GAME WRAP

ESTEEMED READER!

Welcome to the inaugural volume of Game Wrap, a magazine devoted to the art and craft of LARP. Please, allow me to introduce myself. I am the magazine's founder and first Editor-In-Chief (self-appointed, how else?), Viktoriya Fuzaylova. I would like to take up some space here to tell you a little about this publication, how it came into being, and what we, the staff, hope it can be. I want to highlight some of what you can find in this volume and some of the decisions about format that were made during the process of putting it together. Finally, I would like to issue my personal thanks to all those who took this volume from a con-high–fueled fantasy to a glossy-paged reality.

The idea itself grew from some thoughts flitting around in my mind after Intercon O about the tremendous amount of work and creativity that goes into Iron GM games, many of which never run again. And wouldn't it be interesting to read them, and maybe something about them? And wouldn't it be interesting if some of the conversations that happen at Pre-con panels got to go further and deeper with the benefit of some focused writing? And wouldn't it be great if there was a publication focused on the nitty-gritty of LARP writing, running, and playing? Pretty soon I was pitching the idea to New England Interactive Literature (NEIL)'s board of directors. Pretty soon I was talking to a group of people who said a resounding "Yes!" and wanted to jump in with me to make it happen. We agreed that there was a need for a reflective and analytical approach to pulling together the vast amount of experience and tricks-of-the-trade that have been accumulating as LARP developed, as well as a critical consideration of what LARP can do and be.

It has been an exciting, challenging, and dynamic process of figuring out the latter and learning, of course, experientially. We decided early on that we wanted the magazine to be inclusive of the wide variety of games and role-play traditions that exist in our community and to welcome new influences. This brought up a fascinating and multifaceted debate about community identity and evolving language as exemplified by the differences in how the word LARP/larp is spelled and used. (For more on that, see one of our editors' blogs.[1]) You may notice that within its pages Game Wrap includes both.

We discussed how the written materials that comprise a game can also be viewed as an artifact for study of what is necessarily an experiential medium.

We resolved to include examples of such materials in full to allow the reader of the accompanying articles to interact with them both the way a player and a scholar might. We very quickly discovered that writing about LARP required a way to reference and credit games and particular runs of games, a necessity that was not covered in any of our writing classes. Meeting this demand, one of our staff editors developed a style guide extension. We are still finding our way as Game Wrap takes on shape, and welcome all thoughts, ideas, and especially contributions.

In this first issue you will find examinations of character types, helpful reflections on running games, a rare glimpse into someone else's writing process, a reflection on a game system you may not have encountered before, a chance to read an edu-LARP from France and learn about the challenges and triumphs of running it, an examination of the local culture of secrecy, and much more.

If, as you peruse these pages, you are finding yourself brimming over with ideas for what new topics could be addressed, pour that thought and enthusiasm into a shapely summary, go to our website[2] and submit it for Volume 2.

1   https://fairescape.wordpress.com/2014/12/16/a-capital-idea/

2   http://gamewrap.interactiveliterature.org/submissions/

Finally, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone involved in helping this volume see the light of day. First, and foremost, that goes to my staff—my fellow editors (Adina, Brian, Phoebe, Stephen), our helpful webmaster Nat, and our creative designer Kathleen, who have all volunteered oodles of time, thoughtfulness, dedication, teamwork and humility to this project. I want to thank NEIL as a whole and NEIL Board members for their unreserved encouragement and trust. I want to express my gratitude and respect to all the authors who contributed ideas and articles, for their courage in putting their thoughts out for all to enjoy and their patience with us as we find our way. And I thank everyone in our extended community who helped spread the word, who checked in on the progress, offered suggestions and support, and generally made Game Wrap seem possible until it was possible. Thank you.

With that, I leave you to your reading. I hope you enjoy these pieces as much as I have.

Yours in words and play,
    Viktoriya Fuzaylova
    Editor-In-Chief, *Game Wrap*

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The ARTICLES

DESIGNING A LARP FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES
Learning Process and Communication in *Graveyard of the Sacrifice*

by Muriel Algayres

Graveyard of the Sacrifice is an Edularp[1] which was created and first played in France on the 28th of May 2015 (see page 87 for the full text of the Edularp). It was designed for 16 English-speaking students in an 11th grade History course. It was presented as "a game about memory, duty, survivors' guilt and hope for peace,"[2] to explore these themes and our knowledge of World War Two through Larp. More importantly, it was created in a country where Larp is not usually used as a pedagogical tool.

Today students need more and more motivation to engage in learning. Being born and growing in a world of high-resolution entertainment, they can resist the traditional, standardized, low-resolution activities found in a conservative school system[3]. The motivation behind differentiated teaching practices therefore often lies in the need for teachers to find a broader range of activities and approaches to engage their students, as well as transmitting not only knowledge but also competence and social skills. As such, Edularp holds great potential for education, especially where it has never been used before. In one of the most striking examples, the Danish Østerskov Efterskole[4] bases the whole of the teaching process on Larp. Other scholars have endeavored to illustrate the effectiveness of Edularp, such as Sarah Lynn Bowman and Anne Sandiford in their comprehensive 2015 study[5]: "*Out of these five hypothesized dimensions, the quantitative data revealed that students' overall intrinsic motivation and interest/enjoyment of science significantly increased over the course of the semester. The qualitative and quantitative findings converged to reveal an increase in perceived competence in science. In the ethnographic interviews, students expressed a strong belief that larp aided in the development of all five dimensions and a unanimous interest in learning through edularp in the future.*"

However, in a conservative system such as the French one, bringing in an unusual method such as Larp represented an extra challenge, especially in making the process understandable to non-Larpers, to the sudents, their families and the school.

Although a first-of-its-kind experience, *Graveyard of the Sacrifice* was well received by the students, and may open the way to more creations of the

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1   The term EduLarp stands for "educational live action role-playing game." Blazer, Myriel and Julia Kurz. "Learning by playing." Knudepunkt 2015 Companion Book. Rollespielsakademiet, Denmark, 2015, p. 45.

2   Algayres, Muriel. Graveyard of the Sacrifice. 2015. Live action roleplaying game.

3   McGonigal, J. Reality is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World. Vintage Books, London. 2012.

4   Hyltoft, M. "The Role-Players' School. Østerskov Efterskole." Ed. M. Montola and J. Stenros. Playground Worlds: Creating and Evaluating Experiences of Role-Playing Games (2008).

5   Bowman, Sarah Lynne and Anne Standiford. Educational Larp in the Middle School Classroom: A Mixed Method Case Study. International Journal of Roleplaying, Utrecht School of the Arts, Urtrecht, the Netherlands. 2015. http://ijrp.subcultures.nl/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/IJRP5_BowmanStandiford.pdf

same kind. In this article, I will present the design choices that were made in order to fulfill educational purposes, how the game was implemented, and how it can illustrate some of the advantages of games in education.

Designing an educational game

Myriam Balzer, in "Learning by playing: Larp as a teaching method," establishes a number of categories in which the organization of an Edularp falls, some of which appear very specific to this type of endeavor. While *Graveyard* was not created using this framework, it fits most of its requirement, and therefore will be used for analysis purposes.

Constraints: The main constraint was connected to time. Classes are usually short (55 minutes, resulting in little more than 45 minutes for effective work), and it is considered best that activities not exceed 20 minutes so as to not overtax the students' attention. The structure of the game would therefore have to be fragmented into small activities, or different scenes, to be effective.

Project planning: Communication was the main issue here. The Larp was first introduced two months prior to running, first to the students, then by preparing a two-page design document to their families, who also had to sign an authorization for outdoor activities, and finally getting the proper administrative authorization. Notably, the activity raised no concern or opposition from either parents or the administration.

Learning content: Focusing on the Second World War, while challenging, was an obvious choice since it is a substantial part of the curriculum, and would help commemorate the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Europe. An important qualification for an Edularp is to have a set of knowledge and skills in mind which would be acquired through the game[6]. These will be addressed in more detail in the second part of this article, but they focused on knowledge of wartime problems and issues, and the development of communication skills.

Storytelling: Setting the game during the war may have been problematic, and ethically questionable in a European setting, as it would necessitate either to gloss over the issue of war crimes and collaboration, or to have students directly portray them, which could be considered too harsh a role for underage participants. Therefore, the game was set in 1951, a choice that had several advantages: presenting the subject of children and civilian populations in the war, and the aftermath of the war and difficulties of reconstruction, which are usually glossed over.

External setup: The game was built around the visit of a memorial, Mont-Valérien, where approximately a thousand resisters and hostages were executed in reprisal by the Germans. The visit was separated from the game, but the students were invited to use information from that visit to inform their characters' perspectives.

Game design: The design document, context, and playing instructions were given to the students as a short one-page summary, while it was explained in more detail in class, so that questions and concerns might be addressed. The justification for the game and presence of characters was also explained. The students were also asked to research the impact of the war in different European countries. The final game would integrate two hours of workshop and two hours of runtime, including about 30 minutes of debriefing.

Documents: The core of the game materials was the character sheet establishing previously existing relationships between characters. They were created, with authorization, by using the Rollespielsakademiet template designed for the Fairweather Manor game[7]. This format enables the creation of short characters that can be quickly written, but described in a very effective, practical manner.

Therefore, game design for an educational Larp needs to be very specific to the objectives that one wants to attain. While in a conventional Larp theme or action may drive the design, in EduLarp the learning content and developed skills become the primary focus of game design.

6   Hyltoft, M. "Four Reasons Why Edularp Works." Ed. K. Dombrowski. LARP: Einblicke, Aufsatzsam- mlung zum Mittelpunkt (2010).

7   Raasted, Claus, and Charles Bo Nielsen. Fairweather Manor. 2015. Live action role play game. http://www. fmlarp.com/

Running the game: gamification and learning process in EduLarp

Running a game is always a challenge, even more so with a younger audience and educational objectives in mind. Specific possible difficulties were therefore handled in advance.

Rejection: In Edularp more than in any other type, the phenomenon of rejection can become prejudicial to the activity as a whole. It can be more frequent with students than with adults participants, as the former usually have no prior knowledge of the activity, and can be wary of a practice they don't know, be afraid of getting things wrong, or consider the "let's pretend" factor of Larp as child's play. Rejection here is defined as the situation where a player rejects the assigned character[8]. To handle this aspect, preparation is key. Students had been prepared over time using shorter roleplaying exercises. The project itself was thoroughly introduced and explained, and finally the workshops helped students prepare for their characters and make them their own. Having a loose template for characters and giving students freedom to alter the material is an effective tool in getting them into the game.

Break from character: Engaging students in a long-term activity can be challenging, especially in a foreign language, and a single teacher may not be able to watch all of them to make sure they don't break character. However, very little instances of break from character occurred, and needed just a quick, in-game, reminder to keep focus.

Pervasiveness: A part of the game was enacted outside of the school grounds, during a picnic in which their characters took part. While this proved a good strategy to engage students in the game, as any break from routine will create surprise and more attention, it created some tension for the students as they were exposed to strange onlookers. However, as they didn't have to engage in-character with any of them, the exposure was limited and didn't constitute a hindrance to the game proper.

8   For a more complete discussion of rejection , see http://www.baltazar.si/blog/knudepunkt-talk-rejection-a-clash-of-personalities

The game was flexible in structure, allowing students to interact freely as the teacher's NPC character, Ms Greene, interacted with each of them. The in-game discussions were animated, touching on a variety of subjects, from ideology to personal drama, the experience of the war, and the upcoming construction of a unified Europe.

The game had been designed for a maximum duration of two hours, but was stopped a bit earlier as fatigue was taking its toll and would have resulted in a probable break from character. A debriefing of about 30 minutes was also run, to assess the students' impressions and feelings. A week later, a debriefing questionnaire about the whole year was given to assess, among other activities, the game's performance.

On the day it was run, it appeared that *Graveyard* had completed most of the objectives it set out to do. From a gamification perspective, by being played outside, using costumes, characters, and narrative, it made the school subject into an engaging activity. As a learning game, it enabled the student to research the subject and develop their skills in an active way.

Feedback on the experience: on the advantages of using Edularp

While some students may express concern when Edularps are proposed, mostly out of shyness or fear of being pushed out of their comfort zones, once the game starts, active engagement and positive feedback occur more often than not, and it was clear to me that the game was a frank success. We can underline some elements which make Edularp an engaging teaching method.

The character's alibi is the most prominent of these elements. In some students (and even some adults), fear of doing wrong or making mistakes usually prevents them from engaging in activities, hindering their own progress. Through the character, the fear of getting the wrong answer is mostly erased, and make the students generally more daring. As one participant described the process: "it feels strange at first, but once we get into it, we don't give it a second thought and just go along." Experienced Larpers refer to the elements that protect the player over the course of the game as

the "magic circle" and "psychological frame,"[9] and the character's alibi as the means through which the player can distance his or her actions from those accomplished by said character. In more simple terms, the game process turns difficult subjects (the war experience, in our example) and tasks (sustaining a conversation in English over a lengthy period of time) into an exciting activity, in which they feel less pressure to "succeed." The fact that all students engage in the activity at the same time also makes it easier for students that can be paralyzed if they have to perform in front of the entire class.

The second advantage would fall under the categorization of motivation and incentive. While those two terms might sound close, they actually perform different functions.

We can understand m*otivation* as the reason why the students would engage in an activity, while incentive is about the tools that we use to engage players in the dramaturgy. In Edularp, those aspects may get confounded to the points that some incentives can be simply described as "motivation for character," or "motivation for drama."[10] We will, however, consider them as separate entities.

Motivation covers a wide range of factors. The grade, of course, is one, and students were aware that high grades would be awarded as long as they engaged in the activity. The very novelty of the experience in the French educational system was also, clearly, a motivation to perform well in the exercise. However, it would appear that the appeal of the gaming process in itself played the biggest part in the motivation. The effort that a lot of the students put into their own costumes illustrates this fact.

Incentives were mostly character-based. Through a combination of ideological positions, interpersonal relationships (some characters came from the same families or had met before), and workshop calibration,[11] students had the means to create

9   Hook, Nathan. Identities at Play. UK: Open U, 2012.

10   Hyltoft, M. "Four Reasons Why Edularp Works." Ibid.

11   The importance of cultural calibration in players and means to accomplish have been discussed in-depth by Martin Nielsen in http://www.alibier.no/culture-calibration-in-pre-larp-workshops/

a common narrative. They also knew that they would have to write a written summary from their character's point of view, therefore having an added incentive to create the best narrative possible. This resulted in some vivid in-game conflicts and debates.

A trio of very willful girls, playing as communist characters started to sing the *Internationale* as a means to establish their sense of belonging, all the while facing the criticism addressed at the Stalinist regime. Another student reflected on the suffering of civilian populations through his character's narrative arc, which involved his mourning several family members in the wars. Another student, whose character was born in a German family conditioned by propaganda, built a compelling character arc during which his character came to term with the horror of the war and the crimes committed in his own family.

The students were also requested to write a feedback from their character's point of view to complete the exercise and practice their writing skills. Some did letters, newspaper articles, or truly heartfelt journals about their character's journey.

This excerpt is taken from Camille's impressive rendition of her character's thoughts:

"I cried my eyes out when my father was arrested. [...] When the Nazis came to knock at our door, I saw a flash of lightning panic cross the eyes of my father. When he learnt that he was going to be arrested as hostage, he was relieved! I could not believe it. He was satisfied to die like that, knowing that his wife, his children and his resistance network were safe and sound. My dear dad, up to the end he was so brave. I miss him so, so much..."

Romane shares her impressions and reflexions on remembrance duty:

"Before I came, I did not know I was about to go into a such a beautiful adventure. I learnt so many things and met really interesting new people. The Mont Valérien memorial was absolutely breathtaking. (...) I think this memorial, just like all the other memorials, really is important to keep people from forgetting the ones who paid their lives so that the others could live freely and peacefully. The ones who fought until the end for a cause that seemed right to them. I think they

deserve remembrance. I want to see myself as brave as they are, just like my parents were."

To conclude, the result of the first test run of *Graveyard of the Sacrifice* was satisfactory in regard to its objectives, and works as a good illustration of the potential of Edularp as an educational tool. Out of the 16 students, in response to an open-ended question, twelve quoted the Edularp as one of their favorite activities over the course of the year, and six openly expressed the wish to do more of them. That the game was well received was undeniable.

Conclusion

Therefore, we can conclude that, as teachers face more and more challenge in the course of their work, Edularp can become a great educational tool for teachers to work according to their students' need for high-resolution activities. For students, the engaging nature of the activity is obvious, the fiction and narrative providing a valued gateway to the learning process while enabling them to construct valid experiences that they will retain out of the fictional frame. As an educator, of course, I see a lot of room for improvement, for example, more work on workshops, tailoring those more precisely to the need of the students, and getting better tools for evaluation. Furthermore, while the students usually show appreciation for this type of activity, we so far have little means to study and measure the comparative advantage of Edularp compared to other forms of lessons. But even with these limitations in mind, there is a lot of inspiration to draw from to integrate Larp in education and, through it, explore more diverse forms of education.

Muriel Algayres is a French Larpwright who has been designing games for more than a decade in the historically-inspired "romanesque" genre, as well as the experimental and educational style. She is a frontperson for the French Association "Role", was recently a contributing author on the #Feminism anthology, and is currently working on the historical game "Harem Son Saat".

Picture used as an example

Students on the day of the game

HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOR, GOAL ORIENTATION, AND GNS THEORY IN INTERACTIVE LITERATURE

by Cameron Betts

Introduction

Anyone who has played in, run, or even watched a live action role-playing game (LARP) knows that LARPs in general and interactive literature LARPs specifically are not like other kinds of games. They are multi-player games where players each play at their own rate and where the mechanical aspects of the game are deliberately undergirded by social interactions. Interactive literature also has a natural help structure in the form of the game masters, who arbitrate disputes, provide information, and clarify confusion for the players.

This paper presents a study of help-seeking behavior by role-players at interactive literature events. The study measures how much help was sought, the type of help that was sought, and from whom. Also examined is how a player's goal orientation affects their help-seeking or enjoyment of play.

Studying help-seeking behavior in interactive literature not only helps us understand more about how players get enjoyment out of games, but can inform our understanding of how people might seek help in other similar social situations. For example, as K–12 education explores ways to allow students to work at their own pace, classroom help-seeking can come to look more and more like help-seeking in interactive literature. Indeed, as games become increasingly popular in education due to their ability to allow educators to tap into the motivational benefits of play, studying help-seeking behavior in a low-risk, game-like environment with a flexible, adaptable help structure (such as interactive literature) could help in designing effective, pre-determined scaffolds for learning in educational games.

Help-seeking in Interactive Literature

To understand how and why a player might seek help during play, we need to consider (1) the kind of helper the game masters (GMs) are, (2) what player characteristics might predispose a player to seek help or not, and (3) what kinds of help might be sought. In regard to the latter, a taxonomy of player-initiated interactions was developed (see tables 1 & 2).

In comparison to educational helpers, GMs occupy a space somewhere between tutor and peer-tutor. Tutors typically have more domain information than their tutee and also have some amount of authority over their tutee. Peer-tutors are seen as having roughly the same social standing as the tutee, and do and are not expected to have significantly more domain information. GMs are the peers of the players, but also have more and privileged information about the game and often are responsible for logistical aspects of the game such as space and safety coordination.

Not all players need the same amount of help. Different players will need different levels of help depending on the game-play conditions they encounter, and this can affect their thinking as

they become aware of that need (Aleven, Stahl and Schworm). Some players will be more prone to seeking help than others, possibly due to their ability to perceive their own need for help, or because of some characteristic of that player which affects their decision to seek help. One characteristic that might impact this decision is the player's experience level—research into help-seeking in learning environments has found that prior knowledge affects outcomes (Wood and Wood).

A player's decision to seek help may also be affected by their goal orientation. Goal orientation can be described as how motivated an individual is by achieving certain goals. Goals can be divided into two categories: performance goals and mastery goals (Dweck and Elliott). An individual motivated by performance goals is trying to achieve a certain measurement, either for their own intrinsic reason, or to be looked upon favorably by others. An individual motivated by mastery goals is trying to improve at the skill regardless of measurements—the activity is its own reward. Performance goals are further split into performance-approach goals and performance-avoidance goals. Performanc-approach goals are focused on the achievement of a reward for showing success at a measurement. Performance-avoidance goals are focused on not failing at a measurement (Elliot and Church).

If we know a player's experience level and their goal orientation, might we be able to predict how much help they might seek from their GM, and of what kind?

GNS Theory

The question of why humans enjoy a particular activity is a thorny one, part cultural, part psychological, and part practical—how can we make something more fun? Over the years a string of theories and constructs have been formed to help tease apart the qualities and aspects of role-playing that people find engaging. While there has been a recent increase in activity, historically little scholarly work has been done on theories of role-playing the context of games, with the marked exception of Fine's sociological analysis of role-playing games, *Shared Fantasy: Role-playing Games as Social Worlds* (Fine). Currently, the most commonly accepted

and referenced role-playing theory for LARPs is GNS or Gamer-Narrativist-Simulationist.

GNS has its roots in a previous model called the Threefold Way (coined by Mary Kuhner in 1997 on the internet forum rec.games.frp.advocacy)—which attempted to classify the motivations of gamers. It describes three stances that a game master might bring to a game decision based on the relative value they place on game, simulation, and drama (Mason). The GNS model restates the trichotomy as having gamist, narrativist and simulationist values, and where the player's interactions support each value independently. The gamist value rejects the popular stance that one cannot win a role-playing game. The narrativist sees their character as a part of the broader story. The simulationist places value in seeing how a situation would play out as realistically as possible, and as such is the most prone to role-taking (Coutu; Haas).

While several versions and children of the GNS model exist, including the GENder model and The Big Model, GNS remains at the heart of most modern theories of role-playing.

Research Questions

Prior to designing a study, research questions were framed based on a simple model of how help-seeking and goal-orientation might interact with other elements of the game (Figure 1). The model in Figure 1 represents the hypothesis that this study is examining—essentially that help-seeking behavior is affected by a player's goal orientation and their level of play experience; that a player's help-seeking behavior and the social connections they have in the game play will affect the player's overall satisfaction; and that gamer type (where the player sits in the gamist-narrativist-simulationist model) can be predicted by variance in goal orientation.

The research questions the study was designed to address are:

1. Do performance-approach oriented individuals request more information through help than non-performance-approach oriented individuals?

2. Provided multiple possible helpers, do help-seekers return to the same helper, or seek help from multiple sources?
3. Are performance-approach oriented individuals that seek more help more satisfied by their play experience?
4. Is Gamer Type (based on the gamist-narrativist-simulationist theory) predicted by a player's goal orientation?
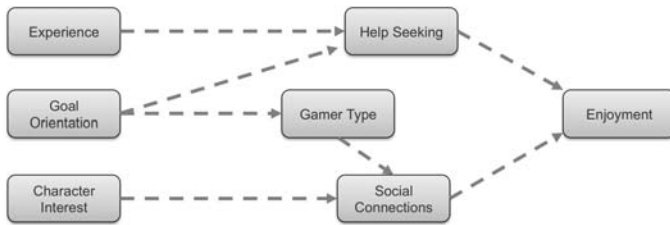

Figure 1: Conceptual model of help-seeking and goal-orientation in interactive literature

METHOD

A study of three separate interactive literature events run at Intercon (an all-LARP convention) included 85 unique participants playing 96 characters (some players played in multiple of the games studied). Each event was four hours in duration, and the participants were evenly split.

