
Ignorable Theme for Issue #388

Typical Character Style

Roleplayers are much like character actors, drawn to similar roles because they suit them. Of course, roleplayers do not have to deal with auditions and agents, but they do have to deal with game rules. So whereas physical description and past roles may limit an actor's options, rules familiarity and comfort may steer a roleplayer's choice of character. Furthermore, just as artists and designers may have common aesthetic elements in their works, it should not be surprising that roleplayers may have commonalities to their characters.

For some, the character variation from game to game may be minimal; I know someone who always plays druids, another whose characters (almost) always have wings. And even if the characters look different on paper, there may be similar actions and personality quirks that come out in play simply because the act of improvising makes on-the-fly originality difficult. I knew one player who always chose the Impulsive and Overconfident disadvantages for her GURPS characters because all her characters ended up acting that way (and she might as well get points for it).

Personally, I know that my characters have a similar thread running through them, but I cannot articulate what that is. Certainly, there are archetypes I tend to play: typically goofy or brooding (and occasionally, both in the same character, as was the case with Charlie from the 1920's C:tD game). But then again, my own personality can be said to oscillate between goofy and brooding. :) I generally do not like playing extroverted characters simply because I can't pretend being extroverted for extended periods of time, though some of my favorite characters (including Charlie) were extroverts. I think the less well I know the character, the more introverted it tends to be; after all, that is my natural tendency in real life, so it becomes my default character style. I prefer characters who use simple tactics (like bricks) because I am not a tactician.

I think I've played every class in D&D, except bards (they just don't appeal to me aesthetically, as represented in (A)D&D). My concepts tend to be human and though I have played the common demi-human races, they generally don't call out to me. The thought of making an "optimum build" repulses me,¹ so my characters are often build inefficiently either by design or because I can't do any better.

Online, I have been in so many failed or aborted

games that I tend to recycle characters who never got a fair shake. Sometimes I tweak them for the specifics of the game or just to keep my interest up. Otherwise, I never feel like I've played the same character twice, though I can always find similarities among them. Both Charlie and Quintus (D&D sorcerer) were charismatic extroverts and shameless flirts, but she was a daredevil and he was a coward.² I will sometimes specifically make characters based on "what haven't I played in a while" so as to keep myself fresh.

Comments on Issue #387

Ty Beard

Like you, there are things that annoy me at a "deep reptilian brainstem level." I find some things so intellectually, morally, and/or aesthetically offensive and irredeemable that I am powerless to do anything other than turn my back, walk away, and ignore them as best I can.

The following was a reply I was writing to Louis, but since it was about you, I might as well address it to you. I have no interest in wasting time and column space educating someone from another planet³, especially someone who has no real interest in becoming enlightened, someone who would rather grind partisan axes and burn strawmen. I cannot in good faith engage with someone who refutes the patently obvious, ignores historical facts, and uses inflammatory and condescending language. And since this a roleplaying APA, I'd rather spend my time writing, reading, and discussing those issues with you.

Myles Corcoran

Sympathies on Sam's gastric issues. Terri had her gall bladder removed (a common side-effect of the gastric bypass surgery she had and she's the only woman in her immediate family still to have her gall bladder) only to discover that her pain didn't go away and that she had an ulcer (though they did find a small gall stone). I think the ulcer is in her "old stomach", the one that was bypassed but not removed.

When I handed my players the same campaign backgrounder that I had published here, I thought that would be enough to get my players on my wavelength. I was wrong. After playing, I think they have a better idea of what I was shooting for, but I don't understand why that wasn't clear from the beginning.

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- 2 Well, as much as one could be in a classic D&D campaign—he still needed to put himself into danger, but he never liked it and avoided it whenever possible.
 - 3 As pointed out by Robert Dushay last issue.

1 In a "reptile brainstem" kind of way Ty mentioned.

Michael Cule

As I mentioned previously, I recommend rpol.net for play-by-post gaming.

