page with no caption or running head (Turnbull, 1981?). It seems to be an A5 sized digest, and as it is typewritten with an illustration clipped from an advertisement for the book, my best guess is that it belongs to a fanzine. The clipping has “Dragon Claw” hand-written on the upper right. I could find no other reference to such a zine, but it might be the name of regular column in some other title. It is signed “Stephen Turnbull,” although I have not been able to identify the author further.⁷² The review is enthusiastic and places *FW* in the “third generation” of RPGs – the first generation being “D&D, plus the instant rip-offs it inspired”; the second being “AD&D, *Chivalry & Sorcery*, and so on,” while the third includes “*Runequest ...*, *Dragonquest*, and now... *Fantasy Wargaming*.” The author is especially appreciative of the personality traits (Lust, Greed, etc.) as they help define a character’s role: “A system now exists whereby real role-playing can occur.”

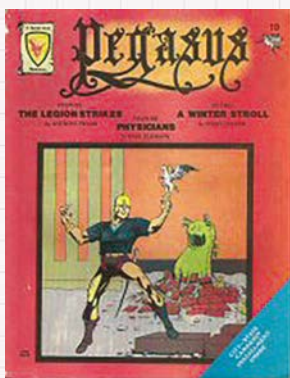
The American edition’s publication, and especially the wide distribution of the book club edition, led to a pair of reviews in 1982. The most influential American gaming magazine, *The Dragon*, mentioned but never reviewed *FW*. It is cited approvingly in an article on legal systems in fantasy worlds, where Greenwood (1982) quotes a passage on the relative strength of the crown in different countries but makes no comment on the rest of the work. Two years later a letter to the editors singled out as a game imposing more severe penalties on female characters than

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons (Golding, 1984). The reviews would appear in smaller magazines.

Space Gamer featured a mixed review by Armintrout (1982). Mr. Armintrout is now best known as the editor of a web site devoted to gaming miniatures (*The Miniatures Page*), but was also involved in the RPG scene. His review in the “Capsule Reviews” column mentions a few positives: parts of the magic system, the extensive background chapters, the idea of including heraldic beasts as monsters, and the influence of the zodiac on character attributes. But on the whole his review is very negative: “the game is abysmal,” he writes, and “I’ve never seen a worse game” (p. 29). He found the rules vague and was particularly offended by the notion that a player would have to roll to determine how their character reacts to temptations, and whether they can resist the orders of a leader. Moreover there is not enough help designing adventures, in his view, and the background chapters are not especially good compared to what one might find in any good library. It’s tempting to defend *FW* here – after all, the whole point of including the background chapters is to save the reader from having to reproduce the authors’ work, and there are in fact some general pointers on adventure design in both the criticism of *D&D* and the sections on the Celtic, Dark, and High Middle Ages. But a game master looking for practical pointers on challenging PCs, placing treasures or magic items, and running a campaign will indeed be disappointed. Whether the rules for temptations and leadership are welcome will be a matter of taste.

Cram (1982) reviewed *FW* in the Judges Guild magazine *Pegasus*. Cram’s review notes the historical essays with appreciation, singling out chapter IV (on warfare and combat) for praise, but considered the rules too unclear and complicated to learn for any but the most dedicated players: “DMs and Judges will probably find it useful and interesting, but, as a game, it will appeal only

to those dedicated players who must have total realism at whatever cost to playability” (p. 93). He also finds fault with the magic system as Mages will need to devise their own spells using the complex and ambiguous rules. Cram is also notable as the sole contemporary reviewer to find the game sexist: “This is a very male-chauvenist [sic] game. Women are relegated to traditional roles and severely [sic] limited in what they can do” (p. 91). This criticism would be taken up much later in online discussions.





My first thought on picking up this book was - "7".
Then after I had a brief look through and realised what it was - "Oh no not another FRP system."
This is the tale of what went on from there.

The so-called "Third Generation" Role Playing Games are now well under way in Gaming society. "First Generation" was D&D, plus the instant rip-offs it engendered. These were self-contradictory, spotty, and generally not very well designed. The "Second Generation" was AD&D, Chivalry and Sorcery, and so on, which while being more sensible in layout and logically thoughtout, still suffered from the hangovers of the "First Generation". Now we have the "Third Generation", Runequest was probably the first, then Dragonquest, and now....
Fantasy Wargaming

So I turned to Character Generation, - sargh!
Dozens of characteristics - looks like C&S on a bad day, Astrology, Lust Greed - where will it all end? But read the reasoning and they (the writers) make good sense. When is a role-playing game not a role-playing game? - When the players don't play roles!
A system now exists whereby real role-playing can occur.

Next stop Combat, well I have my own ideas on that subject - but this is the only system I have met which gives you a method of changing the scale of play, from 1:1 play (i.e. Dungeoning) up to 500:1 or more (i.e. extremely big table topping). For those of you who have read "The Book of Pth" - those armies of billions can be played out.

Then onto Magic - when I skimmed through it it seemed OK, but again quite like C&S - how wrong could I be? This book is divided into two halves, the second half gives you the playing rules, but the first half covers the history of the period used, - and uncovers, obliterates, and wipes the floor with the destructive misuse of the various mythos, as practiced by some others in the field of FRP. It also explains in plain terms medieval magic, (with reference to source books), how it worked, and how the FW system operates. They have finally united Magic and Religion into one sensible, fully workable system, with no exceptions. To be frank it is excellent. No spell lists, no miracles. There are "Mana points", but these are very cleverly used. Any spell is possible if you have the power.

As far as religions are concerned, while only Christian, Diabolic, and Norse religions are covered in the book it would be easy to extend it without causing any contradictions. It is perfectly feasible to have any god and any sect included within the set up without causing any problems, (except maybe arguments in the heavens). The Lawfully - Chaotic alignment becomes redundant, but an excellent system of Virtues, Sins and Piety covers what AD&D and C&S failed to do, and other systems ignore.

You may have gathered from the tone of this review that I like the book - well I couldn't recommend it more, and at £7.95 it compares very favourably with the other source books on the market.

Well done Stephen Turnbull

Fantasy Wargaming was compiled and edited by Bruce Galloway, and is published by Patrick Stephens Ltd.

The next and most enthusiastic review we find is in *Adventurer* magazine (Vincent, 1986), a relatively short-lived publication. While the review here is relatively positive, it is also a bit contrarian, praising the game as self-contained, realistic, and as having an “inspired” article on GMing. It is notable that this review, which is explicitly of the PSL edition, comes five years after it was published. This seems to be the last notice the book got until the dawn of the internet.

Alarums and Excursions, a long-lived fanzine, included a brief review by Nick Parenti (2002), a used game dealer and frequent contributor to the zine. He notes some of the same weaknesses already mentioned (lack of organization, complexity) and adds that the heraldic monsters are odd. Moreover, he writes, the gods, saints, and demons are given combat statistics that would never come into play. He does allow some of the strengths others noted, but ends by saying the reader’s money would be better spent calling a wrong number at random.