	Duration	# of GMs (helpers)	# of players
Event 1	4 hrs	3	33
Event 2	4 hrs	3	33
Event 3	4 hrs	2	30

Table 1: List of LARPs included in the study

Pre-event Survey—Goal Orientation and Experience

Approximate experience level was gathered by inquiring as to the number of events the player had previously participated in and categorizing them on a 1 to 5 scale. The scale was logarithmic, with a report score of 1 indicating they had no prior LARP experience and 5 indicating they had participated in over 150 LARPs. While not needed to measure the research questions directly, each of the nodes of the conceptual model were measured

in some way, so as to build a more complete data set for future analysis.

To assess the players' goal orientation, the pre-event survey presented them with a modified version of PALS (2000) subscales for mastery, performance-approach, and performance-avoid. Since PALS is a validated measure, the survey questions were modified only to make them applicable in the context of interactive literature.

Mastery

1. I like roles that I'll learn from even if I make a lot of mistakes.
2. An important reason why I LARP is because I like to learn new things.
3. I like a LARP best when it really makes me think.
4. An important reason why I LARP is because I want to get better at it.
5. An important reason I LARP is because I enjoy it.
6. I LARP because I'm interested in it.

Performance-Approach

1. I would feel really good if I were the only one who could solve the final puzzle.
2. I want to do better than other players.
3. I would feel successful if I did better than most of the other players.
4. I'd like to show my GM that I'm better than the other players in my game.
5. Doing better than other players in game is important to me.

Performance-Avoidance

1. It's very important to me that I don't look stupid when I LARP.
2. An important reason in how I play my character is so that I don't embarrass myself.
3. The reason I play the way I do is so others won't think I'm dumb.
4. One of my main goals is to avoid looking like I don't know what I am doing.
5. One reason I would not participate in an in-game activity is to avoid looking stupid.

Pre-event Surveys were returned at a rate of 90.5% (77 of 85). Missing surveys were due to players that were late for the game.

Quantitative Field Observations: Runtime Monitoring of Help-seeking

The goal of this method was to determine the locus of help, given multiple potential helpers, and the type of help that players requested. During each game, GMs coded all player-initiated interactions (both help-seeking and non-help-seeking). Help-seeking events were coded into four categories: consultative help, validation, information seeking, and clarifying. GMs also coded four categories of non-help interactions: taking game actions, game commentary, logistical, and not game related. A single player-initiated interaction could be coded into multiple categories.

Help-Seeking Category	Description
Consultative	The player is seeking your input or asking for your advice on what actions to take, or how to handle a situation.
Validation	The player is looking for a show of approval for their actions or to acknowledge how noteworthy some action of theirs was, or will be.
Information Seeking	The player is requesting additional information to what was provided to them previously. This would be information that is entirely new to them. Note that this is just a classification of the request—it does not matter if the information was provided or not.
Clarifying	The player is seeking to clarify or confirm information they already have, such as asking if the player with the nametag "Bob" is the same Bob from their background.

Table 2: Classifications of Help-Seeking interactions

Non-Help-Seeking Category	Description
Taking Game Action	The player wants to interact with the GM in their role as representing reality in order to take some action in the game. This includes actions such as performing dangerous physical feats, interacting with the virtual contents of a room, or searching a virtual database for information.
Game Commentary	The player wants to talk about the game, but is not looking for a response from the GM.
Logistical	The player asks a question or informs the GM of a situation related to the logistics of the game. Example: "I have to leave at 6pm"
Not Game Related	The player wants to talk to the GM about something other than the game.

Table 3: Classifications of Non-Help-Seeking interactions

For inter-rater reliability, the coding system was piloted with three individuals coding player help-seeking behavior (kappa = 0.56). After the event the raters discussed the discrepancies between their results, and the category descriptions were improved, and an additional category Logistical was added. Eight raters were trained using the improved category descriptors and completed the coding of a series of test cases gathered from a panel of expert GMs (kappa = 0.62).

Post-event Survey

Immediately after the event, participants completed a short survey to capture their enjoyment and satisfaction levels using a hedonic smiley scale. Post-event surveys were returned at a rate of 69.7% (67 of 96). The discrepancy between the number of pre-event surveys handed out and post-event surveys handed out was due to eleven

players that participated in two games. Only one pre-event survey was collected for these players, while one post-event survey was collected for each of their games. The hedonic smiley scale was later coded into a 1–5 for analysis.

I was satisfied with my character	🙂 🙂 😐 🙁 😧
My character was interesting	🙂 🙂 😐 🙁 😧
Others seemed to enjoy this game	🙂 🙂 😐 🙁 😧
I enjoyed this game	🙂 🙂 😐 🙁 😧
The GMs were helpful	🙂 🙂 😐 🙁 😧

Table 4: Measures of enjoyments and satisfaction

Results

A review of data sorted by variable, and a review of a histogram of each variable helped to make sense of the data and check for errors in the manual data-entry. The means and 95% confidence intervals, as determined by bootstrapping, are reported below. The mean experience level of 3.61 indicates a prior experience of approximately 60 LARPs.

Variable	Range	Mean	95% Confidence Interval
Experience	1.00–5.00	3.61	3.44–3.79
Performance-Approach	1.00–4.20	2.47	2.34–2.60
Performance-Avoid	1.00–4.00	2.12	1.98–2.27
Mastery	2.84–4.84	4.01	3.92–4.09

Table 5.1: Descriptive statistics for player experience and goal orientation (n=77)

Variable	Range	Mean	95% Confidence Interval
Help events (per player per game)	0.00–15.00	2.44	1.86–3.06
Consultative	0.00–3.00	0.44	0.28–0.60
Validation	0.00–5.00	0.33	0.19–0.51
Information Seeking	0.00–9.00	1.02	0.73–1.36
Clarifying	0.00–5.00	0.65	0.44–0.88
Non-help events	0.00–9.00	2.24	1.75–2.76

Table 5.2: Descriptive statistics for player help-seeking and non-help seeking events (n=85). Help-seeking counts for players that played multiple games were averaged.

Variable	Range	Mean	95% Confidence Interval
Satisfied with the Character	2.00–5.00	4.52	4.36–4.66
Character was Interesting	3.00–5.00	4.42	4.28–4.55
Others Enjoyed the Game	3.00–5.00	4.65	4.54–4.76
I Enjoyed the Game	2.00–5.00	4.59	4.44–4.74
GMs were helpful	3.00–5.00	4.55	4.42–4.67

Table 5.3: Descriptive statistics for player satisfaction (n=67)

Although the confidence intervals for satisfaction measures do not touch the maximum value of 5.00, they are all very close. Looking at the distribution for the values of responses (Fig. 2) to "I enjoyed the game," shows there may be a ceiling effect on this measure. That the surveys were not anonymous (due to a need to be able analyze across measures) may lead to a bias due to self-presentation. Self-selection may be a factor—repeat players have enjoyed this type of game in the past and sign up for games they believe they will enjoy. Also, several individuals showing frustration or dissatisfaction were observed not returning or refusing to complete their post-event surveys, possibly leading to a self-selection bias towards high satisfaction rates on the post-event surveys.
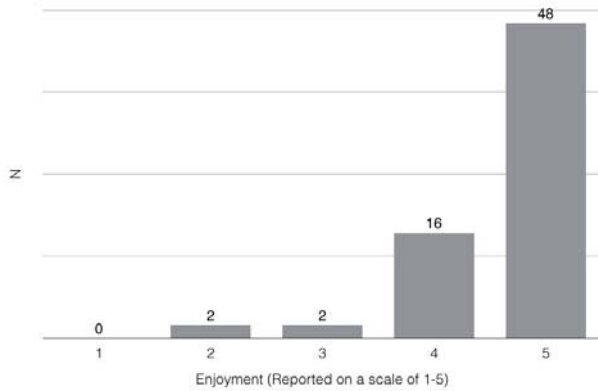
Figure 2: Histogram of values of responses for "I enjoyed the game"

Research Questions

Do performance-approach oriented individuals request more information through help?

Research on help-seeking in interactive learning environments has found that students often use on-demand help systems to achieve their goals (get correct answers) without mastering the material (Aleven and Koedinger). If learning the privileged information that the GM knows was seen as a strategic advantage to performance-approach oriented players, we would expect they would request more information than low performance approach individuals. Not only have we failed to reject the null hypothesis, but the data shows essentially no difference in information-seeking between performance-approach oriented individuals and non-performance-approach oriented individuals. Performance-approach correlates with information-seeking at $r(65) = 0.019$, $p=0.88$.

This could be because the players do not see additional information as a strategic advantage, or because they do not believe a request for the information will be fruitful—that is they may be self-monitoring their requests in order not to wear out the good will of the GM. Another possibility is that the goal the players are hoping to achieve is the approval of the GM. If that is the case then the player may be self–monitoring their requests because they see them as a risk-factor which could lead to a failure in gaining the GM's approval.

One piece of evidence that this is true would be a correlation between performance-approach orientation and validation help events (see the Other Findings section for more on this).

Provided multiple possible helpers, do help-seekers return the same helper, or seek help from multiple sources?

Considering only the players that asked for help at least twice in a single game (N=47), we found that 39.6% used only one helper. Using the formula below, we found that repeat help-seekers returned to the same helper 62% better than chance.

There are many possible reasons for this pattern of behavior. If a player has a successful help-seeking interaction with a helper they would have a positive meta-cognitive evaluation of the help-seeking episode. This may lead to the player strategically preferring that particular helper when they select a help-seeking strategy for a following help-seeking episode. There may also be pre-existing social bonds or social bonds that are created through the help-seeking interaction that encourage the help-seeker to return to the same helper. Finally, there may be contextual reasons included in this behavior—what we report as multiple instances of help-seeking may actually be a single line of requests dealing with the same subject, causing the player to strategically select the same helper due to the helper's understanding of the context of prior requests.

Variable	Mean	95% Confidence Interval
Likelihood to return to previous helper	0.622	0.528–0.717

Are performance-approach oriented individuals that seek more help more

satisfied by their play experience?

Although our results do not allow us to reject the null hypothesis, the trend in the data is that performance-approach oriented individuals that seek help are less satisfied with their play experience. We looked at two populations of performance-approach oriented individuals, splitting the overall population by absolute measures (>3) and splitting the overall population based on the mean performance-approach score (>2.5). For individuals with Performance-Approach scores >3 there is a negative correlation between help-seeking and enjoyment, $r(8) = -0.50$, $p=0.15$. For individuals with Performance-Approach scores of > 2.5 there is a negative correlation between help-seeking and enjoyment, $r(23) = -0.29$, $p= 0.16$.

Although these results are not statistically reliable, the trend may indicate that, for this performance-approach oriented population, help events are generated as a result of less than ideal play. Since satisfaction scores were very high it may be that, in this case, help-seeking is more of an optimization strategy than a strategy to mitigate dissatisfaction. The player may become frustrated if they thought they had a way to achieve their goals only to fail when their help-seeking fails; frustration-aggression theory defines frustration as "a state that sets in if a goal-oriented act is delayed or thwarted (Dollard, Doob and Miller)." Frustration could be described as having high arousal and low valence (Russell), which may help explain how frustration can lead to other negative-valence emotions and reduce satisfaction scores. That is to say, that once a player starts to actively feel a negative emotion such as frustration, it will be easier for them to transition to other negative emotions, which would naturally reduce satisfaction scores.

If we consider enjoyment a measure of success for the game, we could state that players who report less enjoyment are more in need of help—they need help to succeed at enjoying the game. In that light, this trend could indicate that help-seeking in games and game-like environments may not hold to classroom findings that those who need help the most are the least likely to ask for it (Karabenick and Knapp). This trend has a significant effect size, and it may be worth collecting more data to see if we can reject the null hypothesis.

Since the question tackles the relationship between player characteristics and help-seeking events, for players that played in multiple games, we are considering the average of their help seeking events across their multiple games. Eleven of 85 players played in two games, the remainder played in only one.

Is gamer type (based on the gamist-narrativist-simulationist theory) predicted by a player's goal orientation?

That modern role-playing theories such as the gamist-narrativist-simulationist theory (GNS) are generated amongst role-playing enthusiasts rather than from research based or academic sources has lead to many questions about the validity of the theories. Since GNS Theory considers motivational stances of role-players, one possible test of the validity of GNS Theory would be to compare it to validated measures of motivation, such as the trichotomous model of goal orientation.

A leave-one-out forward ANOVA for gamer type "gamist" generated a model that included only one variable—Performance Approach. This indicates that by measuring a player's performance-approach goal orientation, we can predict how they will score on a measure of the gamist GNS stance. Performance-approach correlates with the gamist stance at $r(78)=0.411$, $p=0.00$. The ANOVA model included the three goal orientations as well as the player's total experience.

The narrativist and simulationist GNS stances both correlate with mastery goal orientation. Simulationist correlates slightly more strongly at $r(76)=0.444$, $p=0.000$, and narrativist slightly more weakly at $r(75)=0.408$, $p=0.000$.

These results indicate that GNS theory stances can be predicted by at least one validated scale (PALS subscales for Goal Orientation). However, goal orientation cannot distinguish the narrativist and simulationist stances, which could mean that GNS is not a pure measure of motivation, but also includes aspects of gameplay. It is also worth noting that no GNS stance correlates with the performance-avoid orientation. While this could mean that GNS is incomplete, a more likely explanation is that GNS is a theory of a system that self-selects against performance-avoidance. After all, people

who are motivated by avoidance failure are not likely to take part in a game if they feel like there is a good chance of failure.

It is also important to note that the GNS survey questions are not validated or guaranteed to accurately measure GNS stances. The GNS results are best considered as a trend which suggest that more controlled and validated measurements may be warranted.

Other Findings

An exploration of the collected data was conducted to determine the answer to follow-up questions. An attempt has been made to confine the number of additional tests to a small number in order to reduce the chance of type II errors. Included with each follow-up question is the number of tests performed in this exploration.

Is there any pattern in the kind of help sought by performance-approach oriented individuals?

This was a follow up on Research Question 1, which asks about performance-approach oriented individuals and information seeking. The natural follow-up was to ask about the other types of help-seeking. For this we did four additional tests, and found small effect sizes for Consultative and Clarifying help-events. The one type of help that performance-approach oriented individuals are slightly more likely to seek is validation, with a correlation of $r(65)=0.254$, $p=0.038$. Performance-approach oriented individuals are also more likely to initiate non-help interactions $r(65)=0.249$, $p=0.043$. That performance-approach oriented individuals sought more validation also points to the possibility that one of the goals they wish to achieve is the approval of the GM, and that other help requests are being self-monitored in order to help achieve this goal.

Does experience matter?

To examine experience in relation to goal orientation, overall help-seeking and satisfaction measures, nine additional nine tests were conducted. Experienced players tended to be mastery oriented as evidenced by a moderate correlation of $r(76)=0.307$, $p=0.006$. One likely reason for this is self-selection—players who participate in many games are likely to be those who see intrinsic value in interactive literature and who see the activity of LARPing as its own reward.

Experienced players also tended to perceive the GMs as less helpful $r(51)= -0.359$, $p=0.008$. Since this is a measure of perceived helpfulness it can be used to look at how a help-seeker evaluates the help-seeking episode (Aleven, Stahl and Schworm). If a player were to evaluate a help-seeking episode and conclude that they would have been able to succeed without help their perception of the helpfulness of the GM may decline. If these expert players are requesting help in more challenging areas it is more likely that the help provided does not satisfy their request. The data collected was only for help-seeking, not what help was given, so another possible explanation is that the GMs decided not to provide the help requested—either because there was no additional information available or because they perceived the player to be able to resolve their problem on their own.

Did seeking any particular kind of help improve a player's enjoyment?

Help-seeking types were examined for impact on enjoyment, using six additional tests. Neither information seeking, validation, clarifying, non-help-seeking events, nor overall help-seeking had an impact on the player's enjoyment. Consultative help, however, had a moderate negative correlation—the more a player requested consultative help, the less they enjoyed the game—$r(60) = -0.390$, $p=0.002$. Simple explanations for this are that GMs gave poor advice, or that GMs were less likely to provide this kind of help when requested. However it also may not be the act of help-seeking that results in less enjoyment, but that they both stem from another source cause. Consultative help is requested when the player is unsure of what to do, and it seems likely that players that become stuck enjoy the game less.

IMPLICATIONS

These results tell us not to ignore help events when looking at gameplay because, in game environments, help events can be seen as indicators that a player is struggling. While game designs should

try to avoid the need for help events, attempts to prevent or regulate the use of help could cause frustration and dissatisfaction. Any game that can become aware of its players' goal orientation should design in validations for performance-approach individuals, which this study has shown correlates with higher satisfaction levels. This validation can be thought of as a type of route confirmatory sign—confirmation that the help-seeker is on the right path. One example of this is when players use statistics in computer and console games to provide active, instant feedback that is used as a validation measure. A report of the player's DPS or Kill Count at the end of the level is not only a summary, but also a motivational help tool. In Interactive Literature, this might be achieved by making the progress toward a goal visible to the player, or a GM proactively telling a player they are doing well. It may seem counterintuitive to disrupt immersion to communicate to the player, but for performance-approach players, it might just increase their satisfaction.

FUTURE STUDY

Quantitative field observation of help-seeking in LARP can provide a unique look into both unstructured help seeking in general and into aspects of gameplay. This study has started to look at help seeking as it relates to goal orientation, locus of help, and the GNS theory of role-play, but many other possibilities for future study exist. Even just within the conceptual model hypothesis put forth in this paper, it is possible to ask how aspects of gameplay such as character social connections interact with help seeking. Might a player whose character has more connections seek less validation from the GM? Does the rate of non-help interactions predict the rate of help interaction? With little prior art in this area, additional, similar exploratory studies are warranted to help develop a model for help seeking behavior in games.

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WRITING PROCESS, WRITTEN PRODUCT
Outside-In vs. Inside-Out Larp Design

by Nat Budin

Larp journals are filled with articles contrasting and analyzing various styles of larp design and play. Far less discussed is the process used to design those larps.

Creative processes can significantly affect the results they achieve. Pixar, for example, uses a very deliberately-designed process for creating its films, encouraging collective input and critical feedback at every step. The company believes this process has helped it maintain a high level of originality and creativity (Catmull). Similarly, using an electronic outlining-based writing process has been found to significantly improve the organization of student essays (de Smet 362). Naturally, one might conclude that the process used to design larps would likely have some effect on the larps themselves.

It is important not to overstate this effect. Clearly, if two different writing groups start from the same set of ideas and follow similar processes, each will bring their personalities to bear on the creative output, and they will end up with different larps. Furthermore, all processes for doing work are idiosyncratic to some degree. Arguably, it is impossible for two groups to follow exactly the same process, because process details are dependent on the particular people doing the work. However, there are certain elements and values present in creative processes which, if adopted by a team, can help shape the work they produce.

While interviewing Liliya Benderskaya for a different article, I discovered that she and her frequent collaborator, Tory Root, use a creative process unique among any I had previously encountered. This article will give an overview of both that process and one that I have frequently used in the past, explore differences between these processes, and discuss some effects those differences may have on the larps they produce.

The Paranoid & Crotchety Creative Process

Benderskaya and Root, collectively known as Paranoid & Crotchety[1], have created six larps together: *Lifeline*, *The Sound of Drums*, *The All Crotchety Old Folks With Shotguns Game*, *Stars Over Atlantis*, *Folding the River*, and *The Other Side of the Glass*. Each has also written larps outside of the duo.

Following the earlier conversation I had with Benderskaya, I interviewed the two writers together about their process, its benefits and drawbacks, and the effects it has on their work. In this interview, I learned that Benderskaya and Root's collaborative creative process consists of two phases, which I will call "play/design" and "writing." The play/design phase allows the team to collaboratively discover the details of their game's characters, the world they inhabit, and their challenges and motivations. Only after play/design is complete does any writing of sheets for the larp begin.

In the play/design phase of the process, Benderskaya and Root take on the roles of various nascent characters in their larp-in-progress and role-play

1   http://letterblade.net/larp/

conversations as those characters. During these role-play sessions, they keep in mind questions such as: "If I were a player playing this character, what could I do?", "What kind of character relationships would I want?", and "What would make my experience cooler?" These guiding questions help the writers focus on the player perspective as opposed to simply what would feel natural for the character.

Later in the play/design phase, the focus begins to shift more towards structure, building out a framework for the larp to function as a game given the characters and world that have been designed. As this happens, Root and Benderskaya may discover that the game needs additional characters or plots added to it in order to function well, which may necessitate more rounds of role-playing in order to work out their details and backstory. Furthermore, at this point in the process, the creators often role-play not as the characters, but as players of those characters discussing their experiences after the game. This may lead to the addition of elements to the game design in places where it feels as if characters do not have enough to do.

Once all this has been done, there are very few decisions left to make during writing. According to Benderskaya, "by the time we're starting we know what [the game] is going to be." The game design almost never changes once sheets start to be created; in my conversation with them, the duo could think of only one example when it had changed. For this reason, writing can often begin very late in the process as a whole, relative to the way other larp writing teams work.

The Alleged Entertainment Creative Process

Alleged Entertainment is the larp writing group I co-founded in 2003. The group consists of a large and fluid set of people, writing in various combinations, but the most frequent core of Alleged Entertainment creative teams has been me, Susan Weiner, and Vito D'Agosta.

I wrote a bit about the writing process we use on our group blog[2] in 2009. That article describes

2   http://blog.aegames.org/2009/06/group-writing-process.html

two separate phases (writing and design), but in retrospect I believe these two phases are better understood as one single process (Budin). The design of the larp is continuous throughout the entire process, and writing is done as early as possible for each piece of written material.

The process typically begins with large-scale discussions about the larp we're planning and its structure. Many of our larps have been structured differently than the traditional secrets and powers form typical in the Intercon community, so we begin by hashing out the format for the game and discussing what we think it will be like to play. Even in a secrets and powers larp, however, the early design process begins by thinking about the overall play experience and flow of the larp rather than specific plot and characterization decisions.

Once we have an overall structure for the larp, we begin to fill in the bones of the structure. In the case of a secrets and powers larp, we might brainstorm and outline plots. In the case of a scene-based game, we will typically outline the scenes and the order they should appear. In both cases, we outline the cast of player characters and discuss at least the basics of the game mechanics, both at a very high level—typically, at this stage, the characters are not even yet given names.

Once we have arrived at a set of characters, scenes, and/or background materials, the writing begins. The game is split up into a series of small chunks to be written (often individual sheets), and these chunks are assigned to writers to draft outside of team meetings. Meetings are regular and frequent—usually every two weeks—and consist of dramatic readings of drafts as well as critical feedback and copy editing on those drafts. At the end of each meeting, further assignments are divvied up among the writers (Budin).