When I think of the adventures in film, novels, comic books, etc. that we try to emulate with role-playing games, I cannot think of a case when a leading character died because of a daredevil stunt that was screwed up. This is not to say such stunts automatically succeed or without dire setbacks, but that death is not one of the consequences of failure. This is not the case for mooks and minions, of course. As you noted in your comments to Myles about Etienne, the threat of death can actually deter swashbuckling behavior. Of course, if you don't want daredevilry in your game (and it certainly isn't appropriate for all games), then killing characters who fail is a fine way to discourage such behavior.

I strongly agree with your comments to Ty about the threat to western liberal democracy. The best way to defeat terrorism is to not be terrified. A war (conventional, nuclear, or guerrilla) is not the proper tactic against terrorism. Solid police work, intelligence, and political engagement is.

Robert A. Dushay

I have Everway and have a certain fondness for it, but I am more inspired by Amber, System DL, and Fudge.

I too share your concern about for-profit schools. I'd rather see "profits" go to educating students than the pockets of executives, board members, and shareholders. I feel the same way about for-profit vs. non-profit hospitals.

Lee Gold

Yes, I read the quotes. And many others, including his reports to the UN.⁴ They reinforce my assertions. I cannot find the Ty Beard quote I referred to, and I should have properly noted it at the time. There is simply too much (tiny) text across multiple zines to sort through now.

It is also clear that Blix thought more inspections, and not war, was the proper course of action.⁵ If the US had intelligence drive policy, instead of the other way around, we would found that there were no WMDs (as we later confirmed after the invasion) without the cost in lives, money, and reputation.

It is clear now that the U.S. intelligence on Iraq used to justify the war was derived under political pressure and dissenters were silenced, ignored, or persecuted. "Bush wanted to remove Saddam, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD. But the intelligence and facts

were being fixed around the policy." — the Downing Street Memo.⁶

With regard to ousting Saddam as a justification, I refer again to the Memo: "The Attorney-General said that the desire for regime change was not a legal base for military action."

Louis La Mancusa

See my comments to Ty Beard. In the words of Philip Pullman, "You can't communicate with people who know they've got all the answers."⁷

Brian Misiaszek

Not all self-absorbed assholes are sociopaths. See my comments to Louis last issue.

Lisa Padol

Thanks for the review of C:tL. I really like the concept, but I'm afraid the execution would turn me off (as it has for every WW game I have). One issue I have with the courts is the number of changelings required to maintain them. I see C:tL as being a very personal story of horror (and loss) and would keep the total number of changelings in a city the size of Miami down to a dozen or less (if not making the PCs the *only* changelings). Your observation of the cycle of abuse as it applies to fey and changelings was enlightening. I think it plays well to the personal horror, rather than to political machinations.

Imagine that a villain has our hero dead to rights, pointing a gun inches from his chest. With quick reflexes, our hero is able to step to the side, and push aside the gun hand, the shot goes off, but errantly, and the hero follows up with a left hook to the jaw. This is essentially what happens in Savage Worlds: you may use your Parry (based on Fighting) to defend against ranged attacks in melee range. If you are caught unawares (and I checked for that—the NPC noticed the captain going for his gun), then a case can be made for having "the drop" (such as pointing the gun at the hero's back), which gives a substantial bonus to hit and damage.

Brian Rogers

Your analysis of compensation and xp echoes comments I have read and behavior I have seen for decades. Your essay tied the issues together nicely. You may also want to address bonus xp as compensation (or a bribe) for contributing campaign materials or performing tasks like keeping the campaign log. I still find it disconcerting that players see xp as compensation, but that is the reality of our hobby.

4 <http://www.un.org/Depts/unmovic/Bx27.htm>
<http://www.un.org/Depts/unmovic/SC7asdelivered.htm>
5 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/2658153.stm>

6 <http://www.downingstreetmemo.com/memos.html>
7 <http://www.moreintelligentlife.com/node/697>