When *FW* was published, several other books on roleplaying games were also appearing. Livingstone (1981), Holmes (1981), and Plamondon (1982) appeared at about the same time as *FW*, and so none of these mention *FW* in their surveys of available games. Albrecht and Stafford (1984) do not include *FW* among the handful of RPGs they review either. Butterfield et al. (1984) mention *FW* in their bibliography as one of the only nonfiction books about D&D (aside from Holmes, 1981), but do not otherwise comment on the contents.

Two major surveys of the field would be published in the 1990s and these both notice *FW*.

Swan (1990) gives *FW* one star (the lowest rating) and calls it “among the worst RPGs ever published” (p. 84). His review begins with the note that the term “wargaming” is misleading⁷³ and then criticizes the introductory essays (“rambling, dry, and mostly superfluous to the game it supposedly supports”) and use of astrology and the System of Correspondences as “pointless” (p. 84). His rating system admittedly puts a great deal of importance on presentation, an area most reviewers note is poor in *FW*. His criticisms of the essays and magic system (which most reviewers praise) stand out. He also finds the

⁷³ A point other more recent reviewers focus on as well, owing perhaps to the fact that while “fantasy wargaming” was the common usage for RPGs in the 1970s, by the 1980s “roleplaying games” was the more familiar term.

⁷⁴ Indeed Dixon falls somewhere between the “moral panic” writers mentioned below and pure scholarship. His book is focused on criticizing the amorality of capitalist marketing and production and these forces impose cultural values” as “of capitalist marketing and how toys and games impose cultural values.

references to Black Masses “distasteful,” which is understandable for an American reviewer writing during the “satanic panic.” Swan had access only to the book club edition, and while he attempted to provide “buyer’s note” for all the games listed, there is no mention of the trade or UK editions.

Schick (1991) aims to be a complete bibliography of RPGs, for gamers and collectors. He does not offer critical reviews but instead aims for concise descriptions. The three sentence summary for *FW* notes that the rules are “rather complex” (p. 157) and mentions the historical essays and distinctive features of the game already noted by the other reviewers. The entry also notes all three editions of the book.

Perhaps the most unexpected early mentions of *FW* is in the literature of computer gaming. Several books in The Virgin Computer Games Series (for example Gifford et al., 1984, Pillinger & Olesh, 1984, and Way, 1984), share a bibliography which mentions *FW*. This series presents BASIC computer games, meant to be typed into various home computers. The bibliography lauds *FW* as useful inspiration for adventure games:

Fantasy Wargaming (compiled Bruce Galloway, published Patrick Stephens) provides a complete unified system for ‘historically accurate’ (or at least in tune with the beliefs and circumstances of individuals in the peasant, feudal-economy times in which many Adventures are set) games. The fight, weapon and monster tables alone are worth the book, as many of their ideas can easily be incorporated into your Adventures.” (Gifford et al., 1984, p. 125)

The idea that *FW* will be useful to computer game designers is reinforced in another brief review in *Commodore User* magazine (Ransley, 1984). The review emphasizes both the background chapters and the rules as a “treasure trove of information” and concludes that “if you have half a mind to start writing your own board or computer-based fantasy games, there’s absolutely loads in it to help. I can’t believe that anyone will ever produce a better book of this kind.” (p. 54)

A few outliers in this review of the literature are books for educators and librarians. One notable book on toys and games (Dixon, 1990) refers to *FW* only to discuss some of the book recommendations from chapter V in its own chapter on role-playing games. Dixon’s work is largely critical of mass market recreation, and raises concerns about the values promulgated by fantasy fiction and fantasy games without singling out *FW* for criticism.⁷⁴ Montgomery (1993) includes *FW* in a bibliography of RPGs without comment. Similarly, Allard (1990) includes *FW* as the only “general source” on the subject of fantasy gaming or war games, perhaps attesting more to the wide distribution of the book than its authoritativeness.

A number of books on the rise of the RPG as a recreation, and on the history of particular publishers and games have been published, but as a whole they

neglect to mention *FW*. Gygax (1987) naturally focused on *D&D*, but an appendix listing currently available games does not mention *FW*. Likewise Gygax (1989) makes no mention of *FW* as a possible resource for GMs. However at least one member of Gary Gygax's gaming circle, Mike Mornard, is said to have appreciated and run *FW*, (Trimboli, 2020) so it is possible Gygax was aware of the book. Fannon (1996) focuses on mainstream RPGs, and omits *FW* (and most independent RPGs) from its timeline; reviews are provided only for games widely available at the time of writing. Brown and Lee (1998) also make a brief mention of the book, summarizing it: "A role-playing game, despite the title; a convoluted fantasy game based on astrology" (p. 192).

Several popular histories/memoirs of gaming were published in the 2000s and 2010s. Barrowcliffe (2008), Gilsdorf (2009), and Ewait (2013) have no mention of *FW*. Peterson (2012) focuses exclusively on the lineage of *Dungeons & Dragons*, and while he discusses some derivative games he makes no mention of *FW*. Similarly, Appelcline (2013-2014) does not touch on PSL or Stein & Day, instead focusing on game publishers, so *FW* has no place in that work either. Arnaudo (2018) uses *FW* to introduce the connection between wargames and RPGs but says nothing about the game itself.

FW has received some mention in scholarship related to RPGs. Fine (1983) does not encounter any *FW* players, but his work was being conducted before *FW* would hit American shores. Punday (2010) mentions *FW* in a footnote (p. 160), as an early example of the complaints about *D&D*'s "heterogeneous nature."⁷⁵ Torner (2015) examines *FW*'s combat procedures as a refinement of those in *D&D*, leading a movement to strive for increased simulationist realism. Drury (2011) and Hume and Drury (2013) in their discussions of magic in roleplaying quote *FW* as an authority. Drury (2011) quotes *FW* on worldbuilding and the centrality of commands in spellcasting, while Hume and Drury (2013) cite *FW*'s theory of magic and the hierarchy of Mages outlined in the game.

In the book *Digital Gaming Re-imagines the Middle Ages*, White (2014) finds that *FW*'s piety and religion rules encourage "players to react to the game world in a way that evokes medieval European cultural attitudes. In general, this aspect of Fantasy Wargaming was not widely appreciated then or now." (p. 22) White also notes many table-top gamers remember *FW* as confusing, idiosyncratic, and unplayable, but notes that some also contest this opinion.

⁷⁵ Punday (2005) is essentially an earlier draft of the chapter in Punday (2010) and cites *FW* in the same way.

FW was recognized as an early example of “staged resolution” in its mechanics (Casey, 2003). Staged resolution is defined as “breaking the resolution of an action or task down into separate steps in which different things are resolved” (Casey, 2003, paragraph 1). It is considered a useful mechanic as it breaks down successes and failures into discrete areas, giving the player an idea of whether a failed attempt could be salvaged or re-tried, encourages player cooperation, and generally makes a game more engaging.