Since the game has not been fully designed in its particulars by the time writing begins, there are still many decisions to be made by the writer, who has latitude to invent aspects of the game's backstory, character personalities, and other details. Thus, design is done simultaneously with writing. As before the writing began, design proceeds starting from a macro scale and ending at micro scale. Background information sheets are usually written

first, followed by knowledge sheets given to groups of characters, then scenes and character sheets.

Contrasting the processes

The respective processes of Paranoid & Crotchety and Alleged Entertainment clearly contain some major differences. Let us focus on a philosophical distinction between them that may be usefully applied outside these groups. When designing a larp, which perspective do we take: that of an outsider looking at the entire game, or that of an insider playing out moments in the context of the game's fictional universe? Alleged Entertainment adopts the outside-in point of view, while Paranoid & Crotchety takes the inside-out one.

Each perspective has its uses. Inside-out design prioritizes the experience of players (in Paranoid & Crotchety's case, by having the designers literally adopt the player persona), and by doing so, helps guide the design towards characters that feel natural and cohesive to play. By contrast, outside-in design prioritizes overall structure of the larp, thereby helping make the game itself feel like a coherent whole.

Both outside-in and inside-out processes force certain creative decisions to be made early on, while allowing others to be deferred until later. Decisions made later in the process will usually be based on decisions made earlier, making earlier decisions harder to reverse by virtue of having to also revise a great deal of other design work.

One example of the effects of this tradeoff is alignment of goals in a secrets and powers larp. An outside-in design process might start with a genre and set of themes the game would explore, develop the setting of the game, and then build a plot web from those themes. From there, the designers might create a set of characters to interact with one another. By working in this way, the goals of the characters are very likely to interact well with one another, providing good opposition and interplay. However, the characters themselves are practically an afterthought in this design process. By the time the writers create the characters, it may be quite difficult to create a cohesive set of character motivations to implement a particular set of goals.

An inside-out design process might begin with the characters, making sure to give each one internally consistent and interesting motivations. After designing the characters, the team might move on to plots to tie them together. Through this process, setting, genre and themes would emerge and become fleshed-out. Because the plots (and therefore the character goals) arose from the characters' motivations, they would probably feel very cohesive to play, and players would walk into the game with a very good sense of who the character is. The larp as a whole, however, would be less likely to interact well as a game: characters might be unbalanced with one another, leading to what Benderskaya and Root term "secondary character syndrome," in which some characters feel to players as if they are much less important than others.

Of course, it is quite possible to design an excellent larp using either an inside-out or an outside-in process. Neither design approach dooms its users to a fate of incoherency at a structural or character level. But in both cases, care must be taken to avoid the risks of the chosen process. This is why, for example, Benderskaya and Root use the technique of role-playing as players talking after the game: to force them to focus more on making characters in their larps equally central to their own stories. According to them, this has been an effective way of mitigating secondary character syndrome.

Individual differences

Paranoid & Crotchety is not a single unit, and as such, Benderskaya and Root are very different in their respective approaches to writing. According to Root, when she writes larps on her own, her approach is far more structure-focused and outside-in than when she works with Benderskaya, who tends to think more free-associatively, coming up with possible connections between characters on the fly. Both agree that these qualities combine to make their process work, with Benderskaya providing "the plot web you would have come up with [given the characters]," and Root giving necessary play structure and mechanics to the game.

Similarly, Alleged Entertainment's process works by virtue of who we are as people. Weiner and D'Agosta tend to conceive of the original ideas

about the game's structure and themes, whereas I usually bring the perspective of crafting the player experience to implement these ideas. The three of us all prefer to work independently on creating characters rather than designing them as a group ahead of time, but our independent creativity is appropriately bounded by knowing each others' work as a result of having worked together for years. By virtue of this, we can be fairly sure nobody's independent writing will stray too far from the others', and if it does, we have a relationship that allows us to rein it in.

Because our individual personalities influence our work so greatly, it is highly unlikely that copying either of these groups' exact processes would be possible for any other group. It may, however, be useful for others to consider the benefits and drawbacks inherent in these structures of process when designing their own games.

Intentionality of process

Making use of a specific process is one of the many tools available to a larp writer. From the examples of these two groups, we can see that the aspects of a larp design that are prioritized early on tend to be the most cohesive elements of that game, but also the hardest to change later. Since each larp is different, it is perhaps useful to intentionally consider where to begin with each new game.

In a drama about the sinking of the Titanic, for example, the decision to begin inside-out might produce a poignant character piece, while an outside-in take on that concept might produce a thrilling life-or-death adventure. Our outside-in version of a Passover-themed larp was an intensely emotional story with a plot twist (D'Agosta et al), whereas an inside-out design might have produced a more contemplative, spiritual experience.

Other aspects of process may have effects as well. For example, does the process include peer review of written materials, and what is done with the results of those reviews? Does the group use a plot web or not? How much is decided about characters before writing their sheets? How often does the group meet, and what discussions happen in those meetings? Ultimately, the design of a larp is influenced to some degree by all these factors.

Intentionality of design and a consistency of authorial voice seem to be overall trends in theatre-style larp design in the past decade. The right writing process can help a group of disparate authors produce these qualities in their work—or indeed, other qualities. When embarking on a new project, there is great value in being deliberate in the selection of a team's process in addition to the design of the work itself.

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Nat Budin got his start in theatre-style larp in 2002 at Brandeis University. He has served as con chair for Intercon I in 2009 and Intercon P in 2016. He also founded Brandeis's Festival of the LARPs and co-founded Alleged Entertainment, with which he has written and run over a dozen original theatre-style larps. Nat also created and maintains several web-based tools for larp creation and management, including Journey Surveys, Vellum, and ConCentral. Nat's writing about larp has also been published in the Wyrd Con Companion Book.

BEYOND BIRDSEED
Bringing Immersion to Non-Combat Modules

by Kat Davis

When one hears about boffer LARPs, one generally first thinks of live combat. After all, it's right in the name; boffer refers to the foam weaponry used by players. There is a common belief that live combat is all these games have to offer, and that to be interested in a boffer LARP one must be interested in hitting other people with plumbing supplies. This belief is untrue.

In my experience, what actually brings boffer to life is the focus on immersion and simulation through deliberate action on behalf of the players. One of the main commonalities between boffer games is a focus on the principle of "What You See is What You Get." This principle manifests in the concerted effort by both staff and players to ensure that things in game can be reasonably represented by visible objects or actions. One does not frequently see flying, for example, because it is difficult to replicate flying without elaborate pulleys. Combat is an important part of the simulation. It contributes to the feeling of immersion and the conceit that, for the most part, if one wants to do something, one must physically do it. If one wants to hit someone else with a sword, one must physically do so. But there are other things that one might want to do. For example, if one wants to talk a cop into letting them near a crime scene, one must find the words that will convince the cop to do so. If one wants to open a lock without the key, they must actually physically pick that lock.

Most games create a world that drives players to desire to experience it. As they become immersed in the various stories being told, they get to confront new and powerful emotions. They get a chance to speak with non-player-characters and learn about the places within the world; to break into their "rival's" base, evade his guards, and steal his most treasured possession; to entertain at a fantastical masquerade ball. If the only draw of the game was combat, one would be better off taking a martial arts class. It's everything else that makes the world come to life.

And thus we understand the draw of the non-combat module. *Non-combat* in this case refers to a module wherein combat is ill-advised or not intended to be the focus of the module. Whether the goal is to trick a kidnapped prisoner into telling you what you need to know or swinging on a rope across a gaping chasm (chasm usually represented by rope lights on the ground), the player is given a chance to show off unique skills that either wouldn't be safe in a combat situation or are focused on less physical things. They also allow a player to explore new sensations or emotions as well as unique challenges.

There are several common breakdowns of non-combat modules prevalent throughout boffer LARPing. The most common, in my experience, is what is known as the *rogue module*. Rogue modules, as the name might suggest, focus around incorporating stealth into a tense situation. Usually, there are some guards that the players must sneak past undetected and some information that the players hope to get out of the encounter. Frequently there

are a myriad of locked boxes or traps that players must work their way through and carefully disassemble.

The fun of rogue modules comes from the physical challenge of sneaking through the module. The players must work through physical challenges themselves, such as picking locks or dismantling traps, while risking detection by any guards or destruction of what the characters have come to find. From an immersion standpoint, the players are expected to participate in all of the physical challenges themselves. Any lock that the players wish to bypass must actually be picked by the players with tools they have brought into the module (most rogues wouldn't go anywhere without their "rogue kit"). Any trap must be disabled by the players before it is triggered. Players must be quick, nimble, and aware of their surroundings. There is excitement in the threat of failure, but it is a very different sort of excitement than that found in primarily combat oriented modules. It also allows for players to engage in things that could be too hazardous or dangerous in a full combat module, such as exciting physical stunts.

By incorporating real-world skills such as stealth, lockpicking, or acrobatics, the participants get to utilize and showcase skills they might not usually get to while engaging in difficult challenges and struggling to complete their objectives within the time frame, without getting caught, or whatever other obstacles the game staff has created for them. The fact that the players must do all of this themselves adds to their emotional buy-in and raises the stakes.

A good example of this is a module from *Mirror Mirror* (Chimera Entertainment, Inc.),[1] wherein the player-characters were looking to break open some eggs and avoid the wrath of the blind guardians who stood vigilant over the characters' objective. The intention was to avoid any detection, as the player-characters knew that any detection could easily result in the very powerful guardians killing them. When they arrived, they realized that the guardians were servitors of a rival Fae to the one who had sent them, thus upping the stakes even further as offending a powerful Fae was added to death as a possible consequence. The eggs were simulated by balloons with tea lights

inside, forcing the players to use very sharp knives to open them while trying to remain completely silent. As an additional complication, the module was set at night in the woods with scattered branches and leaves everywhere. The guards would wander throughout, and, if they heard a noise, would swing in its general direction with lethal force. The players were constantly trying to move around silently and perform a difficult task, always afraid of detection.

Another common example of a non-combat module is what is colloquially referred to as a *talky module*. There are a couple of different flavors of talky module, but for the most part they revolve around the intent to acquire the objective, whatever it is, through discourse rather than violence. This breaks down into sub-classifications based on the objective of the module.

One common talky module subtype is a *diplomacy module*. Diplomacy modules generally involve player-characters arbitrating between two (or more) disparate factions. This can take several different forms, whether it's players trying to act as a jury in a court where a non-player character is on trial, trying to reconcile two disparate parts of a faction, or actually acting as diplomats for world powers of the game world. These modules highlight players who are persuasive or capable of thinking of unique solutions to problems. They allow players who are skilled in oration to shine.

These modules work best when there is already an established link for the player-characters to either the situation or the non-player-characters involved. If the staff gives the players a reason to care about the outcome and establishes the possible outcomes, the immersion is an emergent property of the puzzle that the situation creates. The players must solve the social puzzle with the tools given to them or suffer the consequences. They're forced to think critically and speak quickly and charismatically.

A good example of one of these sorts of modules was seen in *Shadows of Amun* (Older than Dirt Games, May 2015).[2] Some player-characters were brought into a group which devoted itself to protecting the Pharaoh during the reign of Cleopatra. Some of the player-characters' superiors brought them in to add insight to a debate regard-

ing whether or not protecting Cleopatra meant protecting her from herself. The characters had to be careful not to offend either of the disagreeing superiors while working to satisfy both of their concerns. On top of this, they knew that whatever solution they came up with would likely be put into effect, so they couldn't just pay lip service to satisfying the concerns. Each of the disparate factions' thoughts and opinions had to be weighed against what the player-characters knew of the situation (even things they couldn't tell their superiors) and come up with a satisfactory solution that would also actually solve the concern of safety.

Another particularly humorous example comes from *Cottington Woods* (Mangio and Mangio, September 2015),[3] a fairytale-inspired game. In a plotline surrounding the kidnapping of children, Peter Pan approached the player-characters claiming that the dastardly Hook must be responsible. The player-characters, having been hoodwinked by Pan before, were suspicious but agreed to accompany him to confront Hook. They followed him down to the beach, where Hook and some of his crew were sitting drinking grog (not real—alcohol and live combat do not mix!) and enjoying the sun. Pan and Hook immediately started bickering, as Hook reminded the player-characters that Pan was the one infamous for kidnapping children. The player-characters had to talk both of them down so they could learn that neither Pan nor Hook was involved, and convince the two enemies to work together to find the kidnapped children. They had to navigate the obvious rivalry and manipulate the non-player-characters into overcoming it to achieve the player-characters' goals.

In both of these examples, players have a vested interest in appeasing both sides of the conflict to find a middle ground. Each presents different challenges for the player-characters to work to overcome, and the players must use quick-thinking and wits to find the words and conversational direc-

tions that allow for success of the character's goals. The immersion in these situations comes from the fact that the players are forced to rely on their own skills of oration and navigate whatever social issues the game staff has presented. The players must use the knowledge they have gained in the game and their own cleverness to solve whatever social puzzle is presented to them.

> *The players must use the knowledge they have gained in the game and their own cleverness to solve whatever social puzzle is presented to them.*

The other common type of talky module that I will talk about is the *masquerade module*. This is something of a misnomer, as it covers more than just masquerades. This module type involves a large block of time set aside for a ball, faire, or other large gathering of unique personalities. Usually, there are lots of non-player-characters representing plot hooks sent out to mingle, armed with information that the player-characters want. There may be games with in-game treasures as prizes, or contests such as bardic contests, dueling contests, or other small tests of skill. These modules are generally meant to entertain the majority of the player-character base and further their plots through investigation and socializing while giving them small, fun and unique opportunities to explore their skills. This is different from many other modules, which usually entertain a much smaller subset of players. Because of the shift in focus towards entertaining a larger percentage of the game at once, the staff of a game can invest in more set dressing. Lights, props, and costuming allow for a more decorated and atmospheric environment, which furthers the immersion for the players involved. They also allow player-characters to push their agendas while perhaps breaking into different plots that interest them or help their friends if they are more socially inclined.

Cottington Woods (Mangio and Mangio, January 2015)[4] presented a particularly memorable example of this when they did a whole one-day event surrounding the Fairy Mist Ball, an event that touched all masquerades across time. This meant that player-characters could meet with any char-

acter, so long as they had once attended a ball. Several players were surprised to see deceased figures from their backstories meeting them face to face, such as parents or long-dead enemies. They were able to confront unresolved trauma or wheel and deal for information. It also allowed players to break out their fanciest clothing and expand their character's perceived image and wardrobe for a formal event.

Several events have done more casual town fair-type modules. In an *Occam's Razor* (Darksteel Games, November 2014)[5] event, they managed to balance an atmosphere where one could participate in silly games to win prizes, but also speak to a creepy blind psychic who seemed to have individual insight memorized for each player-character. The feel of a small-town New Hampshire atmosphere was highlighted while preserving the horrific undertones of the game. *Seven Virtues* (Caruso)[6] managed to create a captivatingly immersive atmosphere with their Dark Circus event that brought interesting plot hooks to characters while giving an experience that one player described as "walking into another world and losing yourself there." These types of games exist to deepen player immersion and the feel of the world around them. The intent is to make the world feel real and give the players an idea of the way their character's lives go when they're not living them.

Some modules don't necessarily fit into either a talky module or a rogue module. *Dreamscapes*, modules where the point is to experience an event rather than challenge it or defeat it, and similarly strange mods can also be potent. These modules all generally share the trait of being designed to evoke a reaction from players. Some dream modules or other strange settings involve puzzles connected to the esoteric concepts of the dream, or simply have the players experience a tense or emotional scene.

Shadows of Amun (Older than Dirt Games, October 2013)[7] gave a particularly powerful example of setting a scene to cause an emotional reaction in their players. During a gathering of a mystical group of player-characters and their Elders to tell stories, a God was summoned to kill all of their Elders and consume their souls in front of the helpless player-characters. This is an interesting example because while combat happened, it was not the focus of the module. The players were repeatedly paralyzed and forced to watch as the figures they looked to for guidance were utterly destroyed in front of them. They tried to fight, but quickly realized that fighting was futile and they were hopelessly outmatched. The module ended with the player-characters running blindly through the woods dragging the bodies of their mentors behind them, shell-shocked and crying from the overwhelming horror they had experienced. The module did not offer any kind of closure, but it was incredibly immersive in the creeping realization that fighting back was pointless and they could not hope to beat it.

Endgame (Black Crayon Games)[8] took a different tack at evoking strong emotion by asking several characters to sacrifice memories and parts of themselves in one plotline. This was done through "mind-dives," modules where a few player-characters entered another character's mind. These modules played out scenes from the character's past and manifested parts of them or their personality through physical objects or non-player characters without any explanation to those viewing the scenes. To the one hosting the mind-dive, it was a chance to confront powerful and difficult facets of their backstory; a chance to explore who their character had been and how they had gotten to who they had become. To everyone else involved it was part puzzle, part theatre; deeply surreal and impactful for all involved due to the clever use of mechanics (trying to figure out what each object represented) and the emotional stakes involved. Characters were literally playing with their friends'

Giving players an opportunity to solve plots with unique and unusual skills will add to their experience.

minds and memories and had to accept all repercussions for their actions afterwards.

The immersion presented in the last couple of examples is different from the more traditional examples above. The immersion created for the players is created less by the representation of what the players are doing and seeing and more in their buy-in of the scene. Typically, the more emotionally driven a scene is, the more deeply a player can empathize with their character. The very emotional scenes create a special kind of resonance that allow characters to experience raw emotion from their character's perspective. This type of module is heightened by the use of less concrete representation. As the intent is to evoke strong reaction in the player, stripping away much of the typical set dressing allows a more focused experience. The immersion comes in from the strong emotion the players feel, allowing them to become more immersed in their character's headspace.

There are ways to add unique and interesting non-combat elements to more traditional modules. The use of clever mechanics to represent puzzles or other parts of the game can allow for very simulationist approaches to non-combat roles. Putting effort into including complicated and immersive non-combat facets in combat modules can round out immersion in all parts of the game.

For example, *Rabbit Run* (Eddy et al.)[9] uses a clever hacking technique that is very resonant with the cyberpunk genre they are embodying. While most of the game is very combat-heavy, there are some characters who are focused on hacking, which is represented by tape set up as circuits that the hackers must re-wire as combat rages around them. It is interesting to observe their focus as they struggle to finish the puzzle while fighting is happening all around them. They are just as crucial as the fighters in these situations (perhaps more), and the fact that the puzzles they are working on are physically representative of what they are doing adds to the ease of immersion already created by the emotional stakes.

Occam's Razor (Darksteel Games)[10] has a similarly impressive representation of their technology. As a modern game with cyberpunk elements, incorporating technology into their game is important to maintain their genre. To this end, one of the staff

members has written small apps that can be installed on various devices and then interface with receiver devices on modules. Hacking is simulated by an app with various functions and puzzles that the players must solve to interface with the technology. This creates an interesting split as, even when these modules contain combat, hacker-type characters have tools given to them by the staff that make them irreplaceable. The fact that the puzzles are so evocative of the real world counterparts adds to the ambience and allows the game to retain its immersive feeling.

Immersion is very important to boffer games. Working to include more immersive non-combat modules is a sometimes tricky but ultimately worthwhile goal. There seem to be a few key threads that weave through non-combat modules that engage players and leave them feeling like something from the module stayed with them.

One such commonality is emotional tie-in for the players. If there are peace talks, the players must have strong feelings about a particular outcome. If a non-player-character is the focus of the module, the characters must have some emotional investment in that non-player-character, be it firsthand or otherwise. The more narratively built up a scene is, the more powerful the emotional payoff will be. Making sure that players understand the consequences of their actions, both in the short and long term, adds to the drama of the scene, the emotional investment of the players, and the overall payout of the scene.

The conceit must be given that most of the time, combat will still be an option within any given scenario no matter the original intent. Part of the freedom of boffer LARPs is that sometimes players will choose to turn a non-combat module into a combat module by deciding that it is time to begin attacking everyone. As the old adage says, no plot survives contact with the players. Even in a module wherein a fight with the guards of a vault should not be winnable, the guards should have full stat blocks in case of player-character failure or player-characters trying to push their luck. If there is no way for peace talks to devolve into war, it will still heighten a scene if the nobility in question have bodyguards to stand with them. It adds to the illusion of the world and weaves a fuller and more

realistic picture as well as an edge of danger that will better grab players.

There are many players that just want to live in the world that the staff have created. They like to explore, learn the stories and lives of the non-player-characters they encounter, and learn as much of the world background as they can. These types of players frequently enjoy opportunities to immerse themselves in parts of the world and show off their own personal skills. Giving players an opportunity to solve plots with unique and unusual skills will add to their experience. Giving them fleshed out non-player-characters to talk to and learn about the world from will add entertainment that can't necessarily be gained from just combat.

It is important to remember that in these games, players frequently consider violence to be their first option. It is seen by many as the go-to solution to many kinds of problems. When a module is properly configured and violence is removed as a possible solution, it forces players to adapt or react in ways that can be very powerful. It is sufficiently rare that creatures cannot be fought that such encounters are memorable. Rendering a character who is normally very physically inclined helpless, assuming that the player is fine with being in such a state, can heighten the experience. Suddenly that character is forced to struggle through figuring out another solution. This is one of the ways to force a character to grow and confront parts of themselves they might not normally engage with, and thus is a very powerful tool.

Working with these concepts can help push a non-combat module to the next level, and help the players become immersed in the world that is being created around them. The more commonly-accepted and talked about such non-combat modules become, the more likely the community is to gain players who are interested in things other than combat. Broadening the appeal of live-combat games to include things other than live-combat creates a more inclusive and accepting hobby as well as one with more universal appeal. It helps draw in players with unique skillsets that can help enhance the experiences of their fellows by bringing fresh points of view and exciting new stories to tell. As writers and players, we can and should embrace this direction of storytelling, blend it with established conventions, and create exciting new adventures.

LARPs Referenced

1. *Mirror Mirror by Chimera Entertainment, Inc.* Produced by Chimera Entertainment Inc. Brookfield, MA. November 2012. Production of live action role play game.

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3. *Cottington Woods by Michelle and John Mangio.* Produced by Michelle and John Mangio. Brookfield, MA. September 2015. Production of live action role play game.

4. *Cottington Woods by Michelle and John Mangio.* Produced by Michelle and John Mangio. Brookfield, MA. January 2015. Production of live action role play game.

5. *Occam's Razor by Darksteel Games.* Produced by Darksteel Games. Windsor, NH. November 2014. Production of live action role play game.

6. *Seven Virtues by Melissa Caruso.* Produced by Melissa Caruso. Ashby, MA. Production of live action role play game.

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9. Zoe Eddy, Albert Lin, Scott Sawyer, Chris Wilkins, Ben Jones, Jeff Holmes, Anthony Reed. *Rabbit Run.* 2014. Live action role play game.