Perhaps the longest-running discussion of *FW* is at the RPG.net Forum, spanning 2004 to the present (The Grey Elf, 2004). While the comments are mostly scattered observations and skepticism about the playability of the game, this thread is among the most civil and patient of the online discussions. Another discussion, again focused on the playability of the rules, ran its course in 2005 (Johansen, 2005). The most detailed discussion is an RPG.net “Let’s Read” thread on *FW* (Felix, 2008). The large amount of discussion there makes it clear that many dedicated RPG fans have run into *FW* at bookstores, libraries, and elsewhere. Felix compares the structure and layout of the book to modern RPG publications, noting that it lacks such common elements as credits for play-testers, signed artwork, and credits for layout. But importantly it also notes the underlying “system” for task resolution, and

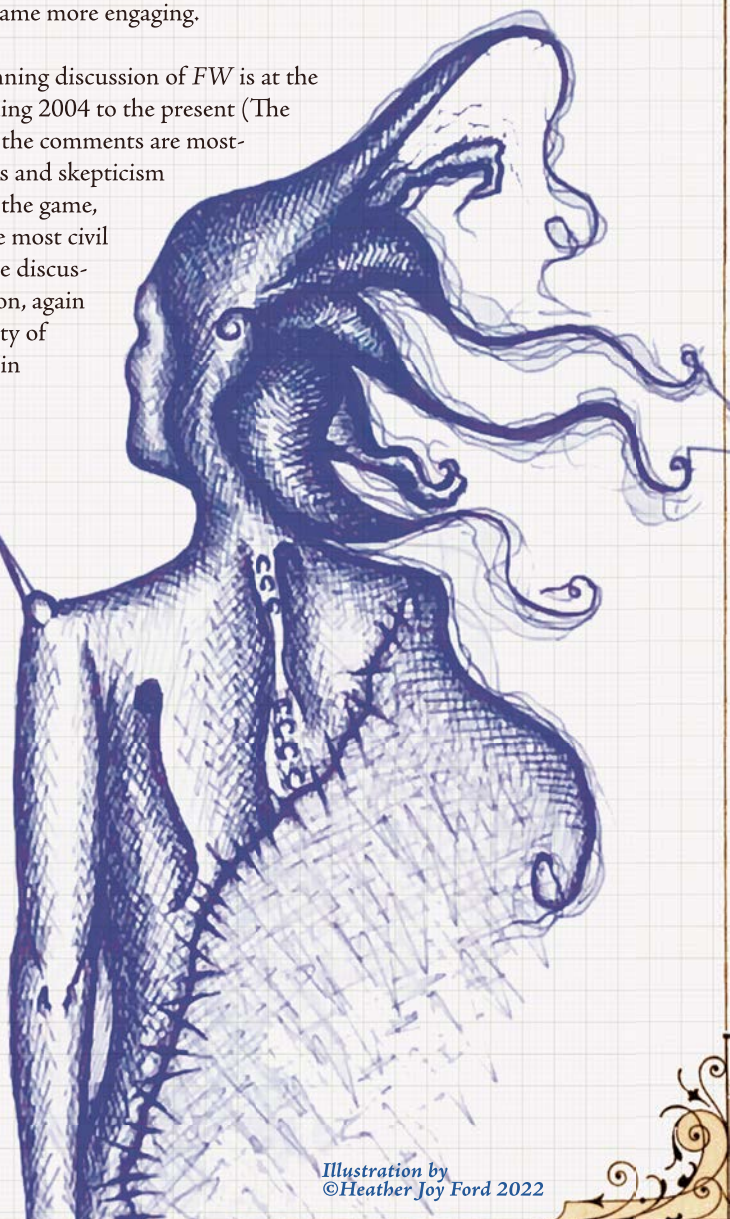


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With a thorough rewrite and

revision, this could have been one of the greatest fantasy roleplaying

games of all time. As it stands, it is still one of the most valuable for

(actual and would-be) game

designers to examine for ideas.

(Faoladh 2012a-i)

Earliest Possible Submission Date: Christmas 1982.

Length: 60,000 words including approx 12 pages of illustrations and 25 page tables or semi-tabulated information.

→ Base.

→ Base of each chapter being Base 0

→ assumption

→ that the game was written

→ by the major religion calculation (must be precisely the same)

pays close attention to finding a design philosophy in the game. Felix's posts and the occasional comments from other gamers give a good sense of how *FW* was received both at the time of its publication and by modern gamers with the hindsight of thirty years. While the threads include a wide range of views, there is a consensus the *FW* was never particularly popular and many readers never tried playing it. Modern gamers are perhaps even less impressed with the game, since the standards for presentation changed significantly over the years and much more slick, carefully laid out graphic design is the norm.

A thread on the Dragonsfoot forums (Lord Gorath, 2005) covers much of the same ground as the RPG.net threads, but takes a deeper dive into understanding the rules. Among the commenters is David Trimboli, who developed the supplementary material mentioned above.

Faoladh (2012a-h) ran an eight-part series of blog posts taking a close look at the game and how the mechanics compare to other systems. While Faoladh finds many things to critique, including the usual problems with the organization of the game, he also notes consistency issues with the choices made for the bestiary (which is heavily tilted toward Celtic legends despite Chapter II's note that the Celtic world is not a focus for the game). He finds much to admire, however, including innovative rules, the copious designer's notes, and attention to historical detail. He concludes:

With a thorough rewrite and revision, this could have been one of the greatest fantasy roleplaying games of all time. As it stands, it is still one of the most valuable for (actual and would-be) game designers to examine for ideas. It is important for the history of gaming, as well. Its reputation among online gamers is largely undeserved, and the game should be sought out for examination, if nothing else. (Faoladh, 2012i)

There are two extended reviews of the game at the *Roleplaying Game Geek* website, both quite negative. The first (Williams, 2008) is titled "Fantasy Wargaming: Hangins' too good fer 'em!!" As the title gives away, it's a rather hostile review, but several of the criticisms are walked back based on feedback in the thread of comments that follow it. This is perhaps the first review to accuse the authors not only of poorly organizing the rules, but of multiple forms of bigotry: sexism, racism, and anti-Semitism. Several forum participants take issue with these claims, and Williams made several edits in 2011 to the review to correct some factual errors and soften some of the criticisms.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Williams (2013) is a verbatim re-post of the 2011 version of the review, without the subtitle "Hangins' too good fer 'em!!!"

The second RPG Geek review (Timmins, 2017) is a snarky critique of the game which takes exception to the stated goals of the writers, but is perhaps worth a read for the heated exchange between Timmins and David Trimboli in the ensuing thread, before moderators cut off the discussion. Timmins concludes: "If I had to sum this book up in one word, I guess I'd go with: 'NO'"

Finally, a number of blogs, podcasts, and YouTube channels have revisited *FW* in the past two decades. These can be categorized broadly as appreciations (which may find inspiration in the essays, rules, or sheer ambition of the writers) and send-ups (ranging from gentle ribbing to outright mockery of the game as the worst ever written).

I would classify fourteen of the social media sources as belonging to the first category. Maliszewski (2009) describes *FW* as the "weirdest RPG I ever owned," but ultimately concludes that he keeps and peruses his copy as a fond reminder that "the craziness of gamers has remained a glorious constant of the hobby for as long as I've been involved in it. May that never change." Ze Bulette (2009) is a short discussion of the pety rules in *FW* and how it might be adapted to other games. Modernkutuzov (2010) provides a brief appraisal of the game as an artifact of 1980s gaming. Monaco (2010) is a compilation of blog posts I made in the summer and fall of 2010, and much of the discussion of the rules in the present volume is adapted from this. The comments on this post lead to much more information about the authors. For example, the comment from "Fitzhorn" (Fitzhorn, 2013) contained information on Mike Hodson-Smith, and other comments led to email exchanges that filled in other information. Kinney (2013) has, about 42 minutes into the podcast, a short discussion of the game in a "where are they now?" segment. J.B. (2014) expresses enthusiasm for the rules along with skepticism that they can be run as written. Daniel (2016) gives a brief summary of the game, finding that the rules support the "recreation of medieval epics, romances and legends and not the sword & sorcery or Tolkienesque tales of certain other games." Ned (2016) briefly outlines the book with some commentary. He recommends the book for research but does not recommend trying to play it. Olde Schoole Rules (2016) is mostly appreciative of the book for inspiration but pans the rules. Magic Penny Productions (2018) is a video review, in four parts, focusing on summarizing the rules. De Goede (2020) is a review touching on the usual high and low points, with ratings of 3/5 for the rules, 5/5 for inspiration, and 1/5 for playability. Dead Games Society (2020) is another video review of the game,

⁷⁷ *F.A.T.A.L.* is still among the most reviled of all RPGs, insofar as gamers know of it. It is hyper-complex (and hence supposedly realistic) game that celebrates bigotry, sexual violence, and gore. The title is variously given as *Fantasy Adventure To Adult Lechery and From Another Time Another Land* in different editions of the game, the first edition being 901 pages.

with very little evaluation. Horvath and McGuire (2020) provide a nostalgic discussion of the rules and the history of the game. MHDebidour (2020) takes a short look at the book club edition with narration in French.

The second category consists of just five sources, although they tend to take much deeper dives into the material. Siskoid (2007) is the shortest take, with a brief, snarky take-down of the book, concluding:

“It’s F.A.T.A.L.⁷⁷ without the anal rape. It can be amusing to skim through as an example of how NOT to design an RPG. The System of Correspondencies [sic] is an interesting attempt at injecting medieval color, but it’s totally inefficient at doing so. In a weird way, it’s a sort of ancestor to *Ars Magica*.”

Aldrich and Taylor (2015) cover *FW* in their comedy podcast series. Many of their claims about the rules are inaccurate or misleading, but their intent is mostly comedic rather than objectivity. Captcorajus (2020) is a video review which highlights some websites created in support of *FW* (Dearman, 2008; Trimboli, n.d.) and recaps information from my blog (Monaco, 2010) before giving a quick review of *FW* as a game; it is noted as the first negative review in the series. The final ratings (out of 20) are: Style: 4, Presentation: 1; Value: 7; Overall: 4 (poor). One conclusion was that *FW* sought to solve problems that had already been addressed in the time between its conception and publication, which seems like a fair point. Mystic Mongol (n.d.) is a repost of a long review originally posted on the members-only forum *Something Awful*. The focus is on humor, largely accomplished through satire and mockery. While the reviewer appears to have little interest in the historical context of the book, s/he does attempt to be thorough and accurate. Finally Morgeson (2020) briefly notes that the different voices of the chapter authors were off-putting, and the rules too complex to understand because, he complains, one would have to read the whole book!

No discussion of RPGs in the twentieth century can ignore the “Satanic panic” that surrounded *D&D* and by extension all RPGs. Stackpole (1990) provides an exposé of some of the key players in the anti-RPG part of the Satanic panic, while Laycock (2015) gives a detailed overview of the movement and its motives. *FW*, despite being widely available, and despite the prominent depiction of a devil on the cover, seems to have mostly avoided direct mention in the literature. Weldon and Bjornstad (1984) promise to cover *D&D*, *T&T*, *Chivalry & Sorcery*, and “other fantasy games” but focus almost entirely on *D&D*, with little more than mentions of the listed games in addition to *RuneQuest* and the supplement *The Arduin Grimoire*. Leithart and Grant (1987) and Robie (1991) are more representative of the literature and focus exclusively on *D&D*. Larson (1989) is vaguely aware of a few other RPGs such as *Warhammer* and *Stormbringer*, but not *FW*. Perhaps the facts that relatively few games of *FW* seem to have been played and that the game remained obscure even within gaming circles despite the wide distribution in the U.S. account for it escaping notice. *FW* does get a

mention in Porter (1998) in a footnote recommending it (along with Butterfield et al., 1982, Livingstone, 1982, and Hackett, 1990) as a source on *D&D* by *D&D* players. However Porter's work is more fairly categorized as belonging to a moral concern, rather than a moral panic, movement. He does not condemn RPGs as a whole so much as raise concerns about how some RPGs affect children, from a deeply religious but comparatively reasonable position.



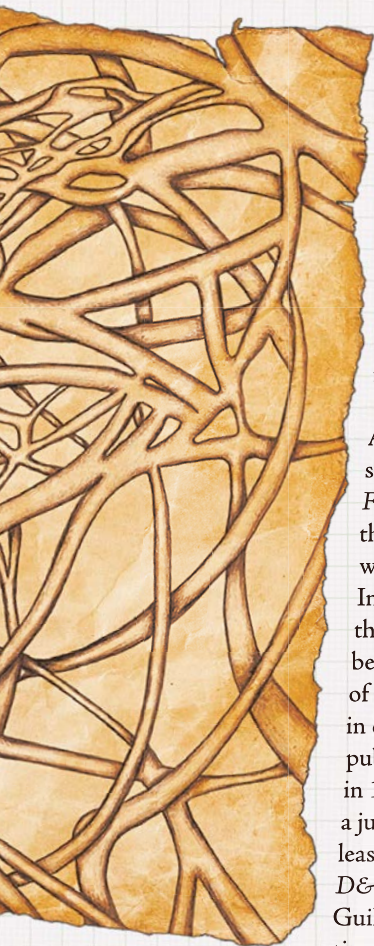
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Criticism