10. *Occam's Razor by Darksteel Games.* Produced by Darksteel Games. Windsor, NH. Live action role play game.

RUNNING OUT OF THE BOX
How to Produce a Pre-Written Theatre-Style Larp

by Malcolm Harbrow

Abstract

There are now over two hundred publicly available theatre-style larp scenarios, the vast majority of them available for free. These represent only a small fraction of the total corpus of such games. Pre-written games, whether publicly available or acquired privately, can be an invaluable resource for establishing and growing a larp community and presenting a diversity of larp experiences.

This article will examine the process of producing a pre-written theatre-style larp. It will examine sources for pre-written games, things to look out for when assessing a game's suitability for your local larp community, what changes (if any) might need to be made, and what to do afterwards. Finally, it makes some suggestions to authors on how to encourage other people to run your game.

Would you like to run a theatre-style larp?

Assuming the answer is "yes," you basically have two options. You can come up with a great concept, then spend anywhere from a weekend to a couple of years conceiving plots, writing character sheets, and testing mechanics. Or, you can skip that bit and run something that has already been written.

In this article, I'm going to talk about the second option. The concept of running pre-written games has been around for a long time: the Interactive Literature Foundation, one of NEIL's predecessors, founded its gamebank in 1993 specifically to make games available for this purpose (Dean 19). While the ILF gamebank has disappeared, there is a growing culture of publication amongst GMs, and there are now over two hundred publicly available theatre-style games, the vast majority of them free. If you want to learn to produce a game, feed a hungry local larp community, present something different, or just take a break from writing, there's probably a game there for you. And if none of them suit, the web has made it easy to find out what has been run elsewhere and to contact authors to ask for a copy.
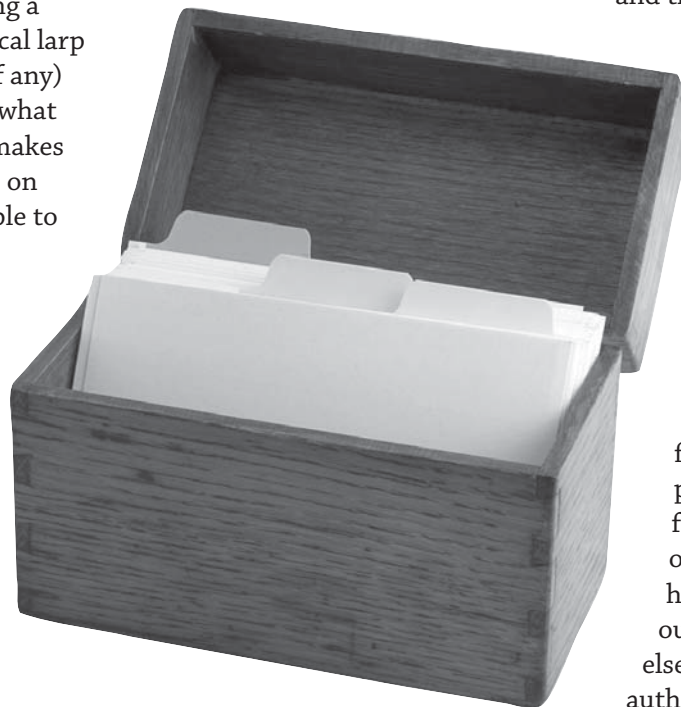
In short, there is a world of choice, and it is easier than ever before to run out of the box.

Acquisition

Where can you find pre-written games? There are three basic options: purchase, online lists, and approaching individual GMs.

There are several sites selling commercially published theatre-style larps. DriveThruRPG[1] lists over twenty scattered across its "larp" and "Live-Action Roleplaying" categories. The UK-based Freeform Games[2] has almost thirty, while Peaky Games[3] and Paracelsus Games[4] each have a handful. Pricing is highly variable. On DriveThruRPG larps range from "pay what you want" to US$12, with most in the US$5–$10 range. Peaky Games charge a flat £5. Paracelsus is more expensive, with its main product, *The Dance and the Dawn*, costing US$35. Freeform Games targets a slightly different market —office parties rather than gamers—and their larps are priced to suit, at between US$30 and $50. Despite the different target audience, they are still larps, written by larpers.

There are also a large number of larps available for free on various internet sites. A collection of links to these is maintained at the RPG.net Wiki.[5] NEIL runs an online Larp Library.[6] More recently, an "International LARP Exchange Project"[7] has been established with the explicit goal of sharing games between the major US, UK, and New Zealand conventions. At the time of writing they are building lists of available games, both published and available upon request from GMs; by the time this is published they should have a reasonable list of games available.

Finally, there's the hard way: approaching individual GMs. The easiest way to do this is within your local larp community; if someone has a great game that hasn't run for a while, or which they don't plan to run in the future, ask them for a copy. Alternatively you can follow the international larp community and keep an ear out for what's been run, or look through the lineups of past conventions (such as Intercon, Consequences, or Chimera) for interesting-looking games. Most convention websites include GM contact details, so it's easy to email them and ask. When asking, be polite, and be specific about where and when you'd like to run their LARP. Also say whether there is money involved and what will happen to it; some GMs are happy for their games to be run at a convention, but not standalone for profit. Also be prepared for failure; many games, even those which have been run multiples times, are never quite fully written up to the satisfaction of their authors. But it never hurts to ask, and you may prompt them to finish the job.

Assessment

Having acquired a game, the next question is whether you can actually run it. This isn't just a question of whether it's all there and whether there are GM notes or a background sheet to go with the character sheets, but whether it's a good match for your local community.

Start by asking yourself the following questions: what's the gender balance of your local larp community, and what are their preferences around crossplay (playing characters of the opposite gender)? What sorts of rules and plotlines are they comfortable with? Are there any that they are *un*comfortable with and prefer to avoid? What do you normally warn them about?

Then, ask those questions about the larp: what's the gender balance of the characters (and are there any cases where a character is unnecessarily gendered or can be swapped without problems)? What rules does it use, and are they a good match? Are there a lot of plotlines which your players won't like, such as romance; some communities love it, others hate it, and the definition of a "romance" plot varies wildly. Are there plotlines—such as sexual violence, discrimination, or religion—you will have to warn people about or which will make people not want to play it?

You will also need to check whether there is runtime advice (frequently absent in many self-pub-

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1   http://www.drivethrurpg.com/
2   http://www.freeformgames.com/our_games.php
3   http://peakygames.wikidot.com/buy-our-games
4   http://www.paracelsus-games.com/theatrical-experiences/
5   http://wiki.rpg.net/index.php/LARP_Scenarios
6   http://library.interactiveliterature.org/
7   https://www.facebook.com/groups/116297192053019/

lished larps), plot summaries, and prop documents. These are often missing, because the GMs have this stuff in their heads and often don't write it down. A failure in this area—on the production advice—isn't necessarily a problem if you know how to run a larp. You can work out the plots and how they interact by reading the character sheets, recreate prop documents from descriptions, and make your own GM cheat-sheet to help you through runtime. It's rules, gender, and plotlines that tend to cause problems.

Adjustment

If you're lucky, the game you've acquired has plenty of gender-neutral characters, clear and simple rules, plots your players will cope with, and you can run it right out of the box. If not, you may need to make some changes. Before doing so, check the game license (if any); some authors do not permit changes to their work.

Rules are the easiest problem to solve. Systems are rarely tightly integrated with characters in a theatre-style larp, and it is usually a simple matter to rip out a rules system you don't like and replace it with one you do. For example, *The Moorstepper on Lloegyr* (Hart) uses a version of the Mind's Eye Theatre system. When I ran it, I hacked it to use live combat with latex weapons, something NZ larpers are generally comfortable with and which suited the nature of the game. All this required was giving people a number of hit points. A friend has done the same to *Final Voyage of the Mary Celeste* (MacDougal). And while the Shifting Forest Storyworks "parlour larps" are frequently run in New Zealand, no GM here has ever used the existing mechanics.

Regendering characters is the next easiest change. Often characters are gendered for no real reason and so their gender can simply be swapped. However, it will be more difficult to do in settings with hard gender roles. One thing to be aware of is that swapping character genders will change the orientation of any romance plots, but whether this is problematic or simply a matter of casting preference depends on your local larp community.

Sometimes you may want to add material to games, such as extra props. For example, *The Tribunal* (Harviainen) uses an act structure, with a short pre-scene set in the characters' barracks to establish hierarchies and normalcy. Relationships with distant family are relevant to some characters, so I tried to highlight these by adding a mail delivery to the pre-scene, with letters being delivered in-play to some characters. The letters were crudely censored, highlighting the military environment and authoritarian political atmosphere. It was not a necessary change, but the game has a culture of hacking and experimentation (Harviainen 33).

If you can't get enough players, or you decide that a particular character concept just isn't workable, you may need to delete characters. This can simply be a matter of telling players on the night that character X isn't there and they should ignore any reference to them on their sheets. If you actually need to *delete* characters, then you will need to edit a large number of character sheets. Read everything first, just to be certain you know what to remove and where. You may be able to salvage some plotlines from the deleted characters and add them to survivors.

On very rare occasions, you will want to *add* characters. This is often easier than deleting them, but can be difficult if a game is tightly plotted. The best advice on this is to look for people mentioned on character sheets who aren't actually present, or to look for plots where someone can be tacked on without the other parties necessarily knowing about them. Maybe someone else is also looking for that MacGuffin; maybe there's someone else looking to defect. Above all, keep in mind the author's vision for the game. You don't *need* to stick to it, but doing so can avoid tone and genre-clashes.

To give a concrete example: I recently ran *A Game of Thrones: Blackfyre Rising* (Patten) here in New Zealand. The game has a very hard-gendered setting, but our players didn't quite have the right gender ratio. Some of it was dealt with by crossplay, but in the end, we deleted a male character whose plotlines didn't quite work, and added a female character. The character had already been mentioned on various people's character sheets, there was a natural "place" in the game for her, and her plotlines meshed nicely with everything else. In the end, the character sheet almost wrote itself.

A more complicated example: *Flight of the Hindenburg* is a large (65-player) 30's pulp "mash-up"

larp originally run in 2007 (Alevizos et al). The gender ratio of the New Zealand larp community has changed significantly since then, so when I acquired a copy to re-run in 2014, it needed significant work to ensure it had enough female parts. After re-gendering every character who could be arbitrarily re-gendered, and re-skinning more as female equivalents while preserving their plotlines (e.g. Dick Tracy became Carrie Cashin, substituting one fictional detective for another), I still needed more. So I added appropriate actresses and pulp heroines (Marlene Dietrich, The Domino Lady), in each case hanging them off existing plotlines. The net result was consistent with the original "pulp and actors" vision, while making the game more suitable for a modern New Zealand audience.

Afterwards

Assume you've done all the above, and actually run a game. What is your responsibility to the people who originally made it afterward? In my opinion, it depends on how you obtained it. There are no obligations towards authors of commercial products—you give them money to be free of such things. But if you've downloaded a game off the web and the author has provided contact information, or you've requested and been given a copy, it's generally polite to drop them an email and let them know how it went. If you've made significant changes, such as adding characters, you should also provide them with a copy of any new material so that they can use it in future runs. If you've created additional material for a game, such as a soundtrack, and there are no intellectual property issues, you may also want to consider sharing it for the benefit of future GMs.

Advice for authors

So much for the advice for GMs. What about for authors? As a larp writer, what can you do to encourage other people to run your game?

The first and most obvious step is of course *make your larp available*. You don't have to commercially publish it, but you can just stick it on the web by sharing it in Google Drive, hitting the "publish" button on Larpwriter,[8] or even uploading it to

Larp Library.[9] Or you can let people know you will supply it upon request, either by word of mouth in your local community or more formally through the International LARP Exchange Project.[10]

Apart from availability, the next step is to make it easy for people to run by *writing down everything you need to run the game*. This means not just the character sheets, rules, and background documents, but also casting advice, setup information, runtime guidance, plot summary, a printing and stuffing guide (what to print, and what to put in each envelope), a blurb, and anything else you think a GM might need to know. Trenti (153–159) has a good guide, or alternatively you can look at what's provided in the average game from Peaky[11] or Freeform Games.[12] If you've done this a couple of times, you can simply incorporate it into your writing process, and it becomes a discipline, a way of getting the information straight for yourself as well as future GMs.

Make your game easy to change by *providing editable files*. This can be tricky if you've done any work to pretty up your larp or used non-standard fonts, but providing the text in an editable format makes it much easier for future GMs to tweak character genders and splice characters in and out according to their needs. They will need to do this, so you might as well make it easy for them. Otherwise, they'll simply copy and paste from your PDFs, even if they have to crack them to do so.

None of this guarantees that someone will run your game. But it does make it more likely.

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Malcolm Harbrow is a New Zealand larper. While he sometimes likes to (be) hit (by) people with rubber swords, he mainly writes and runs theatre-style larps. He has presented games from the USA, UK, Finland, and Norway to his local larp community, and his games have been run in New Zealand, the USA, the UK, South Africa,and Lithuania. His larp resume can be read here: http://larpresume.boldlygoingnowhere.org/people/IdiotSavant/

COMMUNITIES IN LARP

by Rachel Judd

LARP is not "just a game." As a matter of course, communities form around LARPs, whether around a long-running campaign game, or a group of people who enjoy playing one-shots together. Sometimes these communities become close and uplifting, but might, in rare cases, turn toxic and unpleasant. For LARP staff, ensuring their game community falls into the former category is critical to ensuring the long-term success of the group.

To examine the nature and dynamics of LARP-specific communities, I interviewed via e-mail several people with extensive experience as LARP organizers, and two social scientists who both LARP and apply their training to LARP culture.

Meet my interview subjects!

Jesse Heinig has contributed to various White Wolf roleplaying games, including the Mind's Eye Theater system for World of Darkness LARPs. In 2004, he started Dying Kingdoms, one of the longest-running fantasy boffer LARPs in Southern California.

Aaron Vanek has extensive experience in the LARP community. He currently runs Seekers Unlimited (an edu-LARP non-profit), serves as editor-in-chief for LARP World Magazine, co-founded the Larp Census, and also works to build up the community of Nordic-style players in North America.

Dr. Diana Leonard, in addition to being a LARPer, works as an Assistant Professor of Psychology at Lewis & Clark University; her scholarly work includes research on group dynamics in LARP.

Dr. Joel Thurston works as the Assistant Director for the Center for Evolutionary Psychology at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and in his spare time participates in Dying Kingdoms as Plot Staff.

Adrianne Grady is a founding member of LARP Alliance, a pan-LARP organization intended to support the hobby. She has also done consulting work on *Role Models* and *Knights of Badassdom*, ensuring those films portrayed LARP in an accurate and positive light.

I asked each subject a variety of questions about their work in the LARP community. Here are their (lightly edited) responses.

The first objective was to get a sense from Diana regarding how communities form in general.

Q: *Can you give a brief summary of how social science currently understands the formation and development of community?*

> **Diana:** During the first stage, *forming*, the primary concern of group members is whether to trust the group and its members. In the second stage, *storming*, group members test the rules of the group and the legitimacy of its leadership. In the third stage, *norming*, the group leader's role tapers off and mutual investment and norms drive the group's activities. Finally, *performing* is achieved, powered by group cohesion, empathy, and trust.
>
> Groups will likely undergo periods of re-norming, during which group norms must be rein-

forced and renegotiated in order for the group to remain healthy and functional. Groups may even regress into re-storming, in which members evaluate whether the benefits of group life are worth the risks. In extreme cases, re-storming may lead to member exit, the formation of splinter groups, or the dissolution of the group entirely.

I suspect most LARPers can think of of times their own games went through 're-norming,' or when a dispute caused an unpleasant split in the community. However, even these events, painful though they might be in the moment, don't necessarily indicate the end of the community. As Diana goes on to explain, "If the group survives this crisis, however, it can emerge even stronger, with remaining members who have a shared vision of the group's purpose and values."

I was curious how a group focused on roleplay might affect the development of LARP communities in particular, so I had another question for Diana.

Q: *Communities are often based on identity, but LARP is built around the idea of adopting an identity not your own. Do you think this has any affect on the development of LARP communities?*

> **Diana:** Having so many identities at play may just accelerate everything. As I said above, as players retire PCs and bring in new ones, it can cause the community to shift gears often, which can have mixed consequences. I would also argue that taking on other identities can cause meaningful attachments to form more quickly, not less. You get to know other players on a deeper level because of the intense and often fantastical situations you are thrown into in-character. For example, being battle buddies and sharing in victory and in loss can be a strong bonding experience. Due to bleed (emotional reactions carrying over from IC to OOC or vice-versa), these connections can rapidly forge strong OOC friendships. Also, since many PCs are distilled versions of themselves, IC interactions can be very informative about their personalities.

I had a similar question for Joel, though I worded things a bit differently to reflect his experience as not only a social scientist but also as Plot Staff.

Q: *As someone who's studied both social science and led a LARP, you enjoy a very unique perspective. How do you feel that being a social scientist informs your take on LARP, both as a player and a member of Plot Staff?*

> **Joel:** I think that social science research is particularly informative for collaborative efforts such as LARP. And I do believe that my training as a psychologist makes me a better staff person and player. One of the major ways in which I feel its influence is the way it causes me to check my initial reactions and examine people's behavior more critically than I otherwise might.
>
> For example, on the whole, people are more likely to attribute someone's behavior to underlying personality traits than they are to the situation. So, when I see players engaging in a particular action (e.g., stabbing a defenseless enemy spellcaster), my gut reaction is to peg them as a particular sort of player or character.
>
> But, by being aware of potential biases in my thinking (e.g., the curse of knowledge), my training forces me to consider that I have a different (and, as a storyteller behind the scenes, often better informed) perspective than my players, and their actions may be due to situational factors—such as failing to receive information crucial to the situation at hand (e.g., they didn't know a ritual just depowered the spellcaster and she was trying to surrender).

Whether or not we realize it, we engage in community-building (or community-destroying) behaviors every time a game forms. Game staff, as leaders of the community, are crucial in guiding this early process.

My next set of questions were about forming a LARP community. I was especially interested in Jesse's answers, as he had experience with several different LARP traditions at the time he started his own game, Dying Kingdoms.

Q: *When you first started Dying Kingdoms, were you cognizant of the fact that you'd be developing a community concurrent with the game?*

> **Jesse:** When I started developing Dying Kingdoms, I set out to make certain deliberate choices about the community. I realized, as a result of experience playing in Vampire games and in some fantasy LARPs with bad players, that I needed to set expectations early on about the kinds of play that I wanted to promote. This is why I set out to deliberately make a cooperative game where players are encouraged to contribute to one another, and where all characters eventually reach their stories' endings.

Q: *What did you find to be the most challenging element of building community at the outset? Did those challenges change as the community developed? Do feel like these challenges were unique to your game in particular?*

> **Jesse:** For me, the hardest challenge in making the community was just in recruitment. Southern California didn't really have a combat LARP scene at the time that DK was starting up—it was getting started right at the same time as a couple other games—so there were very few people who knew what it was all about. That meant lots of people were very skittish about participating. Fortunately, I had developed a small amount of positive reputation as a reasonably competent storyteller, so people were willing to give it a try. As folks had fun, they helped to recruit more players.

> One of the other difficulties, though not as hard, was convincing people of the value of the retirement system. Many players at first were very averse, wondering why they had to retire their characters or being upset that they were asked to invest so much into a character only to have to put it away once it became powerful. Getting people on board with [mandatory character retirement] was a challenge, but many players had at least a little experience in other games where this had been a problem, and as a result folks were willing to at least give it a try once I explained the idea.

Riffing a little bit on the idea of challenges and communities, I asked Adrianne about any she has personally witnessed.

Q: *What do you think is the biggest challenge facing the LARP community right now?*

> **Adrianne:** Right now, the community is still facing the need to educate the world on the various aspects of LARP and the individuals who participate. ...it's slowly getting better as social media becomes more saturated with resources and discussions. Many community members are still struggling with the challenge of finding their inner strength and confidence to project their dreams and intentions to their own liking, and reject hurtful (harmful?) elements such as theft of concepts or possessions, social discrimination, and sexism.

> This is also improving as fewer people are willing to stay in the middle and are less afraid of upsetting someone who abuses. There are LARPers who study law, for example, who have been making a bigger presence in the community - both educating gamers on their rights, as well as revealing various tactics that can be implemented per issue. Other LARPers who are experienced in first aid have been more willing to lend their skills[...] Invested LARPers specializing in psychology and education are able to inspire and advise by presenting examinations of and solutions to real life social dilemmas, as well as more in-depth, accurately portrayed, in-game interactions. Continuing to provide education and support to the community and to those outside of it is the best use of time if one wishes to make a positive difference to and improve the image of the overall LARP community.

In addition to Jesse and Adrianne's perspectives, I also wanted to get a viewpoint on the Nordic LARP community in the United States. While most United States LARPs are campaign-style and focus on narrative continuity, Nordic LARP de-emphasizes that aspect of play and instead tends towards intense "one-shot" games. And so I turned to Aaron for his take on the Nordic community.

Q: *Do you notice any particular difference between the community which forms around Nordic LARP and the communities which form around boffer games?*

Aaron: In general, Nordic larpers are[...] extremely inclusive. This isn't really unusual, almost all larp communities welcome new people with open arms. However, there seems to be one key difference with the Nords: they don't discourage noobs messing with their systems. In other words, if an outsider came in and screamed "You're doing it all wrong! Larps should be like THIS!" they'd probably either point to an essay from the 90's that already did that exact same thing[...] or they'd play the larp and see why the person is making the claim.

They are constantly reaching out to new groups, new people, to get their ideas and take on live action role playing. A group from Norway went to Palestine in 2012 (I think), ran some larps, and then worked with them so the Palestinians could create their own larp events. Rare indeed is a situation where people brand-spanking new to larping are able to design and run their own events within three years with the same level of respect and admiration as one who has been running larps for twenty years. Nor do I see that level of outreach from the American larp community—not that it doesn't exist, just that I don't see it.

They take their fun very seriously (as we all do), but they also poke a lot of fun at their seriousness.

I also was curious about Adrianne's experience as a leader of a community that wasn't attached to any game in particular.

Q: *Is there any noticeable difference between the community which forms around LARP Alliance and the community which forms around an individual game?*

Adrianne: Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, and online resources like Google, Pinterest, Ebay, Etsy, and Amazon have all made communication, education, promotion, and social connection easier and faster than previously experienced. This expansion has made LARP more accessible as well, and

has helped to clarify what it is and what it can be. It is seen as a sport, a hobby, an artform, a lifestyle, an educational tool, and a form of entertainment. Its uses includes classroom education, military and job training, historical reenactment, sports, and entertainment. It's easier than ever to discover LARP's potential and to see the variety of genres, realities, stories, and styles which exist.

Of course, the next question was to ask my subjects what advice they had for someone intent on starting up their own LARP community.