All discussions of *FW* as a rule set take note of the poor organization and layout of the rules. Some take issue with the tone of the writing, and find inconsistencies already noted in chapter three. But a few charges are repeated often enough to bear examination. First, there is the charge that *FW* is a “fantasy heart-breaker,” as defined by Edwards (2002). In an essay on game design, Edwards noted that many FRPGs published in the 1990s were largely derived from *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* mixed with ideas from other games, each with one great idea buried (heartbreakingly) in the rules. Edwards’ idea is often broadened to include any misguided attempts to improve upon *D&D*. Several reviews in the 2000s would therefore refer to *FW* as a fantasy heart-breaker in that broadened sense. But *FW* obviously does not meet the specific

criteria of Edwards’ idea – fantasy heart-breakers are a specific set of games published in the 1990s, with most of their rules taken from *D&D*, and attempting to correct perceived problems in the rules. There is really very little in common, mechanically, between *FW* and *D&D*. They certainly share some concepts such as randomly rolled characteristics, experience points, and levels, but *FW*’s issue with *D&D* and *T&T* was not rules so much as world-building and setting. Even so, there is undeniably a sense that Galloway, in particular, hoped to improve the FRPG hobby with his insights, whether or not the specific rules of the game should catch on.

And this leads to another criticism leveled against *FW* by some of the more prescient reviewers and critics. It is that *FW* seems to have arisen in a sort of vacuum, with the authors unaware that many of the innovations in the field that were happening just before and during the creation of *FW*. Indeed Gascoigne (1981) and Captcorajus (2020) both note that some of the problems *FW* set out to correct had largely been addressed by products for existing games, with a variety of settings and sourcebooks that would help GMs run games in coherent, consistent invented worlds. For example, TSR published the first edition of the *World of Greyhawk* setting in 1980, and while it might be short on details and seem like a jumbled mélange of ideas from historical cultures, it did at least answer some of the questions about the logic of the *D&D* world. Likewise third-party publishers like Judges Guild and Iron Crown Enterprises would develop settings for games, sometimes with setting-specific rules and sometimes tailored for existing rules sets like



D&D. Metagaming's *The Fantasy Trip* offered a more logical and realistic combat system which compares favorably to *FW* in some respects. Indeed it is likely that the authors of *FW* were only passingy familiar with much of the RPG market. Lowe was not a gamer at all, Quarrie was devoted to wargaming, and even Hodson-Smith and Sturman were equally aligned to wargames and re-enactment. So it is a fair criticism to note that *FW* was partly addressing a problem that was much less pressing by the time of its publication. One may wonder, though, what force can really be attached to the criticism that a recreation as such is unnecessary. Is any game *necessary*?

Another criticism often raised is that rules for temptation, leadership, morale, and control tests limit player agency by taking some control of a character's actions away from the player. As noted above, such mechanics would become more common in later games. Even so, this is a divisive issue in gaming. It's worth noting that *FW* places these tests at the GM's discretion. These tests might be less controversial if players have more control over the assignment of personality trait scores. Ultimately this is a difference of opinion about the nature of roleplaying.

But by far the most serious criticism is that the game has a bias against women and minorities. The reviews on internet forums, in particular, emphasize the perceived bigotry of the authors. This question is the subject of long argumentative threads online. Specifically, there are several features of the game which are claimed to reveal bigotry against women, homosexuals, and Jews. In some cases these charges are broadened to include racism and religious intolerance in general.

Two passages are often cited as sexist. These are the winking description of John Norman's infamous *Gor* series in Chapter V, and the rules for female player characters. The first reads:

Unfortunately, John Norman suffers from a deeply rooted bondage fetish which he obviously expects his readers to share, for all of these books are full of nubile slave girls who are forced to call all men "master," who are kept permanently chained and whose erotic instincts are usually aroused by a touch of a whip. I'm no great advocate of women's lib but these books are sufficiently strong in places to be more than mildly offensive, and you'll have to form your own judgement of them. For heaven's sake don't let a "liberated" wife or girlfriend read them, though, or you'll never hear the end of it! (Galloway, 1982b, pp. 94-95)

It is of course ironic that Galloway, who would embark on a career in liberal politics and as an advocate for gay liberation, would disavow women's liberation. However


the passage gives a fairly clear indication that he is troubled by the problematic Gor series. The disclaimer about a “liberated” wife/girlfriend may have been an attempt at humor, or may even reflect his personal experience. The second passage runs:

Name, sex, nationality. These are entirely open to the player’s choice. The player should, however, choose a name suitable to the character’s nationality, and a nationality covered by the geographic scope of Fantasy Wargaming. Players wishing to play a female character must unfortunately take the penalties of a patriarchal society. Make the following adjustments to diced characteristics: physique and endurance -3, charisma -2, social class -3, bravery -2, greed/selfishness/lust -3. They will be excluded from combat, from all parts of the Church save the nunnery, and expected in most cases to adopt a domestic position as wife, housekeeper and servant. These factors are invariable. (Galloway, 1982b, p. 121)

Whether the “penalties of a patriarchal society” reflect the rules writers’ sexism would seem to be easier to answer. The penalty to Physique is rather severe, even if there is some sexual dimorphism in humans. The Endurance penalty is even harder to justify given that women in medieval society worked the same long hours as men, and perhaps longer. The Charisma and Social Class penalties could reasonably reflect the lower status of women in game terms. The penalty to Bravery would help ensure women are less likely to engage in combat, and to go berserk. The penalty to the other three vices however are actually a “bonus” in the sense that female characters will be less likely to succumb to temptations, and reflect the society’s expectations that women would be more virtuous than men. While most of these adjustments are on the face of it unrealistic, if the intent of the game is to reflect what medieval people believed about the world, they are not an unreasonable interpretation of societal norms and expectations, at least within some of the recommended settings for *FW*.

It is worth noting that the one sample chapter for *FW* volume II details another patriarchal society. Here the patriarchy is again described in fairly neutral terms, but clearly without approval. A passage on daily life in Sumeria seems to register Galloway’s authorial restraint, as he describes a particularly repressive society:

It was an overwhelmingly patriarchal society. The prehistory of Sumer gives glimpses of a time when women were equal, or even rulers. By 2200 BC at the latest, this had changed. The Code of Hammurabi gives the father absolute authority over the wife, any concubines he might take and any children he might have. Marriage was monogamous, but concubinage (especially of slaves) common. Wives owned no property, and divorce was rare. The accent on fidelity, especially on her part, was marked. Homosexuality, among men at least, was punished by castration. Almost the only avenue of



sexual and career fulfilment alike open to women and to gay men lay in religion. Priestesses often achieved great power, and independence, while religious prostitution of men and women alike was sacred to the goddess Ishtar. The Persian attitude to women (and homosexuality) was rather different, and signalled a turning away from the sexual rigidity of Semitic laws. It remained however a man's world - as it was among the Hittites, and in Syria-Palestine. (Galloway, 1983c, p. 9)

I find it hard to give much credence to the idea that Galloway particularly approves of the patriarchal structure of Mesopotamian, let alone medieval, society. Internalized or unconscious sexism is another matter.