Q: *Is there something you wish more leaders in the LARP community understood? Do you have any advice to someone trying to build a community within the LARP world?*

Diana: Mostly I would like to articulate what leaders are already doing really well. [M]y chapter on group dynamics in LARP (Wyrdcon 2013), identified a number of practices that are consonant with what social scientists know keeps group dynamics humming along. For example, "listen up" and "afters"[1] both resemble the restorative circles identified as hugely important for reaffirming community values and allowing informal leaders to emerge. Further, the circular nature of these activities may make players feel connected to one another as a group of equals. Doing this before and after an event likely helps set the stage for emotionally challenging work and ease tension after that work has been accomplished. This work is continued in often extensive online "shout outs," which ideally serves to both bask in the feeling of community but also highlight

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1   The terms 'listen up', 'afters' and 'shout outs' reference social customs used by some LARPs to foster their sense of community. Listen up is the pre-game talk which reinforces the boundaries of the game—including the narrative boundaries ("This game takes place in this city") and the meta boundaries ("No touching players without their consent"). Afters refers to the custom of many games for the players to meet up after a game has concluded (restaurants being a popular choice) and cement their out-of-character social ties, usually by talking about their shared experience at the game. Shout outs is when one player, either formally or informally, publicly acknowledges the good roleplay of another participant.

what a valuable group member looks like (e.g., someone who helps to create fun, memorable moments for other players). Being cognizant of the important social work that is done with listen up, afters, and shout outs could help leaders to nurture these activities more effectively.

Joel: If you mean advice to someone interested in starting their own LARP, then I'd say reach out to people. I've found the LARP community to be one of the most welcoming and accepting group of people I've ever known. There are a ton of folks out there with a lot of varied experience, and they can prove a great resource.

If you mean advice to someone interested in starting a community or group within an existing LARP… well, my advice is very much the same: Reach out to people. Find out ways to connect the type of community you're trying to build with existing structures and people within the LARP. Players love new avenues for roleplaying and exploring interpersonal (character) drama, and a great way to provide this is to tie together multiple people's stories with an interconnected group.

Aaron: [*asked specifically about Nordic LARP*] I would recommend communicating with the many Nordic larpers around the world and rifling through their brains. Second, I would read the Nordic Larp book,[2] and as much of the literature as you can stand, then pick up some of the scenarios. The vast majority of them are free, and more and more are being translated into English. An increasing number of them are being written by Americans like Lizzie Stark,[3] Shoshana Kessock,[4] Jason Morningstar,[5] Evan Torner & Kat Jones, and Emily Care Boss,[6] to name just a few… [T]he book Larps from the Factory[7] has more than 20 scenarios ready to go, most with a very low barrier to entry and requirements for GMs. The Stockholm

Scenario Festival[8] also has a great collection of larps that, if not immediately downloadable, are available by simply asking the designers, who are always happy to see it run again.

Find a scenario or scenarios you like, run them. Some only need three players.

Run more, and invite more people, and have them invite more people.

Adrianne: The LARP Alliance was created before there was unification… within the community… The LARP community now has enough resources and volunteers to flourish on its own. If anyone wishes to create a community resource at this point or to meet other LARPers and try a game, social media sites such as Facebook, Youtube, and Meetup are excellent tools with which to make contact with new and experienced LARPers. Sharing talents, interests, and education has never been easier. Finding a LARP via any of the above online resources will get things started—make contact with a player or owner and ask questions. One can also volunteer behind the scenes, or offer to play smaller roles to learn the system and get a feel for the community. LARPs are happy to assist getting a new player into their first game!

And, of course, the final question!

Q: *What do you think is the best thing about LARP/ being part of a LARP community?*

Diana: I've got to have two—forging relationships with people in game that carry over into the rest of my life, and that superlative feeling when disparate threads of collaborative roleplaying result in a really cool In-Character moment.

Jesse: For me, the best part of being in a LARP community is that you're connecting with other people in a shared hobby that you can all be passionate about, and you can use that as a way to get to know people you might normally not interact with and find a common ground. Hobby communities like this are really a way to know people in a proximate sense in

2   http://tampub.uta.fi/handle/10024/95123
3   http://lizziestark.com/
4   http://shoshanakessock.com/
5   http://www.bullypulpitgames.com/
6   http://www.blackgreengames.com/
7   http://larpfactorybookproject.blogspot.com/p/welcome.html

8   http://scenariofestival.se/

spite of our internet generation's tendency to rely on virtual connections—like a knitting circle or a classic car group, this is a group of people with whom you share an interest, and you all meet in person to be happy as a group about it.

Joel: Hands down, the best thing about LARP for me is the community of people. To quote myself from a previous answer, "I've found the LARP community to be one of the most welcoming and accepting group of people I've ever known." I've honestly never met another group of people so quick to welcome me as one of their own and make me genuinely feel welcome within minutes of meeting them.

The social scientist version of me from Question 1 is cautioning me that this may be a case where my personality was actually predisposed to enjoy and feel welcome in a group like LARP. But, from the diversity of the community I've witnessed, I feel confident standing by my assertion that the people and community are the best part of LARP.

Aaron: This might change any minute now, but currently the best thing I love about live action role playing is its power to influence and change individuals and society, almost always for the better, even if the process is painful.

Adrianne: There isn't one "best thing about LARP," in my opinion. But perhaps I can express my feelings by saying that LARP has incredible potential to fulfill any person's needs and wants. It assists with mental, social, and physical development. It can be used as a tool and as entertainment. It can challenge or confirm beliefs. It gives people the opportunity to connect and grow by putting themselves in an environment that they might otherwise have not experienced.

I'm very grateful to Jesse, Aaron, Diana, Adrianne, and Joel for allowing themselves to be interviewed!

Community is an often underlooked aspect of LARP, but an element just as important as setting, mechanics and logistics. Cultivating a positive and uplifting community is key to a game's long-term survival. Whether you've just started a game, are in the planning process to begin a campaign or have been on a Story Team for years, keep in mind that while setting and mechanics can initially attract players, community will retain them. Hopefully, the individuals here have provided more insight into how game runners can focus on developing their game's community and player culture.

Rachel Judd currently lives in Southern California, where she works as an independent game designer and writer. You can see her work at http://stolen-fire.com/ or contact her at rachel.e.judd@gmail.com.

A TIME TO (NOT) KILL
An Examination of the Institution of "Kill Moratoriums," Their Use, and Alternatives in the Craft of LARP

By Matthew Kamm

Author's Preface: This article will focus primarily on the mechanics surrounding death and killing in one-shot theater-style LARPs.

Spoiler Alert: This article contains one minor spoiler about a mechanic in the weekend-long game Secrets of the Necronomicon.

Death in one-shot LARPs is simultaneously thrilling and boring. I don't simply mean that it's thrilling for the killers and boring for the killed (though that may sometimes be the case.) I mean that the threat of death, the looming possibility of paying the ultimate price for failure, can add a great deal of immersive suspense and excitement to a LARP experience. If, however, a LARP writer accepts the three axioms that 1) death is possible, 2) death is permanent, and 3) player characters can kill each other, they are then faced with a particular sort of problem. The player of a character who is killed early in the game has been denied the opportunity to play the rest of the LARP, possibly after investing significant time and money into their participation. In addition, characters who were closely connected to that character or reliant on that character for some portion of their game experience are now left without the benefit of that interaction, often through no fault of their own. How do we ensure that everyone gets the chance to play the game while also allowing for permanent character death as a meaningful consequence? There are many methods to resolve this conflict, each suited to different situations.

One of these methods is the so-called "kill moratorium." At its essence, a kill moratorium is **any rule or mechanic which prevents character death before a prescribed point in a LARP, after which character death becomes possible**. This most often takes the form of a specific prohibition in the rules of the game, e.g. "Characters may not be killed until the final hour of game." This resolves the conflict introduced above by guaranteeing that no one will be removed from play before they've had a chance to significantly interact with the game while still preserving some of the suspense and realism carried by the threat of death. The moratorium may or may not have some sort of in-world justification, such as the presence of NPC law enforcement or magical wards. Working the kill moratorium into your setting rather than keeping it an explicitly out-of-game conceit may seem to be the more immersive choice, but it is seldom that simple. As Fair Escape writes in their excellent blog post on the subject of death in LARPs, "when it seems as though the in-game justification should no longer apply ('why can't I just trick him into entering the privacy of my shop and kill him there?' or 'I don't care if I get caught; it's worth being arrested to kill this person') then it can be just as immersion breaking…" (Fair Escape). Clearly, both approaches have issues, but only you can decide which one feels most appropriate for your game, if a kill moratorium feels appropriate at all.

There are other options, of course. The option to forbid killing entirely may seem both unrealistic

and needlessly restrictive, but for many games it makes perfect sense. Small interpersonal games about the relationships between a group of friends or coworkers are an increasingly popular genre, and while there's no simulationist reason killing *shouldn't* be possible in these games (every kitchen has knives, at the very least) from a narrativist standpoint it would often go completely against the tone and themes of the game, not to mention being a poor way to accomplish most purely interpersonal goals from a gamist perspective. Instead of explicitly forbidding killing, most such games simply never mention it in their rules.

On the other extreme, the option exists to allow for killing at any time and making that explicitly clear to your players in game materials and game briefing. Three interesting yet entirely separate assumptions about community values can lead to deciding not to use a kill moratorium. First, there may be an assumption that players all accept the risk of dying very early in the game, and that any player who does die early has no real business being upset about it on an out-of-game level. Though it may be counter to the culture of some LARP communities, in terms of disclosure and setting expectations it's difficult to find fault with this theory. When I played in *The Prison* at Intercon N, the game rules explicitly stated that the game focused on a group of people repeatedly voting for one among their number to be executed in a series of such votes, and that anyone might be executed at any point in the game and would not be able to rejoin the game until game wrap (Danilenko et al.). All of the players were on board with the conceit of the game and there were no problems. On the other hand, regardless of how clearly everyone *thinks* that they understood what they were agreeing to, I could still foresee a lot of unhappy players if someone with a very combat-effective character elected to go on a killing spree within the first five minutes of a game. This assumption, more than the following two, sides very clearly with our would-be mass-murderer in that case, which makes addressing hurt feelings and dealing with player complaints in a fair way that much more difficult.

Second, there may be an assumption that

player characters will refrain from killing each other too early in the game out of a desire to allow everyone to enjoy a good chunk of the LARP—in effect, that players will *self-impose* a kill moratorium. This offers the advantage of not needing to impose a potentially immersion-breaking external rule, but the considerable disadvantage of failing to make behavioral expectations known to the players. If we want LARP to be a hobby accessible to new players and encourage different LARP communities to think and play together, I feel it is irresponsible for us to expect every new player or player with different community values to infer these expectations when the rules explicitly permit them to kill other characters. Voluntary forbearance in killing other characters early in the game may be seen as courteous in some circles but illogical and problematic metagaming in others—again, it is a matter of community norms.

Third, there may be an assumption that the nature of the characters-as-written and the setting are such that characters will act to interfere with other characters killing each other except in the most egregious circumstances, and will refrain from committing murders that are likely to get them caught except (again) in the most egregious circumstances. Indeed, theoretically, players with different community norms can hash out their differences entirely in-character, when one interferes with the killing blow of another and the two must discuss why another character does or does not deserve to die. However, as LARP writers, we must accept that players have free will and may interpret the characters they receive through a lens that does not match that of the writer. While I expect that many LARP writers would look askance at the player who decided that their explicitly pacifistic character should activate the doomsday weapon to exterminate all human life and thus bring an ultimate end to violence, it is a very difficult proposition (and beyond the scope of this article) to hash out the ethics of telling a player that their interpretation of a character is "wrong." Thus, a well-crafted game must be robust to the possibility that a player will act against the motivations and values of their character as the writer(s) perceived
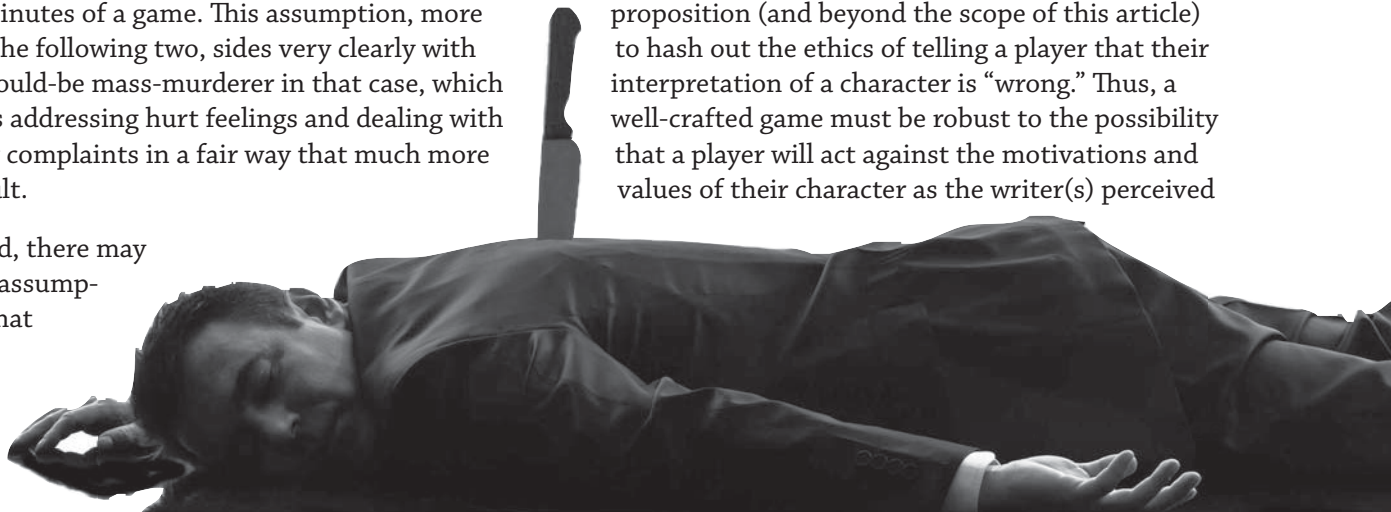
them, up to and including unexpected killing sprees. Assuming that the characters and scenario are written such that early character deaths *shouldn't* happen is not sufficient to ensure that they *don't* happen.

Between the previous two options (no killing at all, or completely free rein) lies a spectrum of other solutions. The weekend-long game *Secrets of the Necronomicon* only has a brief combat moratorium on Friday evening, but additionally allows every dead character the option to return to play as a ghost with all their former knowledge intact (Balzac et al. 1991). These ghosts would now only able to speak to those characters with the special ability to hear ghosts, so there is some cost to dying, but it is greatly reduced. Many games allow a player whose character is killed to come back as a "recast" or backup character. In general, games that are larger in size, sillier in tone, or more free-form in plot can use this strategy to better effect than games that are smaller, more tightly plotted and/or feature lots of tight character connections. On one hand, being recast as a new character may allow a player killed early to still have a fun time participating in the game in a new way. On the other hand, it may be worse than simply going home if the recast character is not tightly integrated into the plots or interactions that they care about.
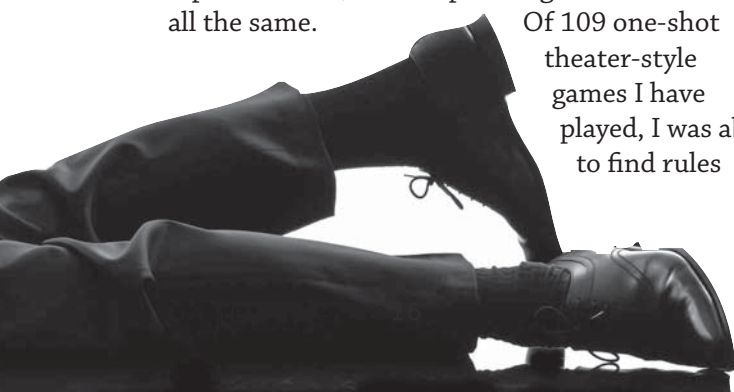
So, which options are used most often, and which option is best for your game? Indeed, in the process of writing this article, I became curious about how prevalent kill moratoriums were in the realm of theater-style one-shot LARPs. I went back though my own notes and materials from ten years of LARPing and tried to identify whether each game I had played in 1) had a kill moratorium, 2) did not have a kill moratorium, or 3) lacked any rules for killing other characters or explicitly stated that character death was not possible. Naturally, I acknowledge that this sample is haphazard and reflective of my own tastes and opportunities in LARP, so it is not truly representative, but I hope it might be interesting all the same. Of 109 one-shot theater-style games I have played, I was able to find rules

information for 77 of them. Fifteen of these had kill moratoriums, 29 did not, and 31 lacked rules for killing other characters or explicitly disallowed it. This sample would suggest that kill moratoriums are common enough to be considered an established feature of LARP writing but are present in a minority of games overall.

Some readers may have noticed that only 75 out of these 77 games fell into one of my three categories. The remaining two took a different tack: killing another player character required the murderer to possess a special ability. Thus, killing is not an option for all characters, a tactic which allows GMs to manage risk when casting and minimize the potential scope of violent rampages. Indeed, this was only one of several interesting strategies for overcoming the difficulties inherent in allowing for the meaningful threat of death while also preventing untimely death from ruining players' fun. The game *Cracks in the Orb*, a LARP set in Steven Brust's Dragaera universe, includes a set of rules covering dueling (Fracalossi and Gabin). A unique feature of this game is that, while duels to the death are possible, they can only occur with the consent of both parties involved. Thus, characters cannot be killed without the players' consent.

Another noteworthy mechanic comes from the weekend long game *Torch of Freedom*, a swashbuckling romantic adventure game set against the backdrop of an incipient revolution in a fictional European country (Villains by Necessity 2003). The game features a combat system full of swashbuckling flavor, but it disallows killing except in a combat that had been declared "Ruthless." Only certain characters begin game with the ability to declare a combat Ruthless, and must expend one of a limited number of Ruthless cards each time they do so. Furthermore, no combat can be declared Ruthless before 1pm on Saturday, and ALL combats are automatically considered Ruthless on Sunday. By using multiple different controls on killing—a kill moratorium, requiring a special ability, and raising the stakes at the end of the event—the writers send a fairly clear message about the role they expect killing to take in the game. Before the last day of the event, killing can only be the work of Ruthless villains, but on the last day, any brave swordsperson with a score to settle or a desire to prove their worth in lethal combat has the oppor-

tunity to do so. So many restrictions on killing might be burdensome in another game, but in a game like *Torch of Freedom* that is so firmly rooted in a cinematic genre, rules enforcing the narrative conventions of that genre feel perfectly natural and contribute to the atmosphere of the game.

If nothing else, that should be the take-home message for readers of this article: whatever choice you make about killing will set the atmosphere of your game. Writers would be well-served to consider a kill moratorium not so much a tool for controlling the unpredictability of human nature as an opportunity to make a statement to the players about the tone of your game. Ask yourself if you feel your game needs rules for killing others before including them. In some cases, such as cyberpunk games or games in the World of Darkness setting, the reality of life being cheap and the ever-present threat of death are important facets of the game's setting and tone. In other games, such as romantic comedies about dating or reunions of old friends in a mundane contemporary setting, killing is so at odds with the setting and tone that it should be disallowed entirely. For the rest that fall somewhere in the middle, GMs should consider what messages their rules documents are sending to the players about the acceptability of killing other characters. Remember that players are bringing their own personal and community values about the acceptability of killing other characters to the table, and if your rules present the mechanics for killing but remain agnostic about when it is allowable/appropriate, those values and norms will rule the day and situations will eventually arise where two sets of norms come into conflict.

As a final thought, I will present my personal favorite solution to resolving this conflict. This mechanic comes from *Bitter Tears at Sad Mary's Bar and Girl*, a LARP about a bunch of strange people meeting in a fictional bar on a fictional island (Beattie and Walden). The game isn't particularly combat-heavy but certainly allows for the possibility, using a simple rock-paper-scissors system to determine the winner in any round of combat and dealing damage based on the weapon used. On the subject of what happens when a character reaches zero hit points, the game rules say, "[o]nce she reaches zero hit points she goes unconscious. Any damage dealt to her after falling unconscious

will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis by the GM, who will be trying to keep a balance between the fact that sitting out large portions of the game isn't fun for the player doing so, and realism of what horrible injury will do to a person." [sic]

In all the games I've played, this is the only time I can recall seeing this conflict explicitly acknowledged in the rules. Furthermore, the game officially states that the GM will be the arbiter of whether or not gravely injured characters die based on their assessment of the factors in play. I think this approach might actually be a widely applicable and very useful one, since it does not explicitly protect characters from lethal consequences or the theoretical threat of death, but does note that no one needs to worry about having their game ended prematurely due to another character's decision to engage in potentially lethal actions. This, to me, seems to capture the best of both worlds.

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Matthew Kamm has been LARPing in New England since 2005. He has played (and written) primarily short-form theater-style games in that time, but now plays and serves as a board member for the boffer LARP campaign Witchwood.

SECRECY IN INTERCON-STYLE LARP

by Brian Richburg

Every LARP community has unspoken assumptions about LARP, whether they're about some element of LARP design or what the ultimate goals of LARP are. People whose LARP experiences come from a single community are often unaware of these assumptions, which they tend to take for granted. Talking about these assumptions explicitly is important both for making your community open to players from other LARP communities and enabling experimentation with new forms.

In the Intercon[1] community, one of these assumptions is the importance of secrets and hidden information to our game design. Intercon-style[2] games usually contain numerous secrets and surprises which are pre-written into the game materials and revealed by either the players or the GM(s) over the course of gameplay. While these secrets are central to many Intercon-style games from both a gameplay and narrative standpoint, we tend to take their presence for granted rather than seeing it as a design choice. In this article, I'll be talking about the importance of secrets and hidden information in Intercon-style LARP—where it comes from, how it has influenced our LARP culture, and the effects it has on how we write and discuss theater-style LARP in the Northeast.

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1   http://interactiveliterature.org/P/
2   By "Intercon-style Larp" I mean a particular style of one-shot theater-style LARP using pre-generated characters, which is popular in the American Northeast and is typical of games run at the Intercon conventions. It is not meant to imply that this type of LARP only runs at Intercon, or that only this type of LARP runs at Intercon.

What do I mean by secrecy? How does it underlie our games?

When I talk about the unique way in which secrets are important to this style of LARP, I am talking specifically about secrets that are pre-written into the character sheets or other game materials. Many other LARP writing traditions have ways of providing surprises that do not stem from pre-written materials in this way, such as by encouraging players to invent their own character secrets, either individually before the game or in pre-game workshops.

In most Intercon-style games, these pre-written secrets are integral to both the narrative and, in LARPs that feature a gamist element, to the gameplay and challenges presented. On a narrative level, the stories in our games are often driven by secrets. The story beats often consist of surprising revelations of material that is pre-written into player backgrounds. In games in which players cooperate against challenges in the game world itself, those challenges often take the forms of puzzles or mysteries for which the players need to discover the correct answer. For many games in which characters come into direct, mechanical conflict with one another, the primary challenges consist of determining who can be trusted, where other characters' loyalties actually lie, and what resources people can bring to bear on a conflict. When games feature negotiation, one of the biggest bargaining chips tends to be other characters' secrets, and the community has coined the phrase "information economy" to reflect that character secrets are often the de facto currency of the game.