The history of sexism in RPGs is examined in some depth by Peterson (2014) in his chronicle of female players and player characters in wargames and RPGs. While the emphasis is on *D&D* and its wargame precursors, his essay provides context as well as examples of how female characters were penalized in other games of the 1970s and 1980s (including *Chivalry & Sorcery*), and the attitudes of males gamers towards women in the period. While not universal, sexism was often quite open and unquestioned among young men, and perhaps heightened by the male-dominated scene noted by Fine (1982). Later game writers, aware that a patriarchal setting would potentially alienate female players, have often tried downplaying the patriarchy, by modifying the game-world institutions to be more egalitarian than real-world analogs (RPGPundit, 2016), by choosing to simulate more egalitarian cultures or periods (Crawford, 2020), and/or by emphasizing the exceptionalism of adventurers and their ability to skirt norms and mores (Crawford, 2020; Davis, 1992). Often critics take issue with the final sentence in the passage from *FW* quoted above – “These factors are invariable” – claiming that it precludes exceptions. In the rest of the section, attributes are described as “invariable” or “variable” depending on whether they can change as the character gains levels. For example, height is invariable, because the character does not grow taller even if Physique, which determines height, changes; Physique is variable because gaining a level may allow the character to increase that score. In this context, it would seem the meaning of the factors being invariable is that increasing levels or Social Class would not remove the modifiers to attributes nor societal expectations.

The most strident critics also consider the exclusion from combat and other social expectations to be an invariable restriction in the sense that the game prevents female characters from adventuring.⁷⁸ There is no reason one could not follow historical precedents and have exceptional characters break conventions, such as the often-cited example of Joan of Arc. To be fair, *FW* explicitly points to Norse settings as potentially more egalitarian: “Women have rather more opportunities for distinction in Norse legend than elsewhere in the

⁷⁸ *Mystic Mongol* (n.d.) in particular carries this point to extremes with a humorous illustration of character generation, designing a Joan of Arc type character and applying astrological and gender modifiers to slowly morph the character from an armored warrior to a slave in chains.

$\square \cdot \omega + \zeta = \parallel$
 $\boxplus \cdot \omega + \zeta = \psi$
 $\boxtimes \cdot \omega + \zeta = \infty$
 $\boxminus \cdot \omega + \zeta = \alpha$
 $\boxdot \cdot \omega + \zeta = \otimes$



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period; in character, martial prowess and magical skill they can sometimes rival men" (Galloway, 1982b, p.50). Similarly, being relegated to a nunnery is not such a disadvantage in Anglo-Saxon England: "Monasteries were ... paralleled by nunneries, of particular importance in Anglo-Saxon England where a royal princess might wield great power as an Abbess" (Galloway, 1982b, p. 32). And Witches are certainly a potent option. Dearman (2009) recommends using the modifiers as given but granting female characters a couple of experience levels to make up for the penalties.

The charge of bias against homosexuals and Jews (as well as atheists and heretics) is traceable to the "Bogey Table" and the religion rules. The Bogey Table has random quirks and characteristics, and in general rolling an odd number bestows a negative trait and penalties, while even number rolls grant positive traits and bonuses. Homosexuality is the first negative bogey listed (a roll of 35), while at the other end of the table rolls of 95, 97, or 99 result in "Jewish," "Heretic," and "Atheist." These religious minority statuses all note: "You will be persecuted and shunned by all right-minded Christians" (Galloway, 1982b, p. 125). Some reviewers see this as evidence that the authors delight in the intolerance of the medieval Church, but it's difficult not to read the phrase "right-minded Christians" as a tongue-in-cheek comment. Moreover, "Homophobia" is also in the odd/negative column on the Bogey table, while "Bisexuality" is on the even/positive side, which is harder to fit with a theory of the authors' biases.⁷⁹ That homosexual activity is listed as a class 2 sin along with incest and "other sexual perversions" (Galloway, 1982b, p. 227) for Christians is hardly the authors' bias either -- sodomites are after all confined to the seventh circle of Dante's inferno. Likewise, denying God is a class 1 sin, while blasphemy (which may include Judaism and heresy) are class 2 sins, because orthodox belief was extremely important in the Church. The authors can't really change this fact without doing a disservice to their project.

Current scholarship might take a more nuanced view of medieval sex roles, how homosexuality was viewed in the medieval world, and the treatment of non-Christians in Christian Europe, but there can be little doubt that the authors were reflecting what they understood to be the medieval world-view. To take issue with these as bigotry on the part of the authors seems uncharitable at best, and to misunderstand the project of reflecting the medieval world-view in the game. It seems fair to say the authors made no special efforts to counter-balance the effects of patriarchy and intolerance. But patriarchy and intolerance were very much a part of the Middle Ages.

⁷⁹ Presumably homophobia is counted as a negative bogey as it constrains a character's options, and bisexuality is a positive because it permits greater latitude in the character's behaviors.

Influence

It is difficult to ascertain the influence *FW* had on the RPG world. It was certainly not the only game to attempt to create a milieu based on the medieval world as contemporaries believed it to be, although it may be unique in attempting to accommodate multiple periods and settings, and in the emphasis on using the real world as a setting rather than attempting to simulate medieval romances. And *FW* was not the first game to attempt to draw more on medieval lore than fantastic fiction. *Knights of the Round Table* (Edgren, 1976) as the title suggests took Arthurian legend as its setting. The game focuses on tournaments, jousting, and quests, with simple rules (Pulsipher, 1978; Schick, 1980). While the game has rules for wargame-style play with no GM, there are campaign rules that make it a simple RPG, with magic playing a smaller role than other FRPGs (Pulsipher, 1978). *Chivalry & Sorcery* (Simbalist & Backhaus, 1977) would attempt a more detailed simulation of medieval knighthood, but the setting was still partly rooted in fantasy fiction, with hobbits and balrogs appearing in the first edition. Another interesting attempt to draw upon real-world lore and beliefs was the wargame *The Emerald Tablet* (1977). *TET* was a highly complicated miniatures wargame meant to cover the fantasy genre, in the pseudo-medieval “high fantasy” vein common to most fantasy RPGs. Thus the troops are generally equipped with medieval arms and use medieval tactics and formations, according to the popular imagination. But one aspect that was based on research into history was the magic system, which was clearly meant to simulate the ceremonial magic of various historical grimoires. Indeed wizards in the game would invoke angels, demons, and “Olympic spirits” drawn directly from the *Lesser Key of Solomon* and the *Arbatel De Magia Veterum*. While grimoires generally date to the early Modern period, this sort of “historical accuracy” had not been previously attempted. Bonewits (1978) would follow a similar path in his book *Authentic Thaumaturgy*, attempting a fresh take on magic in RPGs based on his own serious study and practice of ceremonial magic. It’s possible that some of the authors of *FW* could have heard of either *The Emerald Tablet* or *Authentic Thaumaturgy*, but none of my sources indicated they had. The magic system in *FW* bears similarity to them only insofar as all three have similar source material, and thus refer to some similar ideas about ritual magic and casting spells. For example, the names for some of the demons that appear in both *FW*’s Ethereal hosts are similar to those listed in *The Emerald Tablet* as infernal spirits. It would be fair to say *FW* was the first RPG to narrow the focus to the medieval world.