Where does the culture of secrecy come from?

People come to LARP from all over: from table-top roleplay, from improv theater, from historical reenactment and combat sports. Two large influences on the New England theater-style scene were "Assassin" style games and murder mystery games[3], both of which hinge on secrets. In the former, players are assigned a hidden "target" which they must get close to and "assassinate" through a variety of means (nerf gun, buzzer traps, etc). In the latter type, people are given a backstory and must probe the inconsistencies in other characters' stories in order to solve a mystery. It's not that surprising that as our games grew in complexity and drifted away from these sources, they kept the familiar focus on secrets.

The seriousness with which we treat preserving these secrets stems from how we write games. Intercon-style games are somewhat unique in the sheer amount of written material that goes into them, and thus the amount of prep that

they require. Games often have character sheets of 5 pages or more, meaning that a 20-character game could easily contain 100 pages of writing for a 4-hour event. These games can often take dozens of person-hours to create, or even hundreds for some of the larger games. As a result, successful games tend to be re-run several times in order to get more out of the substantial time investment that went into them. It's not uncommon for these games to be brought back and re-run years down the line, when enough new players have entered the community that haven't had a chance to experience it in the initial runs. Thus spoilers can remain a concern almost indefinitely.

What are our social norms around secrecy

Social norms around spoilers in the community resemble general common courtesy about spoilers you would see in other media, but with one major difference. When we discuss spoilers with regard to movies or TV shows, the point is usually to protect the media consumer from unintentionally having the surprise ruined for them. Thus spoiler etiquette consists mostly of warning a potential consumer if you are about to discuss substantial spoilers from a work they might not yet have seen. In the etiquette of the Northeastern theater LARP community, the purpose extends to also protect the creator against having the size of the potential

3   Budin, Nat. "Over Time: Intercon and evolution of theatre-style larp in the Northeast" Wyrdcon Companion 2012. 2012. 65–70. http://www.wyrdcon.com/2014/05/the-wyrd-con-companion-book/

unspoiled audience for their work reduced. This concern stems from the prep-intensive nature of our LARPs. LARP writers who invest dozens of hours into writing the materials for a LARP are "paid back" by seeing the enjoyment that players derive from it. Because so often the core gameplay of these LARPs revolves around unearthing secrets, some organizers will go so far as to consider someone who has been spoiled as no longer able to play the game. There's often a sense in the community that if you spoil a potential player on the secrets of a game, you're not only depriving that player of the joy of surprise, you're depriving the writer of seeing a player experience that surprise—or depriving them of having an audience for their game at all.

The fact that our spoiler etiquette extends in this way means that it's no longer always enough to simply warn that an online discussion may contain spoilers. There is an expectation that the LARP writer has some say over what can be spoiled as well. If a LARP writer requests that people not talk about their game's twists in public, this request is usually deferred to by those in the community. Beyond this, there is often an expectation that someone wishing to write publicly about a game's secrets seek approval from the writer first, something that is never seen when discussing other forms of media. When asked how they would feel if someone wrote publicly about their game without consulting them first—even if clearly labelled as containing spoilers— several local LARPers I spoke with admitted that they would feel put out.

Consequences of Secrecy

The prevalence of pre-written secret information has had a number of effects on our design traditions as well as on our culture. Some of these are neutral, quirks that arise from having games heavily built around the revelation of secret information. Take for instance this publication's namesake, the game wrap. A game wrap is a local tradition, a type of post-LARP debrief specifically structured around the revelation of "what is really going on." During a game wrap, the GMs or the individual players will often go through and shed light on any

major mysteries of the game ("So, who really killed Mr. Body?"), as well as reveal the true natures of characters and what they were after ("Ha, I was really working for the enemy all along!") This focus on the revelation of secret information serves to differentiate it from debrief in Nordic Larp which tend to focus more on creating a sense of closure and processing the emotional content of the LARP. Because of its focus on revealing in game secrets, some local groups refer to it as a "spill," as in "to spill one's secrets."

Too often, however, the focus on secrecy has had some negative consequences for how we design and discuss games. On the design side, we have the prevalence of the "big twist" LARP (sometimes called a "bait-and-switch" LARP by its detractors.) This is a LARP where the entire advertised premise of the LARP is, in some significant way, inaccurate. Maybe a game advertised as a Victorian comedy of manners is actually a horror game, with several of the characters actually playing vampires. Or maybe a game advertised as high fantasy is actually a post-apocalyptic game, with players finding out that all of their magical artifacts are really just lost technology from before the fall of civilization.

> *"Big twist" LARPs can lead to unsatisfying gameplay if players are not given sufficiently accurate information to strategize effectively.*

These types of games are the subject of growing controversy within the community. For some, they can create an exciting sense of surprise and shock when the player puts together what is really going on. For others, they are seen as breaking the sense of trust that exists between the players and GMs. Locally, many of these games are run at conventions alongside dozens of other LARPs. Players often have a choice between several LARPs in a given time slot at these conventions, but may only make it to a small number of these events in a year. There is often a real sense of frustration

when a player chooses a game because it is in a preferred genre, only to find out 15 minutes in that it is really of a different genre that they have no interest in. For players who relish the surprise that these games provide, the twist often has more impact the less they were able to see it coming, which makes writers of these games reluctant to even advertise that the game might not be what is written on the tin.

In more gamist or competitive games, these "big twist" LARPs can lead to unsatisfying gameplay if players are not given sufficiently accurate information to strategize effectively. Because of the simple conflict mechanics that many games employ, which often involve little or no element of player skill, gameplay challenge often consists of taking a calculated risk by choosing whether to engage in conflict in the first place. These risks often incorporate what a player knows (e.g., "Most of the lords openly support my bid for succession over my rival") as well as "known unknowns" (e.g., "I don't know if the lords who claim to support my bid will betray me"). "Big twist" LARPs often incorporate an excessive number of "unknown unknowns": twists

Our culture around secrecy poses even greater problems for how we discuss and write about LARPs.

that a player can't strategize around because they are beyond the normal boundaries of what they would consider possible in the world as presented (e.g., "One of the lords not supporting my bid is a time-travelling robot, come back from the future to warn my rival of my plot"). Twists like these destroy a player's ability to take calculated risks, because there are effectively no longer any boundaries to what the "unknown unknowns" might be.

Beyond design, I think our culture around secrecy poses even greater problems for how we discuss and write about LARPs. The Nordic LARP tradition, which also focuses heavily on one-shot games, has a long tradition of writing about their games. Publications like the Knutepunkt[4] books and nordiclarp.org contain articles that both document how the LARP played out, as well as provide a post-mortem analysis on the design decisions that were made and how they succeeded or failed. No similar tradition exists in the Intercon community. Last year's Intercon featured over 75 individual LARPs none of which, to my knowledge, were the subject of similar documentation. While some discussion happens on social media, of course, I am aware of only one blogger[5] who provides public post-game reports of games run in the community with any regularity, and even then concern over spoilers often leads to them being heavily redacted.

The problem with this is that public, written discussion is what allows us to learn design lessons from games that we haven't played personally. This failure to document LARP design puts us at risk of needing to re-invent the wheel and repeating the avoidable mistakes of the past. While in-person game discussion is common, taboos around spoilers often mean that such discussions hinge around games that all people present have already played in. Relying solely on in-person discussion makes our design knowledge unavailable to newcomers just joining the community, and limits cross-pollination of ideas with other communities with which we are not in personal contact.

Where do we go from here?

Despite the problems I see stemming from a focus on secrets and spoiler culture, I don't think that going to the other extreme of full-transparency in LARP writing would be a good thing for our community. While it has its drawbacks, our LARP traditions around secrecy also allow us to create experiences that are difficult to provide in an environment where everything is known to everyone. These secrets allow us to create intricate mysteries and carefully balanced webs of intrigue that wouldn't be possible if everything were made

4   http://nordiclarp.org/wiki/Knutepunkt-books
5   https://fairescape.wordpress.com/

available to players beforehand. Creating these types of experiences in LARP is a unique strength of our community, and one that would be a shame to completely lose if we were to move universally towards fully transparent games.

The problem then isn't secrecy, but how we prioritize surprise over other forms of engagement. By treating the preservation of in-game secrets as something sacred—an absolute which we don't even think of compromising on when we design— we miss opportunities when we could trade a small amount of surprise for a larger improvement somewhere else in the LARP experience.

Take for instance the design tradition of contingency envelopes. These are envelopes containing written information that are given to players with the instruction to read the contents when a specific event happens. A common use of these is an envelope with the instruction to open when you see another specific character in the game. The contents go on to tell you that you recognize that character as someone that you did not expect to see in game, such as a family member that your character thought was dead. The problem is that maintaining the surprise of that character's appearance in this way also disrupts the flow of what should otherwise be a very dramatic scene. At a moment that should be a dramatic reunion, you now have two players fishing through their pockets for envelopes to open instead. We need to ask ourselves if that disruption to immersion and drama is worth spoiling the surprise that an unexpected character is in game. We should look closely at how impactful that surprise will be, and how much disruption preserving it until game time will cause, and consider giving some information ahead of time instead.

Dealing with the question of the "Big Twist" LARP is a tricky one, because for all their pitfalls, there really is a subset of players that really enjoy them. Here I think we again need to consider matters in terms of the tradeoffs we are making, which means avoiding the big twist when the surprise isn't actually going to yield a big payoff, or when it is particularly likely to annoy players. For instance, the revelation of supernatural in an otherwise mundane LARP is a common trope in our LARP tradition, and it doesn't have the impact that it once did, as players have come to expect it. Furthermore, introducing supernatural elements to what is billed as a mundane LARP centered around interpersonal drama is more likely to annoy players than merely blending two fantastical genres. It's also important that a twist not render a character's decisions during the game meaningless. The revelation that a magical artifact is really technological in nature might change how you look at the world while still leaving your strategies intact; the addition of a time traveller to an otherwise historical LARP changes the rules of the in-game world entirely.

Most importantly of all, we need to change our culture around spoilers to avoid stifling public discussion of LARPs. I'm not suggesting abandoning the common courtesy we extend around spoilers in other media. Rather, I'm suggesting that we need to treat it exactly as we would any other medium: warn people when we intend to discuss spoilers and let them make their own decisions from there. Ultimately, I think that writers need to lead the way here, both by expressing that frank discussion of our LARPs is O.K., and by analyzing and documenting our own LARPs once they are past the initial set of runs. Bad design is ultimately a fixable problem, but surrendering the tools we have to improve our designs is a much more serious problem. And open discussion of our design decisions is one of the most powerful tools for improving game design at our disposal.

Brian Richburg has been active in the New England theater-style and live-combat LARP communities for almost a decade. He is involved in a number of NEIL projects, including volunteer work for the Intercon LARP conventions and Game Wrap.

SMILE AND SMILE AND BE A VILLAIN
Supporting the Narrative Function of Villain Roles in Larp

By Phoebe Roberts

In theater-style larp, the process of telling the story provides a big chunk of the fun. The opportunity to be an interesting character, follow their journey, pursue their goals, and use their capabilities is all provided by the unfolding story as a major part of the player experience. And though there are many ways to tell a compelling story, it's a longstanding aphorism that you can't have drama without conflict. Conflict provides a struggle which adds dimension and interest to the pursuit of goals, as well as creates the investment in the proceedings that accompanies things which only come hard-won. One of the most obvious tactics for creating that conflict within the story comes from the inclusion of villain characters—antagonist PCs with goals and motives designed to drive them to act in opposition to other characters in the game.

Unfortunately, designing a villain PC to serve this vital narrative function is much trickier than it may at first appear. Some of the purpose the character is designed to serve may be at odds with the goals of the larp play experience. Villains, by definition, need to stand in conflict with the views and desires of other characters so they can clash. If they are true villains, instead of merely antagonists, they represent some presence of "evil" that ought to be borne out in their attitudes and actions. Because of these demands, villains present particular challenges to ensuring that they are enjoyable to play. It comes down to balancing the needs of the player versus the needs of the game, and it can be hard to make sure that the villain role does both. This article will first examine what diffi-culties the inclusion of a villain character can pose to the balance of storytelling and play experience, addressing the issues of narrative demand, player satisfaction, and effect on the larger game. Then strategies a writer can employ will be discussed, in order to make best use of villain PCs while avoiding these problems.

The first step is to understand the challenges involved in achieving that end. The villain character is often conceived of in relation to the resolution the writer had in mind for the important conflicts. Generally players (and writers) tend to believe that the "good guys" of the story ought to come out on top, which can lead to the hope that the heroes will "succeed" and the villains will "fail" by the end of the game. In theater-style larp, we don't like to emphasize "winning" and "losing" too heavily, as it creates a somewhat false metric of success for playing a game. It's much more preferable that players tell a compelling story and have an enjoyable time, independent of whether they are any sort of objective "victor." At the same time, another tenet of creating drama is that characters ought to want something, so having goals to achieve creates investment and drive to act. The prospect of attaining whatever goals have been set down as important to a character can provide player satisfaction. In such a case, where the writer is ultimately hoping that the "hero" characters will achieve goals in opposition to those of the more "villainous" characters, this means that, one way or another, the villain PCs are set up for failure.

This is not automatically a bad thing, given the lack of emphasis on success as a measure of the story or experience. But it can have consequences to player autonomy, both in perception and in reality. When a character is set up to be unable to really achieve their goals, it can make the player feel like nothing they do matters. This can be discouraging, and lead them to feeling like there is no reason to make an effort or take action. Players generally like to have agency unless specifically prepared ahead of time. In games that are not explicitly on rails, villain players may feel like they are handicapped so that the so-called "desirable" endings can occur. And of course, this is only if the player is aware that they're intended to fail. If they aren't aware, and learn of their impossible situation after the game, it often creates disappointment after the fact, a dissatisfaction with the time and effort invested during play.

Additionally, just the knowledge that a player is supposed to act in a particular way in order to make the game work—in this case, pushing the conflict—risks compromising their freedom of choice. They can feel pressured to make choices they don't want to make to ensure the function of the game overall. Depending on the expectations the player had going in, that can be met with resistance and frustration.

Many players may not want to play villains because they don't want the experience of being despised or persecuted by the rest of the cast. Due to the tendency to favor the good guys over the bad, there tend to be many more heroes than villains in any given larp. Being the one of the rare villains in a game can be a lonely experience, particularly when everyone around you is motivated to thwart you. It can also compromise execution of the antagonist role, causing excessive caution in the player for fear of retribution from opposing players. Anything that leaves a player isolated as well as inactive is a problem, considering both the purpose of villain roles, and that interacting with others is a major interest of theater-style role players.

Being too unique in the game is not the only reason villains risk isolation. The nature of the hero-villain opposition means that the villain is likely to be set upon and neutralized the moment they are identified as such. This is where the phenomenon of the "lynch mob" comes from, a group of usually protagonist characters ganging up to confront their common antagonist and overwhelm them with their number. In Breaking Light Productions' *Alice*, a gothic reinterpretation of Alice in Wonderland, the primary antagonist has been so dangerous and so universally opposed that other PCs have found it necessary to converge on him in this manner in all six of its runs. (Roberts) Given that villains already face so much opposition to their efforts, this represents the extremity of the situation.

Next, villainy usually requires very active players. If villain PCs are included in the game, a common role they play is "problem creator," someone whose actions make challenges for other players to respond to. With their status as an evil or negative presence, they bring negative circumstances into play, which characters of a more positive bent will naturally counter. The clashing of these two opposing impulses achieves our end goal of creating conflict. But in this framework, the villain must be very proactive, coming up with schemes and putting them into effect with less, or entirely without, in-game prompting. This requires a high level of creativity, energy, and effort on the player's part. Many find this to be too excessively demanding to be enjoyable, particularly if they prefer a play style that is more reactive to other events.

A final major concern is finding players who are willing to be as wicked as the villain is written to be. Many larpers simply don't want to be or do the sort of things being a villain entails—immoral deeds, obstructing other characters, espousing repellent ideas. And what if your villain is truly repugnant, such as a racist or a rapist? If you have such characters in your game, casting them can be near impossible, when some people find even the simple idea of being in conflict with others to be unbearable.

All this can mean that it can be very challenging to design a villain that will both serve your story without being prohibitively difficult to cast. But I'm old-fashioned—I believe very strongly that drama *is* conflict, such that you can't have drama otherwise. That conflict has to come from some-

> *The most compelling characters are rarely simple, and one of the most fascinating dimensions of human complexity can be moral.*

where. But you may ask, why use villain PCs in order to provide it? I would argue because it provides richness to the narrative.

A larp writer intends for the players to become invested in their characters, so they more fully involve themselves in the larp. The most compelling characters are rarely simple, and one of the most fascinating dimensions of human complexity can be moral. Furthermore, if every role were too similar, the game would become bland, losing the specificity that true individuality creates. Characters feel more human when they are as unique as real people actually are. But although each PC may be the hero of their own story, in a larp's complicated web of desires pursued by diverse personalities, they don't need to be Snidely Whiplash to serve as the villain in someone else's. It is simply the natural consequence of creating an array of varied and complex roles that they will sometimes want things that other characters do not. When there can be no drama without conflict, it is well worth the effort to find a way to make that conflict playable if it means more interesting characters, narrative, and gameplay. So, in order to deal with their challenges and make use of their advantages, villains should be designed and cast in such a way as to allow the player to enjoy that job of pushing the conflict. This requires taking the problems mentioned above into account in order to work around them.

The place to begin is by ensuring the character has the right degree of capability to act. It may help to make certain a villain player has some agency, or at least the feeling of having it. This may seem dangerous if you are invested in the heroes coming out triumphant in the end. But the villain's ability to present some kind of serious threat heightens the tension and raises the stakes of the entire story. If there is nothing for the heroes to overcome, the victory does not feel satisfying. So it can be helpful to ensure the antagonist character has the resources, abilities, and knowledge to actually make a real challenge to others. Even if you stack the deck against them, and make it very difficult indeed for them to win, when the villain player knows they have these things at their disposal, it makes them feel more able to affect things. Finding this balance tends to be better for the game overall, not only to improve the experience for the villain players.

Even further, I would advocate for never making it absolutely impossible for the opposition to come out on top in the end. If a player is clever and creative enough, the game ought to be set up so that their cleverness is rewarded. It encourages future efforts toward maximum brilliance and boldness from players, which always results in more interesting games. It also helps heads off the villain feeling as though their actions cannot have a meaningful effect on play. In the debut run of *The Prince Comes of Age*, a high fantasy comedy of manners, one of the primary antagonists found that by telling elaborate lies and making up powers she did not possess, she could manipulate her unsuspecting targets without detection. (*The Prince Comes of Age by Jonathan Kindness et al*) There was nothing specifically in the design of the game intending for this, but permitting it made the character more effective and allowed the player greater enjoyment. This positive feedback on their creative efforts from the game gave the player the feeling that their actions matters and they had a sufficient level of agency.

This of course raises the question of what exactly that correct agency level is. In the hero-versus-villain competition, there is a risk of a villain's success making the game less enjoyable for other players. If you are concerned with whether or not villains' victory will make for an inappropriate ending to the narrative, you can manage the win conditions for the character's achieving of their goals. It is possible to make it so that characters' goals are not completely mutually exclusive, so no one's victory necessarily means someone else's total defeat. The potential problem, however, is that in lowering the barrier to success, it can neutralize the conflict, which defeats the purpose of including villains in the first place. But if the writer balances the achieving of oppositional goals with personal ones that no other actor is particularly trying to prevent, there can be a chance to snatch at least some meaningful, satisfying victory even if overall the character is meant for defeat. Perhaps your wicked schemer will not succeed in wresting away the throne from the rightful heir, but if they can have an engaging romance plot, or explore their relationship with their estranged sibling, it may still feel like time well spent. The key, in this case, is providing an array of objectives of varying size, contentiousness, and difficulty to achieve.

There is the danger that in allowing a villain to triumph means loss and disappointment for what may amount to the lion's share of the cast. Villains and evil characters in general tend to be outliers in a given game, with most PCs either being actively protagonistic or at least not working against the interests of anyone else. So when that minority achieves something at the expense of their opponents, you are likely to have made a pleasant experience for a small number of players at the expense of the majority. In that case, a balancing measure can take the form of how the villain's victory expresses in gameplay. Often it serves as a nice compromise to allow the villain the chance to achieve their ends, but make it so that the consequences thereof trigger after the period of play is over. In such a case, the GMs can declare that the villain's success did come to pass, but not until after the point in the story at which play has ended. This can soften the negative consequences by making them less immediate. In *The Dying of the Light*, a two-hour high weirdness Iron GM game from The Melpomenauts, it is possible for certain antagonists to bring about an event that would conclusively end the narratives of all other characters. (Benderskaya et al) But if the conditions for this are met, the players continue on until the conclusion of the game as normal, and are informed later that the villain's event would later come to pass. The villain got to achieve their goal, but the

other PCs didn't feel particularly defeated by it, as it didn't actually affect their experience of play.

Another way to combat the agency issue in villainy is to ensure that there is a team of PC allies for them to work with. As mentioned before, antagonists tend to be vastly outnumbered by protagonists in most games. By ensuring there are at least a few other like-minded, sympathetic, or at least symbiotic individuals in the cast along with them, these characters will have more strength in numbers. Additionally, this is a good way to prevent them from becoming too isolated. Their team members can be characters with whom they can be honest and collaborative, and are actively interested in interacting with them. With at least one or two others designed to be on their side, they have both the power of group cooperation behind them as well as a built-in source of positive intercourse.

If the concern is the villain being too easily overwhelmed and having no one to engage with, a useful design choice can be to make it so that it is not immediately obvious to other PCs that the character even is a villain. Secret antagonists can be much more playable than apparent ones, as they do not invite immediate opposition to their actions. Other players will be much more open to talking to and even confiding in them, heading off the issue of having no positive in-game connections. This provides a little more leeway to maneuver towards their goals, because their actions are not automatically scrutinized for evil intent. All this gives the character the sense of having a fighting chance, and a play experience more like the other PCs. As such, many writers take it for granted that villains must be secret at the top of game, though it is certainly possible for antagonists to be set up clearly from the start. In that case, however, it may be necessary for the villainy to be less extreme or not so explicitly evil, so as to not face immediate opposition from the rest of the game. The difficult cousin character in the family reunion game probably has a better chance of being a functional open villain than the high fantasy evil wizard scheming to murder the king. A good rule of thumb is the more you can foresee the character being killed or imprisoned as a consequence for his actions, the better off they're likely to be working in secret.

Many of these strategies encourage the writer to take advantage of the shorter-term form, at least for truly evil characters. It is much easier to design workable, actively malicious villains in a game with a briefer period of play, specifically the two-, four-, or six-hour game, and certainly no longer than a weekend. It doesn't make diegetic sense in most cases for heroic characters to tolerate the presence of villains for long, particularly when they're actively working towards negative ends. And the more a villain does, the more difficult it is to remain undetected. When the villain is at last discovered, they will probably not stay alive or free very long against all the other characters who oppose them. The villain player will not be able to fully participate after this happens, removing them from the game. Early removal can be tolerable in a short game, but if a player goes in with the expectation of many sessions of play as a villain, they are likely to be disappointed. If a writer desires to include active, malevolent villains, a short-form game is a much better option to make than a longer-term or serialized one.

It is also possible to include antagonists that are oppositional, but not necessarily in a way that is intensely malevolent. Technically, the definitions of "protagonist" and "antagonist" do not map precisely to "hero" and "villain." A protagonist is simply the narrative figure attempting to work towards a goal, while an antagonist is the narrative figure opposing their actions. These terms do not have an inherent moral dimension; it's only that we usually tend to make our characters who make positive efforts our protagonists, and those who make negative ones our antagonists. If you use antagonists to provide conflict rather than truly evil characters, it not only widens the range of players interested in portraying them, it can also lead to fascinating character dimensions that are a little less black and white than the basic hero-villain dichotomy.

However, often when you choose to soften these PCs, it helps to have an additional source of conflict from elsewhere in the game to make sure there is still a sufficient level of struggle. Many games, particularly those intended to run over a longer term, make most of the problems facing the PCs come from something external, such as an in-game circumstance or the actions of an NPC. This

has the advantage of allowing the GM the control to keep the conflict level as high as desired while circumventing any aversion to pushing it on the players' part. It is also a good way to get the presence of truly evil villainy in the game. If someone wants to include a terrible monster figure, or a figure of one of the special kinds of evil that players often feel uncomfortable embodying, it may be most workable to have it take the form of an NPC. *The Stand* is a cowboy game set in the American west before the Civil War, and racism is a presence

> *Setting expectations correctly may be the single most effective way to ensure you get a player base that will have a good time.*

in an effort to incorporate some sense of historical realism. But given that players consistently have an aversion to consciously behaving or speaking in a racist manner, the most virulent bigot is an NPC villain whose actions have an effect on the PCs' journeys in-game. (Roberts) It allows the theme to be expressed without making players behave in a manner they don't find fun.

All of this is what a writer can do to manage the workings of a villain character in the design process. But the last line of defense, and sometimes the most effective, is getting the right player in the role. Setting expectations correctly may be the single most effective way to ensure you get a player base that will have a good time. You need a way to choose which people are the best possibilities for the needs of your particular villain role. It's easy to include a question, or multiple questions, on the casting form about it. "How do you feel about playing a villain?" "How do you feel about having the game stacked against you?" "How do you feel about acting in service to the plot?" While they are certainly less common, there are definitely people who actively enjoy the challenges of villainy. And securing the player's complicity beforehand is always beneficial; in fact, even letting them

know things beforehand has the tendency to make people much more open to possibilities than they might be if you sprung it on them. And of course, you can drop the veil a little bit and directly obtain buy-in from your villain player. Make it explicit that you are looking for someone who is willing to actively push the conflict and then go out in a blaze of glory in the service of telling a good story. Because telling good narrative can require certain managed choices, many players who value the narrative in particular are happy to make those choices to tell the most interesting tale.

After all, telling an engaging story through larp is a major source of the fun of the game. Managing the conflict level is a necessity to ensure that a story is told in a compelling way that entices the players to emotionally invest. The inclusion of villain PCs can be a narratively strong choice to achieve that end, though it can be fraught with challenges. But with a little careful consideration, at both the design and the running levels, they can be well worth the effort with the dimension they bring to your larp cast and to the game at large.

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Phoebe Roberts is an MFA-trained playwright and screenwriter who has been larping since 2007—and playing more than her share of villains! In that time, she has turned her love of storytelling to the writing of twelve live action games, solo and in teams. She is also on the editorial staff for Game Wrap Magazine. Her writing for larp and for other dramatic forms can be found on her website, www.phoeberoberts.com.

THE COWARDICE OF YOUR CONVICTIONS

by Warren Tusk

It is much, much easier to be virtuous in a role-playing game than in real life.

It's appealing, too, especially in a live-action scenario. Tabletop GMs are often advised to plan for their PCs acting like psychopathic monsters, but in LARPing—some kinds of theater LARPing, anyway, within certain gaming communities[1]—it's far more common to encounter the exact opposite. Players often drift towards portraying their characters as saints, or at least eliding their characters' moral failings.

There are some obvious, predictable reasons for this tendency to take hold. LARPing is a high-powered imaginative technology that produces a strong visceral identification between player and character, and most people much prefer feeling like a good person to feeling like a bad person. What's more, the flurry of real-time social interactions triggers the usual suite of basic human social impulses (*I want these people to like and trust me*, *I don't want to upset anyone*, etc.), which pushes inexorably towards niceness and decency. All of this is exacerbated by the fact that, in LARPs, niceness and decency are usually the tactically-optimal choices for most characters. When gameplay mostly boils down to "convince people to care about you and help you," it helps a lot to be sympathetic and appealing and cooperative.

Whatever the reasons, this pull towards moral excellence on the part of PCs reliably manifests in a number of separate-but-related ways:

PCs are not selfish with their time or resources. In a LARP, just like in real life, offering someone a helping hand produces warm emotional fuzzies and the possibility of strategically-beneficial alliances. *Unlike* in real life, this comes at no real cost, because "going out of your way to help" tends not to be genuinely taxing in any way, and is likely to be more fun and interesting than not. Who could be surprised that the average PC sees helpfulness as a pretty good deal? The situation is even more pronounced with mechanical game resources, such as money and items. These don't actually have any use at all outside the game, but within the game they often unlock exciting plots and outcomes, and so there's lots of incentive not to hoard them in the name of self-interest.

PCs love to cooperate and negotiate. Expect to see ancient foes somehow managing to get over their differences, or abiding disagreements of principle being hashed out amicably and reasonably. Cutting deals with your enemies or rivals is usually a risky tactic…but LARPs reward fun high-risk tactics, because the consequences of failure aren't real (and tend not to be very dire even in game terms). Finding a win-win solution or even a best-available-compromise feels much more like an accomplishment than being obstinate or bellicose, and provides more in the way of rewarding interpersonal interactions. This particular phenomenon has a way of feeding on itself, because when you have some sense that your counterparty is likely to

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[1]   Here I refer primarily to the so-called "theater LARPing" tradition of the American Northeast; the Harvard-derived community first and foremost, but also communities that grew out of Brandeis and Smith and RPI, and to some extent the somewhat broader and more heterogenous group that collects at Intercon.

be open to cooperation, *that alone is enough to make cooperation a better option*.

PCs will not be bound by prejudice or nasty-seeming ideology. If your characters are supposed to be sexist, or orc-hating, or dismissive of robot personhood, or inclined to burn witches at the stake—well, chances are that they just won't be. And if they *are*, it will probably prove remarkably easy for the forces of enlightenment and tolerance to pull them away from their opinions. Casual broad-brush statements made in public documents (e.g., "this is a sexist setting where most people are very sexist") are often ineffective. Specific PCs with especial reasons to be prejudiced (e.g., the Witch-finder-General or the leader of the We Hate Orcs Party) are likely to give it more of a sincere try, but regardless, they usually have a way of looking for excuses to drop their nastiness at an early opportunity. Even the very most stubborn ones often end up as lone angry voices crying in the wilderness, without any power to make other PCs listen or to influence the game world in accordance with their prejudice.

All of this makes perfect sense, psychologically and strategically. In our society, bigots are treated as especially contemptible, and no one much enjoys the feeling of identifying with them. Players are likely to have some out-of-character discomfort with the idea of presenting a bigoted demeanor to other players with only the thin veil of "roleplay license" as social protection. And, above all else, *being a bigot is a losing proposition in most LARPs*. LARP authors tend to be egalitarian types, these days, and their works reflect it. Within any given game world, the bigots are very likely to be just plain wrong; probably the orcs aren't really always-chaotic-evil, the robots aren't really mindless slaves, and the women aren't really hysterical and unfit for men's work. Investing in bigotry requires sinking precious time and effort into being unhelpfully wrong. Furthermore, since every PC represents a valuable concatenation of resources (time, social influence, mechanical widgets, etc.), the in-character bigots who write off some PCs as not being valued allies are likely to be behind from the get-go in terms of achieving their goals.

PCs are resistant to vice and temptation. In real life, people constantly do things that are bad ideas, because they're lazy or greedy or irritable or lustful. This is less true in LARPs. Being lazy is not much of an issue when your goal is to have active social fun, and when most possible things you can do are pretty easy; greed fails to be compelling when the prizes being dangled are fakeries that will vanish within hours; LARPers, unlike their characters, often have trouble channeling the sort of long-standing pervasive dislike of one another that leads to reflexive destructive antagonism; and as for lust, well, it's easy to see why in-character seduction doesn't work as well as real-life seduction. Against all these much-weakened forces is pitted rationality, which is much *stronger* in LARPs than in real life, because LARPs are often simple systems where it's not hard to figure out what the objective best ideas actually are. So it's not a shock that PCs tend to home in on good plans and to sidestep the personal moral pitfalls that might serve as obstacles.

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None of these things is *inherently* a problem. LARPing is all about getting to play out the fictional roles that you find appealing, and if many players find it appealing to take on the role of a good person, that's not a crime. Quite the reverse. It probably says something more-or-less encouraging about human nature.

But in many circumstances, these tendencies can play hell with a LARP's narrative fabric, rendering it less engaging and less artistically worthwhile as an experience. In the worst cases, they can totally subvert the story that the author was trying to tell, and render everything cheap- and silly-feeling for the PCs as a whole.

In the most general sense, the narratives of theater-style LARPs are usually all about character conflicts, and most conflicts are ultimately driven by *someone* being less than totally virtuous. PCs who steer hard towards cooperation, and away from difficult tensions, are often making their own experiences more boring; PCs who are resolutely good to everyone are often taking away other people's reasons to struggle with them, and thereby smothering the drama.

And in a much more narrow-bore sense, there are a lot of gripping narratives that rely directly on

central characters being bad in particular ways. There's real value in telling stories about sin (and perhaps redemption), stories about spiraling hatred and antagonism (and perhaps the ways they can be overcome), stories about prejudice and cruelty (and perhaps how they can be defeated), stories about communities treating their members badly (and perhaps learning to do better)...but all of these stories rely on their characters playing their parts. PCs who are sufficiently determined to be nice can make all those stories impossible to tell through the medium of LARP.

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Fortunately, as a game author, you've got access to a wide variety of tools that you can use to pull your PCs away from over-virtuousness and towards the negative character traits that you want them to have.

Resist the temptation to make your game into a morality play. This is a big high-concept umbrella idea, with a lot of concrete actionable subcomponents—and, in a moment, I'll be talking about those subcomponents individually—but it's worth taking a moment to think about this abstractly.

We all have our own ideas about what is right and good and just. Those ideas matter to us. So it is very tempting, in writing a LARP, to set things up so that rightness and goodness and justice are rewarded while wickedness is punished. And if that's *really* the story that you want to tell, go ahead. But you should be aware that you'll be playing directly into, and amplifying, your PCs' natural inclinations...and you'll be encouraging them to short-circuit the conflicts and dramas that would otherwise be making their stories interesting.

LARP authors, particularly newbie LARP authors with big epic ideas, are often drawn to structures that produce optimal outcomes when the PCs are cooperative and decent (and less-optimal outcomes when the PCs engage in vice or struggle with each other). Those same authors tend to be disappointed when their games resolve in easy hug-fests, or when their players don't seem to be grappling with the serious problems and tensions that were written into the text.

PCs are usually pretty good at figuring out, and pursuing, the structural incentives provided to them by the game. If you want them to do something—like "engage with the darkness within themselves" or "fight with one another"—*reward them for doing that thing, not the opposite*. This is especially true when they have a built-in preference for doing the "wrong thing," as they do here. You don't have to encourage PCs to be good and nice; they'll do that on their own. You may have to encourage them to do anything else.

Put your PCs in zero-sum competitions. Offer narratively important prizes, make it clear that those prizes can't be shared, and set your characters to fighting for them. When PCs realize that they actually can't get what they want by cooperating, they're much less likely to cooperate. As a bonus, they'll probably develop more in-character hostility once they realize that other people are directly standing in the way of their goals.

I've seen this technique used to great effect in many political games. It's easy to create a scenario where only one person can win a particular office, or where PCs are clashing over diametrically opposed policy options. But you don't actually need politics to make it work; you just need any situation where there aren't enough goodies to go around.

The trick is making sure that the competition really is zero-sum. When given the opportunity, PCs will often find clever ways to sidestep their conflicts: supporting compromise candidates or compromise policies that will give everyone what he wants, trying to use the MacGuffin for multiple purposes simultaneously, and so on. If you want the struggle to be real, you have to be explicit that this kind of thing won't work.

> Historical example: I once wrote a LARP called The Song and the Sunrise *about a magic martial arts tournament where the winner's prize was a genie-style wish—"whatever your heart desires"—on the theory that such a valuable thing would spur the PCs to true kung-fu-movie heights of competitiveness. In the first run of the game, however, the competition instead resolved into the winner saying "I wish for everyone here to get his own heart's desire." This made some sense from an in-character perspective, but it absolutely crippled the narrative. The difference between victory and defeat was rendered meaningless, and the action*

ended with a long, boring "town hall meeting" in which the PCs talked about how to use their wishes for the best overall good.[2] In future runs, the wish mechanic had to be substantially restricted, in order to make it truly zero-sum.

Offer explicit rewards for betrayal, vice, and other antisocial behaviors. This is the most direct technique. In many contexts it's hard to engineer a way to use it, but when you can, it's extremely powerful; LARPers love cooperating, but they love receiving game-relevant toys *even more*, and they'll descend into all sorts of darkness if you dangle the right bait.

The generalized version of this is: if you have some "bad thing" that you want a PC to do or to think seriously about doing, take a moment to ask yourself, "how can I make this thing seem more appealing from a player's-eye perspective?"

Contingency envelopes probably provide the simplest and most widely-applicable technology here. If a PC starts the game with an envelope labeled *Open this when you sell out your friend*, or *Open this when you've yelled at someone in front of others…* well, he's going to be curious what's inside, and that curiosity will push him towards the relevant badness. That goes double if he has any real reason to believe that the envelope is likely to contain rewards (game resources, a new power, etc).

There are lots of other options, depending on your game structure. Have an NPC offering concrete rewards in exchange for harm done to fellow PCs (bribes for snitching, etc.). Provide mechanical bonuses for indulging in vice (drugs that boost combat power, etc.). The possibilities are endless.

Historical example: My greatest success with this technique was in a LARP called Neon Genesis Revolution, *a fangame crossover between two anime series called* Neon Genesis Evangelion *and* Revolutionary Girl Utena. *The central mechanic of this game was a stat called Self-Worth, which was used to win duels and to complete other plot-relevant actions, and*

which went up and down according to a set of triggers that were unique to each PC. So it was trivial to give the slimier and more villainous PCs triggers like "gain 2 Self-Worth whenever you break someone's heart."[3] One otherwise-good-hearted character was supposed to be an alcoholic, so we gave her the ability to get rid of a dangerous negative status effect by getting drunk and making a self-destructive decision.[4] These systems were kind of blunt in the ways that they manipulated the players, but they resulted in some incredibly intense roleplay, and the PCs sure did engage with the darker aspects of their personalities.

Offer Faustian pacts that actually work as advertised, and that aren't cripplingly expensive. This technique is a particularly noteworthy instantiation of the previous one. Giving LARPers the chance to make deals with the devil (or some narratively devil-like entity) is a very clear way of providing game-relevant incentives for bad behavior; in my experience, when executed correctly, it does a really good job of getting PCs to think hard about their priorities and to do questionable things that make for interesting stories.

Very often, though, the power of the Faustian pact is neutered by the author's desire to make it a really bad idea. PCs aren't stupid or self-destructive; they usually won't sell away their souls, or their most important values, for minor advantages. And "is this pact actually a good deal for me?" is a much less interesting question than "are the costs of this pact morally acceptable?"

As a rule, when PCs sell out to the devil, they should get something pretty good for it—and the costs to them should mostly come in the form of making them feel like bad people, rather than direct negative consequences. The temptation should be a real and meaningful one, with benefits that aren't inherently self-defeating. The morality-play version of the Faust story just doesn't provide anything very useful to most LARPs.

2   *The Song and the Sunrise by Warren Tusk, Matt Granoff, and Weiyi Guo*. Produced by Warren Tusk. Harvard-Radcliffe Science Fiction Association, Cambridge, MA. March 9, 2007. Production of live-action roleplaying game.

3   Tusk, Warren and Ada Palmer. *Neon Genesis Revolution*. "Character Sheet—Touga Kiryuu." 13. 2009. Live-action roleplaying game.

4   Tusk, Warren and Ada Palmer. *Neon Genesis Revolution*. "Character Sheet—Misato Katsuragi." 8. 2009. Live-action roleplaying game.

Use text to emphasize negative PC attitudes and traits. It's easy for PCs to ignore themes and issues that are mentioned only in passing, or that are discussed in a boring way. It's much harder for them to ignore lengthy passages of gut-punching prose. If you want a PC to be bad, or to contemplate badness, *use all your skill as a writer to tell him about it*. Don't just toss off a sentence saying that a character has anti-orc sentiments—write a paragraph luridly describing the depths of his passion, and then another paragraph explaining all the psychological places where that passion comes from. Don't just tell Character A that he has an irrational hatred for Character B—blast him with such a powerful description of the sentiment that he will *feel* it.

Writers of all stripes often receive advice that amounts to "be as concise and efficient as possible," and there are good reasons for that, but there are some purposes for which that advice is almost entirely wrong. This is one of them. If you want to push PCs in directions that they wouldn't ordinarily go, you have to pull them hard into the narrative, and that requires verbiage. Unless you're a Hemingway, bald no-frills descriptions aren't going to cut it.

Give your bad guys genuine power. Many LARPs are supposed to feature big multipolar social struggles between right and wrong, and those LARPs often devolve into situations where a couple of designated "bad guys" are grimly hanging onto their bad guy opinions while everyone else ignores or steamrolls them. There's a simple fix for that: *allow the bad guys to punish other people for having non-bad-guy opinions*. (Or, if you want to be slightly less hardcore, allow them to reward other people for having bad guy opinions.) This is especially important if the "bad guy" position is supposed to be the social default.

Let your inquisitors actually perform inquisitions, with consequences that the other PCs will rightly fear. Give your villains the ability to make or break other people's key goals. This makes it *hard* to be a good guy; you actually have to be willing to accept negative consequences for your ideals. Which makes for a much more compelling story than "we were nice because there didn't seem to be any real reason not to be."

This works especially well with powerful NPCs, who aren't limited by the usual PC considerations of "trying to win," and who are generally much more willing to be arbitrarily unreasonable. A scary, authoritative NPC driven by a negative ideology can do a lot to pull PCs into doing things they wouldn't otherwise do.

> *Historical example:* The Dance and the Dawn *is set in a fairy-tale court that's supposed to be a scary place filled with heartbreak and intrigue. Unfortunately, the basic mechanical structure of the game encourages the PCs to cooperate intensively, because their goals are all perfectly compatible. This problem is largely kept under control by an NPC called the Queen of Ice, who has almost total power over everyone, and who is actively interested in causing the PCs to be terrible to each other. Those who live up to her cruel ideals, through backbiting and intrigue, get prizes from her that make it much easier for them to get what they want; those who are determined to play nice have to put up with her putting lots of obstacles in their paths.[5] This usually results in at least some people deciding to be mean, which makes the game world feel a lot more like it's supposed to feel.*

Provide real evidence in support of bad opinions or ideologies. The designated bad guys are often stuck in the position of defending beliefs that are clearly, unilaterally 100% wrong. This is a good way for an author to make a statement about how no one should be a bad guy, but it's a terrible way to evoke drama (and it tends to make the bad guy players involved very sad). If the bad guys are ever allowed to be *right*—even "right for the wrong reasons"—it can make the dynamic much more complicated, and give a serious shock to PCs who were expecting their default moral-narrative assumptions to be confirmed.

Maybe, this time, the poor orc refugees really *are* scheming to kill all the humans. Maybe, this time, tolerating that oppressed minority religion really *will* result in the demon god getting summoned into the world. The PCs will be stunned, and the

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5   Tusk, Warren. *The Dance and the Dawn*. "Character Sheet—The Queen and the Duke." 2006. Live-action roleplaying game.

obvious-seeming moral narrative will become substantially more fraught and worthwhile.

I tend to like this technique on philosophical grounds as well as dramatic grounds. It's easy to defend nice-sounding principles if they never ever lead to anything bad. It's much more meaningful to make your PCs defend those principles, or else abandon them, when the costs are meaningful. And, in real life, the people filling the "good guy role"—*whatever* you think that means—sometimes turn out to be wrong, or to do horrible things. That should not be less true in the narratives of LARPs.

Use your best players well. There are a few precious LARPers who are reliably capable of engaging fully with the worst aspects of their characters. Sometimes they can even be identified through casting questionnaires (although surveys tend to generate false positives on this front). If you have access to any of these wonderful players, stick them with the PCs that will make the best use of their talents—the PCs who are most damaged, narratively, when they veer towards plaster-sainthood.

Know when to give up. There are some ways in which you just can't make PCs be bad, and so there are some stories that you basically can't tell through the medium of theater LARP. Unless you have a brilliant new idea, it's probably best just to steer clear of these rather than letting your game shatter on the rocks of emergent PC morality.

The most infamous of these is the standard-model "gay plot." LARP stories about about entrenched anti-homosexual prejudice in society will pretty much always fail, because PCs *really* don't want to be prejudiced against gay people, and it's basically impossible to give them any good reason why they should be. So you end up with "anti-homosexual prejudice" that isn't actually entrenched at all, and before long everyone becomes enlightened and basks in the warm comforting glow of tolerance.

Things play out similarly with other social-justice-type issues (racism, sexism, etc.) where your PCs will have been drilled on a single morally-correct outlook and will be very uncomfortable expressing or embodying anything else. You can get around this to *some* extent by using fantasy or science-fictional elements to distance the PCs from the real-world version of the issue—LARPers are happier to discriminate against demons than against goblins, and happier to discriminate against goblins than against humans with different-colored skin—but even the "distanced" version of such a trope is likely to run into enormous psychological resistance.

Whatever story you want to tell, ask yourself, "can I truly see my players being willing to take on their proper parts in this story?" If you can't, try something else.

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But, of course, LARPing is a collaborative art form. The task of letting a game tell a brilliant story does not rest with the authors alone. In many ways, a game must stand or fall on the strength of its players.

I'd like to end this with an exhortation to anyone who plans to LARP in the foreseeable future: the next time you take on a PC role, *let yourself be bad*.

In fact…do more than that. Before the game, actively think about the ways in which your character is a flawed person. Decide on one cowardly, prejudiced, or unethical thing that he's likely to do if given the chance. Come up with a moral test that, if he finds himself faced with it, he is likely to fail.

Later on, when you think about the narrative you spun for yourself in that LARP, you'll be glad you did.