The earliest game that should be mentioned as a successor to *FW* is *Swordbearer* (1982). While the game includes many elements of high fantasy, such as a host of playable non-human races, the game also insists that the GM can tailor the contents to fit in various historical settings. Moreover, the two magic systems reflect real world beliefs: the “elemental” magic is partly adapted from the five traditional Chinese elements, while the “spiritual” magic uses the four humors of medieval thought. Lastly, the game is moneyless, relying on social status rather than coinage to determine what a character may purchase. Thus, like *FW*, *Swordbearer* makes significant efforts to represent the importance of social class in the medieval world.

There were two other games in the 1980s that shared *FW*'s focus on the real past and enjoyed more success: *King Arthur Pendragon* (Stafford, 1985; hereafter, *Pendragon*) and *Ars Magica* (Tweet & Rein-Hagen, 1987). Indeed these two games would become "classics" even though they never rivaled the popularity of more conventional fantasy RPGs.

Pendragon is focused on Arthurian romances, and is therefore in some ways ahistorical, despite the inclusion of real world locations and events. Of course *FW* advocated blending legend and myth with historical fact for Arthurian games too. *Pendragon*'s use of virtues and vices (called Traits and Passions) as ability scores echoes the Piety, Greed, Lust, Bravery, and Selfishness attributes in *FW*. Stafford was undeniably aware of *FW* when writing the *Pendragon* rules, since he reviewed *FW* for *Different Worlds* (Stafford, 1981). Whether he borrowed any ideas or found inspiration in *FW* is unanswerable, but to be fair the commonalities may owe just as much to common sources (medieval romances) which stress the importance of the Christian (and Pagan) virtues and religious life.

Ars Magica is focused on the High Middle Ages: the setting is described as being in the 13th century, specifically the year 1220. Much like *FW*, it assumes that medieval beliefs in monsters and magic are true, and co-author Jonathan Tweet affirms that *FW*, with *Chivalry & Sorcery*, *Pendragon*, and *RuneQuest* inspired the first edition of *Ars Magica* and its generic medieval setting.⁸⁰ Indeed the game seems to have many other influences beyond *FW* – for example, the purchase of goods and services uses an abstract system based on status, like *Swordbearer*, rather than an accounting of coins as we see in *D&D* and *FW*. The revised edition of *Ars Magica* (Tweet & Rein-Hagen, 1989) explains that "The world in *Ars Magica* is the world the way the medieval folk looked at it: It is as magical as they imagined it to be" (p. 5). This idea obviously hearkens back to the conceit behind *FW* (the medieval world as medieval people believed it to be), but magic in *Ars Magica* does not follow the assumptions or patterns in *FW* and the game rules are entirely different. Importantly, the *FW* concept of mana is absent, and the nearest analogue would be "vis," which is magical power in a physical form. Like mana, vis can be expended, but unlike mana, vis is wholly external to the magician. The third edition ("*Ars Magica*," 1992) echoes the sensibilities of *FW*, most explicitly in the description of the game's setting:

Many fantasy worlds don't hold together – they aren't self-consistent. *Ars Magica* overcomes this weakness by evoking the full richness of the medieval world. *Ars Magica* is set in Mythic Europe because that's the only way to create a truly realistic medieval setting for a fantasy game. (p. 11)

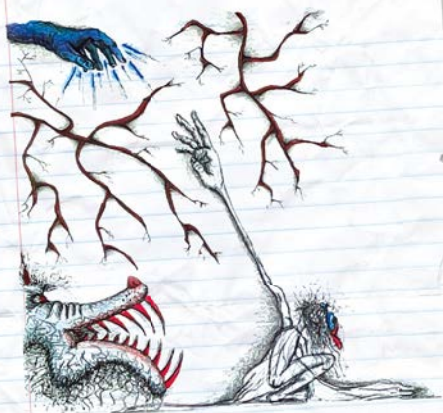
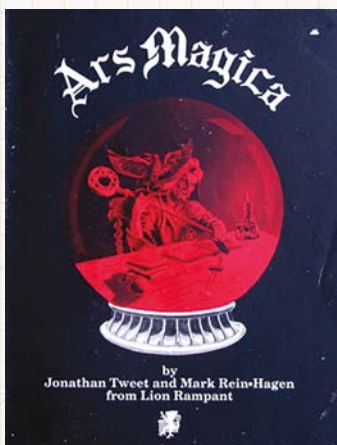


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The third edition of *Ars Magica* also explicitly adopts the idea that the people's belief powers magic, but this is less an homage to *FW* than an attempt to make the game consistent with the publisher's other World of Darkness games ("Relationship of World," n.d.). Each edition of *Ars Magica* introduced institutions



and historical events unique to its "Mythic Earth" setting – the first edition mentions the Order of Hermes which takes on greater importance and is more fully described in the revised and second editions; by the fifth edition ("Ars Magica," 2011), there are "tribunals" with authority over vast swathes of Europe. In the latter edition the GM is also advised to consider non-historical, and even "pure fantasy" games ("Ars Magica," 2011, p. 199; pp. 220-221). Even so, there are extensive notes on creating an authentic medieval feel, so the game never wholly abandons the idea of using a historical setting.

From the late 1980s onward, there was considerable interest in using real world settings in RPGs.

Indeed, *D&D*'s second edition would see a series of supplements intended to provide historical settings for adventure.⁸¹ Some games focused on specific periods or settings, on the assumption that a set of rules tailored to a specific world would be more satisfying. On the other end of the spectrum, there was also interest in more "generic" (generalized or universal) rule sets that could incorporate multiple settings or realities, real or imaginary. But GURPS and other "universal" systems also encouraged the use of historical settings, in part to demonstrate their flexibility, and GURPS is especially known for well-researched period sourcebooks. Because such games allow mixing genres and a flexible approach to determining what is "real" in a game, they may offer the best hope of realizing Bruce Galloway's dream. The GURPS supplement *Middle Ages I* (Davis, 1992) focuses on the actual history rather than pure legend, but also provides ideas for adding fantastic elements. While there would obviously be overlap in topics due to the source material, the author does not cite *FW* at all. But at least two game books do acknowledge *FW*.

Hite (2001) mentions *FW* as an inspiration for *GURPS Cabal*: "This odd little book was where I first learned about the theory of correspondences. Blame it." (p. 126) Strayton (2012) lists *FW* in the recommended reading list of *The Secret Fire* RPG (p. 308) without further comment. *The Secret Fire* is an eccentric RPG combining elements of classic *D&D* with the more modern story game *FATE*. *FW* is listed in the recommended reading list, along with an assortment of game-related books, literature, and philosophy. The book's frontispiece – Eliphaz Levi's Baphomet – is perhaps a clue as to why. More likely, the do-it-yourself ethos and GMing advice is intended.

⁸⁰ J. Tweet, personal communication, August 22, 2020.

⁸¹ The HR1-7 Campaign Sourcebook series: *Vikings*, *Charlemagne's Paladins*, *Celts*, *A Mighty Fortress*, *The Glory of Rome*, *Age of Heroes [ancient Greece]*, and *The Crusades*.

The Secret Fire makes no particular effort to create a setting based on history. Beyond these examples, I'm unaware of any other major game writers acknowledging a debt to *FW*, even though it must have circulated very widely, given the books' eventual publication as a sci-fi book-of-the-month club selection.

FW has had some revival of interest, carried on the tide of the "OSR" (variously spelled out as "Old School Revival" or "Old School Renaissance," depending on the context and preference of the user). The OSR combines nostalgia for the games of the 1970s and 1980s with a do-it-yourself ethic that encourages creativity and modifying existing games. Often *FW* is recognized as a source of useful ideas for other games. Ze Bullette (2009), as mentioned above, discussed adopting *FW*'s piety system in other games. Gloine36 (n.d.) created a website for a "living campaign" (that is, a campaign consisting of multiple collaborating gaming groups) in the low-fantasy RPG *The Dark Eye*. While the site is mostly incomplete, the author explicitly adopts *FW*'s Social Class table as the most understandable and authentically medieval system available. Ladage (2020) places *FW* on a list of five books recommended especially for game masters. *FW* is listed as number five on the strength of the first six chapters. Chapter VII, the rules, is recommended only for a selection of ideas (astrological influence, the Bogey table, the social class table, and so on).

There is a relatively unquestioned consensus among modern reviewers that the game itself is unplayable and/or un-played. The comment section of Captcorajus (2020) goes so far as to suggest that only "hipsters" will claim to like or have played the game. In fact the play-testing appears to have been sporadic, occurring mainly during the Leigh Cliffs adventure (before the rules reached their final form) and then piecemeal as sections were written. Although Nick Lowe reports joshing the Bruces that *FW* would be the first game published without ever having been play-tested, some of my informants say they did in fact play-test the game. Andy Strangeways cautioned though that it would take both Bruce Galloway and Kevin Prior to run it: "perfectly playable and run at a reasonable pace -- if and only if you have Bruce and Kevin GMing. Total nightmare for a nyone else, I think."⁸² He reports that his gaming circle moved on to other "home-brew" systems after *FW* was published.

Given the wide distribution the book had there must have been many attempts to play the game by consumers. A review of the discussions of the game at RPG.net, Dragonsfoot Forums, and RPG Geek provide no accounts of extended campaigns played using the system. However, multiple users do report having played the game. More often, the book was used for inspiration and as a source

⁸² A. Strangeways, personal communication, June 16, 2020.



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of ideas. This would likely have satisfied the authors, as the introduction explicitly states that “We hope that, after reading *Fantasy Wargaming*, you will have acquired some of the ‘feel’ of the period and its beliefs and that your future adventures will benefit therefrom.” (Galloway, 1982b, p. xi) Galloway’s correspondence with a reader provides an example of *FW*’s influence as an example to be followed. Arlynde Cota wrote:

“I recently purchased your book ‘Fantasy Wargaming’ and was delighted by your logic, amused by your wit, and inspired – to write a game of my own! [...] I strongly feel that yours is an invaluable source of inspiration and information.”⁸³

Galloway replied with encouragement and must have felt some pride – even though I’ve been unable to find any traces of the game Ms. Cota created. Of course very few players ever consider publishing their own games, and the point of a game is play it. Further evidence of appreciation among players is given in a handful of other letters Galloway saved in his files, and range from a detailed critique of the interpretation of the influence of astrological signs to simple questions about specific rules. This correspondence is reproduced in Appendix 4.

The authors should take some consolation in the fact that the tide of the RPG industry did in fact flow in the direction of more consistent and coherent worlds, and most of the games to follow in the 1980s, 1990s, and onward pay a great deal of attention to settings. *D&D* itself would see a large number of sourcebooks and campaign settings designed to aid Dungeon Masters in creating coherent fantasy worlds beginning in the 1980s. Whether or not *FW* was a direct influence on these projects, the proliferation of settings confirms the authors’ insight that this was wanting. Staats (1994) would include *FW* as an important reference in his seminar on world-building for RPGs.

If there are any heirs to *FW*’s other project – fleshing out a setting based on medieval history and the worldview of people in the Dark and Middle Ages – there seem to be at least four branches in that family tree.⁸⁴ There are numerous historical sourcebooks for GURPS, filling the historical niche, and similar products for other “generic” rules systems, but the distinctive feature of these

⁸³ A. Cota, October 19, 1982, see Appendix 4.

⁸⁴ The proliferation of games, published, self-published, or distributed for free, makes it far beyond the scope of the present work to list all the games or supplements in these branches.

⁸⁵ A supernatural investigation RPG set in England in 1086. It features detailed historical background information, and the system derives from the *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* rules to which Gascoigne & Tamlyn contributed. While the game’s influences are not listed, the character generation includes a “characteristics” chart similar to the *Bogey* table.

games is that they may be played with little or no fantasy element. Or the fantasy element may be a focus of the game, with the players investigating the supernatural events in an otherwise mundane world, as in *Maelstrom: Domesday* (Bottley, 2013).⁸⁵ Another branch is the rich tradition of games that especially play up fantastic elements from legend and folklore, including *Pendragon*, *Ars Magica*, and other similar games; *Wolves of God* (Crawford, 2020) is an impressive effort written in a style evoking the age of Bede. A third branch focuses on authentic medievalism in alternate worlds, like the classic *HårnMaster* (Crosby, 1986) and the recent *Lion & Dragon* (RPGPundit, 2016); such games omit real-world religion and cultures, and introduce elements of high fantasy. A fourth branch latches onto the madcap sensibilities evident in Galloway's games married to an interest in history. I think this branch is well represented by the *Burgs & Bailiffs* series of supplements, which mix historical research with dark comedy and sensationalism (Greco, 2013a; Greco, 2013b; Monaco, 2016).

It is my hope that this exploration of the book and game will enhance the appreciation of *FW* and dispel some of the misconceptions that have tainted its memory, and encourage others to visit or revisit its pages for inspiration.



Illustration by Lawrence H. Heath