Warren Tusk has been writing LARPs for ten years, and his games have been featured at conventions, theaters, and private events around the world. Some of his work is commercially available through Paracelsus Games.

HARNESSING THE GLOWING RECTANGLE
Using Mobile and Computer Technology in LARP Play

By Matthew Webb

We are living in an interesting and great time in live action role play. In addition to the growing visibility of our hobby, unprecedented amounts of graphic and communications technology is available to organizers and players in the form of mobile platforms such as smartphones and tablets. With portable computing becoming so cheap and accessible, many larpwrights and designers are turning their eye to them, seeing how these devices can be integrated into the live action experience.

The great news is mobile technology can be leveraged into the LARP experience by almost anyone to different degrees. But there are important pitfalls and limitations to consider before taking your game down this path.

I have been experimenting with integrating technology into LARP for over five years now, as well as collaborating and trading notes with games from Prague to Los Angeles, and am currently heading the groundbreaking Planetfall science fiction LARP (www.prepareforplanetfall.com), which makes use of dedicated mobile apps and augmented reality to create an immersive and automated game experience. That road has given me some strong lessons I hope to guide you with here.

Should you use technology?

This is the single biggest question—should you use the power of technology in your game? Mobile and computer technology is very tempting. It is new, interactive, and flashy. But not every game is suitable for it.

The largest consideration is genre. Science fiction, from space opera to cyberpunk, is the most obvious choice to integrate computers—they do not break immersion and are easy to justify. For decades, movies and television have told us the future is going to be made up of glowing rectangles. Modern and post-apocalyptic games can also integrate them easily, depending on the game's background story.

Medieval fantasy is one of the most popular genres and one of the most difficult to integrate without harming immersion. Technology has to be hidden, but the careful use of facades and set dressing, as well as limiting exposure during actual gameplay, can leverage these into a fantasy game.

Even if your genre does not easily allow for the immersive use of technology, online software and apps can still offer you easy bookkeeping, player communication, and downtime management in campaign games—though this can be a serious undertaking, as we'll talk about later.

Some Basic Rules

Here are my basic rules for integrating technology into your games:

Rule 1: It will take longer than you think

How long do you think your new software will take to write? Come on, be pessimistic. Okay, now double that. Are you relying on someone else, especially a volunteer, to do the work for you? Okay, double it again. If you are not particularly technical, double a third time. Then maybe you are close to what is needed.

Software development takes time. Part-time volunteer software development takes an eternity. Most games that have an active and useful integration of technology have owners and founders as the programmers themselves—and even then, it just takes more time than you think.

Rule 2: Plan for the future

Don't do the same work twice if you have to. In software development, we refer to problems in old approaches holding us back as "technical debt"—a hole you've dug due to the way you chose to do things that you now have to dig yourself out of if you want to be more efficient, effective, or expandable.

Don't be afraid to tear down the old code and spend the time to make new software that does everything you want.

Rule 3: Create flexible solutions

Don't do anything twice if you don't have to. See if a generic solution is just as easy as a specific one. Want to build prerequisite skills for using certain items into your character databases? What about prerequisite races, alignments, et cetera? You could come up with a far more flexible tagging system to integrate that required (or banned) characters with certain tags for everything from race to political allegiances—and you went from creating a one-off solution to a powerful, useful tool for managing the game.

Rule 4: Use computers and people for what they are good at

Computers are good at storing and processing information. They are good at following large amounts of preset rules quickly. This covers a lot of rules systems in the LARP hobby, especially the parts that aren't very much fun. When possible, leverage computers to take crunching numbers or looking up things out of the hands of a person.

Humans are extremely good at weighing their chances and making decisions. Use computers to put decisions into the hands of the player, not take them away. The best dynamic is often that the computer presents available choices and limitations, which the human decides upon and the computer executes.

Strategies and Approaches

Most approaches to using technology in LARP fit into a few categories, requiring differing levels of commitment and time on the part of the developer. With overviews and examples, I hope to give

you some ideas on what can be integrated into your game, or in a game you play.

Within the Game

Computers and mobile technology are integrating themselves into actual LARP gameplay in a variety of ways, and they can be great additions as both centerpieces and helpers. There are many ways they can be integrated into your game, with varying degrees of complexity.

The Pure Prop

The simplest and easiest to integrate is the pure prop. Little more than a looping animation on a screen or on a phone, these are often remarkably effective additions to any costume or scene for science fiction, cyberpunk, or related LARPs. Most app stores feature "scientific scanner" gag apps. A more ambitious player or staff member can use game engines such as Unity to set up a looping animation with some simple reactive buttons that do nothing other than cause a visual effect.

Magical effects can also be created using mobile technology with some set dressing. Particularly useful is an old magician's trick called Pepper's Ghost. You've likely seen this before—a ghostly translucent apparition floats due to being a projection being reflected against a piece of shiny glass. This effect makes it easy to create "holograms" or floating glowing shapes as magical effects.

Manually Controlled Effects

Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain. Some games effectively use technology but have a staff member running the show and controlling the technology at all times. This is often a trick using an off-the-shelf piece of technology.

In a Call of Cthulhu game I played many years ago, the "command line" for a computer was actually an IRC chat room. The computer's responses were provided by a staff member in the other room. A simple 'trick' but an effective one, since it allowed the players to interact with a fictional computer system, but it still required a staff member's attention.

The Czech LARP Shards (Vano et al) has a wonderful example of a manual solution giving a incredible digital effect. A post-apocalyptic sci-fi game, it featured conversations with NPCs via a communications viewscreen prop made out of a projector. These communications were handled elsewhere on the site, via a live video feed from a camera and makeshift studio.

These are great solutions, though they require a great deal of time and organizer support. But they can make for a very enjoyable experience.

Single Purpose Programs

Now, we take the first step toward fully automated computer-augmented LARPing. It is extremely easy to utilize mobile computing and other technology to create single-purpose obstacles, puzzles, or information sources for a particular plot. If the players need to hack an ancient pre-war computer or bypass a complex computerized bomb timer, you can use technology to make a completely in-game experience that does not break immersion. Computers are also great locking up information—a computer that only gives you information if you have the right passkey, for instance.

There are two ways to approach this—repurpose other apps to stand-in, or make a custom program.

Don't be afraid to repurpose existing games and software. Mobile games come in many varieties, and free simple puzzle games abound. In Planet-fall, in-game scientists were scrambling to analyze an alien virus, and we wanted to make a game be the mechanic for doing the analysis. We attempted to create a custom program, but given time limitations, we instead found a 3D puzzle game for free that had a suitable sci-fi looking interface. The

players still loved the struggle and experience, and only had to be given a note that they should contact the staff once they had completed the puzzle.

Building a custom program is more time-consuming but allows for you to control the entire experience. With limited programming experience and an off-the-shelf game engine, simple interfaces and basic games can be created. Generally, the more simple the interface, the more you should consider creating a custom program. A simple keypad puzzle can be made in minutes. An engaging DNA analysis minigame might be too ambitious.

Smoke and Mirrors

One step beyond the one-shot puzzle, you can create interesting effects by *faking* a fully functional program quite often. Coupled with good art and design, very shallow solutions can be very effective. The computer interface might be little more than a web page or a Flash animation.

For example, the Czech LARP Shards (Vano et al) featured a mechanic around manipulating and discovering resources via a satellite network. They created a basic interface via a web page, styled as a futuristic control system, overseeing hundreds of satellites. However, it was simply a web page with a great many buttons that displayed information if you clicked on a "sector" to scan. The sheer volume made hints as to what sectors to scan valuable in game, but the actual technology was ridiculously simple.

Especially for short-run and one-shot games, these solutions are perfect. They don't require any risky programming, use well-established technology and yet given a fully-automated interactive experience for the player. But the kinds of mechanics and puzzles they can implement are limited.

Taking Over Systems

One of the most time-intensive but rewarding applications of technology to a game is when you hand over entire areas of mechanics to software. But, this requires dedicated developers offering their time and expertise to the game.

The American science fiction LARP Spite (Northwest Roleplaying Games) utilizes a web interface to handle money transfers and hacking in-game.

These hacking mechanics form a core part of their gameplay, and are a completely self-running part.

That's perhaps the most powerful aspect of these fully-integrated systems, that they minimize organizer involvement, yet are guaranteed to behave exactly as they are intended. Automating gameplay is an extremely powerful way of creating interesting gameplay and complex interactions while lessening staffing requirements.

Fully Augmented Gameplay

This is the Holy Grail of LARP and technology—a game which is run almost entirely via smartphones, tablets, and computers. Many experiments are currently underway, but in my opinion, the most we will see in the near future is games which *mostly* run on computers.

My game Planetfall is taking steps toward this, integrating a custom mobile app which handles almost all of our core mechanics, from healing wounded characters to analyzing strange alien lifeforms. Most of the interaction takes place through QR codes attached to props or scattered around the site, allowing the players to scan, get customized information and interact with the game world without staff involvement.

I cannot overstate how time-consuming this approach is. The Planetfall app took roughly half a year of dedicated development before the first game, with a lot of learning experiences along the way. Also, equipment requirements are a concern—requiring every player to have a smart device poses a barrier to entry, but one that is getting lesser and lesser as time goes on.

What about digital combat?

The use of computers to handle LARP combat is a very difficult problem—and the technology simply is not there yet. Some companies have begun to develop LARP-like electronic games. Sabertron was a popular Kickstarter for electronic boffers that would record hits; and companies such as Lyte-Shot are creating Bluetooth enabled beam guns for virtual combat.

However, these technologies are not ready for competitive play yet. Sabertron is easily spoofed and cannot handle more than one-on-one combat,

and existing laser tag systems have limited range and capabilities, especially in daylight. Real-time simulated combat of the accuracy and fairness that players would want is currently the province of high-end military and police training systems. Expensive systems such as MILES (Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System) represent the state of the art. One player's equipment can cost thousands and the manufacturers of such systems are focused on government customers, not commercial products.

Will LARP combat one day be handled by computer? Maybe. But not any time soon, though I hope I am proven wrong.

Management Software and Databases

This is likely the most pervasive and oldest form of computers being leveraged in LARP, and is so ubiquitous, I won't spend much time on it here. I first encountered a full-featured LARP management solution as early as 2000, with the World of Darkness desktop application Grapevine (http://grapevinelarp.com/). But even before then, spreadsheets and database applications have been part of the LARP runner's toolkit for most of the life of the hobby.

More and more, these databases are moving online. Attempts are being made to make a 'generic' online LARP database that is customizable and usable for most games. But they suffer from the limitation of how 'generic' they can really be. For example, Larpwriter (http://www.larpwriter.com/) focuses on story games and one shots; but would be of less use to a large campaign game.

Some games simply make use of shared online spreadsheets to track characters, but more and more games are using custom-made databases and web-based submission forms to handle character submission and approval, but a truly generic but LARP-focused solution has not presented itself. Maybe it will soon, but these custom databases are a well-established part of the LARP manager's world; if that is the limit of how you want use technology, get a talented web programmer and a database then have at it.

Character Creation

While many games will allow characters to be submitted through websites, it is rarer to find one where the character creation process itself is automated. Usually, the character is entered by hand after being made with written rules; the final math and approval is done by a staff member.

There's a simple reason for this—character creation is complicated and hard to validate in most traditional systems. Keeping track of prerequisites, available skills, limits placed on a character due to previous choices, all gets very complicated very quickly. What is easy to write into a rulebook is hard to "explain" to a computer sometimes.

As a simple example, in your game, you can write the line underneath the "Great Orc Howl" power that "only orcs may take this power." You're done. You just have to remember that rule when approving characters. But computer programs are notoriously intolerant of "one of kind" cases. You would need to start building a system into the character creation software to check to see if any limits are on a skill, and you need to start defining those limits in a fashion the computer can interpret and you can update as you see fit.

Now, you must add a special command for whenever the computer adds a skill to a character sheet to check for the prerequisite trait ("being an orc") and you must also have a way to outline those prerequisites and read them. Oh, and if the player changes their mind and changes their race, you either have to drop all skills and force them back a step…or write a function to drop all the racially specific skills.

And that's just for one particular type of character creation rule. Don't despair, though, this approach is very powerful but it is time consuming to write and each new type of limitation you want to add for the system will require some work.

If you are designing a LARP from scratch and you know this is how you want your character creation to work, you can design *around* the use of computers instead of trying to make the computers interpret and work around traditional character creation—and do things that are onerous or impossible with a book-based creation system.

When I was creating Planetfall, I was able to create a complex life path system, where players created their character's biography through character creation. They spent points on each step of the way on skills based on their choices for their character's history. There are even secret life path steps that can only be revealed through specific combinations of skill spends and life choices. In a book form, outlining over a hundred different life steps would be tedious. But since I made the system for online character creation only, the computer knew what choices to reveal and what skills to make available. This is because sorting through large amounts of information based on criteria is something computers are really good at.

Online Action

Some games, such as my own Planetfall LARP, have moved to even more ambitious online enhancements. While between-game role play in forums, chat rooms, and email are a decades-old staple of LARP, some have moved to make the time between games into an online gaming experience in and of itself.

Campaign games often allow between-game actions, but with some work and the implementation of an online system, this process can be completely streamlined for both the player and the game owner. Players can be engaged in predetermined downtime activities and served information based on their traits—their faction, their skills, or whatever else you can imagine.

Done well, this can make a campaign game more engaging and also easier to play. Your game can be accompanied by a miniature online multiplayer game that can engage players while also lessening the need for valuable staff time.

Conclusion

Marc Andreesen has famously said, "software is eating the world," and those teeth are finally beginning to find live action gaming. As we move forward as designers and organizers, it is tempting to see software as the magic solution to many problems. And it is a powerful solution to many problems.

But I hope this article helps both creators and players understand what goes into the process, its limitations and its possibilities. It is a very exciting time as virtual reality, augmented reality and live action converge, allowing for new forms. But we must take care to do it right, and I hope my experiences and insights into the growing use of technology helps clear the way for you to choose how to integrate technology into your game.

You can learn more about my own technology-enhanced game at www.prepareforplanetfall.com.

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Matthew Webb is the creator of Planetfall and owner of its production company, Incognita Limited. He began LARPing when he was 17 years old with Call of Cthulhu Live. He is a professional software engineer, working with the Department of Defense developing applications to support military training exercises and education. He frequently applies some of his knowledge from live action role-playing and gaming to his professional field. A native of Austin, he lives there with his wonderful domestic partner Stephanie, her daughter Belinda, and two black cats.

COMMUNICATING THROUGH QUESTIONNAIRES

By Robert Wensley

From a player satisfaction perspective, casting is probably the single most significant decision you will make as a GM running a theatrical-style LARP. Considering the extremely diverse set of characters one is likely able to play in a single LARP, and the one-playthrough limit mandated by the current spoiler-conscious culture of New England theatrical LARPers, being cast as one character or another will result in completely different experiences, and heavily influence the player's perception of the game. A player who is cast as one of a pair of star-crossed lovers, who must fight against the biases of their families to be together, will have a drastically different experience than one who is cast as the mustache twirling villain who seeks to depose the king. This is simultaneously a great strength, and a great weakness of theatrical LARP as a medium.

Games in the New England theatrical-style LARP community typically contain pre-written characters interwoven in such a way as to make significant post-completion edits difficult. Games in this culture are also typically written to be re-run, and are therefore written without knowledge of the players who will be portraying these characters. The process of assigning each of the pre-written characters to one of the players participating in a given run is called 'casting'. This is usually done with the aid of a questionnaire, or 'casting form' sent out to each of the players ahead of time to gather information on what types of characters each player would like to play. The role of the GM in casting is to assign the limited cast of characters

to the limited set of players in such a way as to maximize player enjoyment.

In addition to the character they receive, player enjoyment is also dependent on the state of the game as a whole. This means that, when casting each character, it is important to consider how that cast will affect the rest of the game. The interconnected, collaborative nature of a theatrical-style LARP means it is necessary for players to roleplay their characters within a reasonable range of the intended characterization in order to give all involved players the intended experience. Casting a player in a role that they will misuse, or are not able to play effectively, will not only affect their game, but also the game of anyone required to interact with that character in a manner dependent on the intended characterization. If the stern patriarch, expected to keep his daughter away from that ruffian of ill-repute, is given to a player uncomfortable with conflict, or to a player who doesn't have a problem with the relationship, the star-crossed lovers will get together instantly. Their entire arc will be rendered null, resulting in a somewhat boring game for those involved with the plot. It's easy to blame the players, or the writing, for such mishaps, but in my experience, writing can only go so far to mitigate runtime issues, and perfectly well-intentioned players can wildly misinterpret what is asked of them. Good casting, on the other hand, can go a long way towards preventing these issues and delivering an enjoyable experience to the players.

When I prep a LARP to run, I find I often imagine my ideal set of players. The high-roleplayer, who

will play the overdramatic movie star, the schemer, who will play the manipulative agent, and the shameless attention-seeker, who will play the screaming fan. In all the games I've run, I have never gotten this perfect list of players. That is not to say that I can't fill every role, most players are pretty flexible, but it inevitably means giving someone a character that is slightly off from what they asked for. Casting is the art of taking all of those square pegs, and fitting them into the round holes you have available. In these cases, it is critical to know what your players are comfortable with, what they feel they can play, and ultimately, on a level lower than a character-by-character basis, what they are expecting out of the game.

And so, communication with your players is paramount. In some cases, you may already know the players who have signed up for your game, and what they are comfortable with. But, in many cases, you don't know the players, or the players you think you know are looking to break their typecast. Especially in the former case, the lines of communication between yourself and the players are limited. In many cases, the single line you have between yourself and the players is your casting form. The casting form is a standardized set of questions that is sent to your entire player base and, as such, it is your most useful tool for unbiased comparison. So, what you should strive for most of all when designing a casting form is to maximize communication between yourself and the players.

Now, what does this mean in terms of casting form design? It means that every aspect of the form must be looked at from the standpoint of facilitating communication. Take length of the form, for example. Overly short forms often will not ask enough questions for you to gauge the intent of the player. However, overly long forms will often cause the player to lose interest, and decision fatigue will set in as they scroll through an endless set of irrelevant questions. In general, the more questions you ask a player, the less thought they will put into each individual answer, and the less attention you can give each response when casting. In extreme cases, this results in uneven weighting of responses on both the player and GM side of casting, and those uneven weights may not line up. So, when adding new questions to a casting form,

you must ask yourself whether the information you will get from asking the new question is worth the loss of significance every other question will suffer.

Next, consider the format of the questions you are asking. In general, I find casting form question formats fall into one of three categories. The first is checklist, in which a player is presented with a list of items, and must choose either their top N choices, or any number they would be interested in. The second is a number scale, in which a player is presented with a list of items, and must rate their preference for each. The third is free response, in which a player is asked a question, and given a large text field to respond in. Each of these formats has its distinct advantages and disadvantages. Checklists provide you with a broad range of traits for each player, allowing you a general idea of what a player is looking for. In extreme cases, checklists can even contain a brief summary of each character in game, allowing players to do most of the heavy lifting for you, as they select which characters they would like to play. However, checklists are prone to clustering, as multiple players pick the same traits or characters, giving players false expectations when there are not enough of those traits or characters to go around. Clustering on limited checklists, where players must pick their top N choices, can also mean that certain traits or characters are left with no requests. Unlimited checklists mostly avoid this problem, but can lead to the "give me anything" problem, where a player just checks off everything on the list, making it nearly impossible to gauge what characters they would like.

Number scales give you a rough interest range for a given, standardized set of traits, allowing you to weigh giving players certain traits against not giving them others. However, the exact subjective weighting of a number scale can vary from player to player. On a five point scale, a player who put no fives, and their sole four for a given trait, could prefer that trait much more strongly than a player who put a five for several traits, including that one trait in particular. Number scales, too, are prone to the "give me anything" problem, where a player just puts the highest score for every trait.

Free response fields allow a player to explain what they are asking for, in a manner much more in depth and player-specific than a standardized set of traits would yield. They also allow you to ask different questions, such as "what would you do in X situation?" which yield more personalized, and thus possibly more useful, information for casting. However, the odds increase of getting useless information, or answers that are clearly keyed to character archetypes that do not exist in game, or to characters that the player cannot receive given a certain answer to a previous question (for example, asking to play a mad scientist, when, unbeknownst to the player, the only mad scientist in game has a heavy romance plot, which the player indicated elsewhere that they would not enjoy). The latter is especially concerning, as now the player has an expectation to receive that character archetype, and their odds of disappointment with the game increase sharply, especially if the archetype does exist in game. Free responses also scale much more poorly than checklists or number scales in terms of number of questions versus thought put into each question, as free response questions take considerably more mental effort to respond to. However, while not immune to the "give me anything" problem, they are significantly more resistant to it, and a well-constructed form can wring an opinion out of all but the most determined players. It's hard to give a truly neutral response to "what would you do in X situation?"

The flip side of this, of course, is creative GM interpretation of player responses, in which the GM derives, from a questionnaire response, a request that the player did not intend to convey. For example, a response to the question "What are you doing on a space station?" could be "Something I want is on the space station." What this would seem to convey is that the player would like to have traveled to the station in search of specific object. An example of a creative GM interpretation would be casting him as the chief of the hydroponics bay, who cares about his plants. The plants are why he's on the station and technically "something he wants," but this is likely not what the player had in mind when providing that response. Creative GM interpretation obeys the letter, but not the spirit of a player response, and is therefore a GM-side example of poor communication. A good check for this is to ask yourself if, as a player

responding to that question in such a way as to request the trait being considered, you would have worded it the same way. In this case, you likely would not use the word 'want', even though it is not technically incorrect. Instead, you might use 'like' or 'care about', since the object is already in your possession.

Creative GM interpretation, although much more common to free response, is not absent from checklists or number scales. This phenomenon often results from a fundamental miscommunication between the player and the GM, usually as a result of poor question design. In many cases, this can be avoided by asking different questions, or phrasing a question in a different way. A common trait I see interpreted creatively is 'Romance.' I have seen many a casting form put the trait 'Romance' on a checklist or a number scale, with no definition or further explanation. Now, it might seem odd that one would need to define 'romance,' but here are some of the ways I have seen GMs intend this question. The character could be in an established, fulfilling relationship, a lovesick teenager with no specific target for his affections, in an unrequited romance with another character (on either side), a playboy trying to sleep with anything that moves, one of a pair of star-crossed lovers driven apart by circumstance, pining for their NPC SO who perished before game, in an unhealthy or failing relationship, sleeping with another character for personal or political gain, one of a pair of lovers who have yet to express and have reason to doubt their feelings for one another, in a romance which may be frowned upon by most (such as significant age difference), embroiled in a love triangle, or aggressively pursuing another character who is completely oblivious to their advances. These are all *very* different roles that could reasonably be construed as 'romance,' and a player may interpret the question much differently than the GM who wrote the form. This is an example of poor communication from the GM to the player, where the player is unintentionally misled as to the intent of the question. When designing questions, it is important to phrase the question in such a way that the player can grasp in what way you intend to use it to cast. Some better ways to phrase "romance" would be, for example, "Being in a relationship with another character," "Seeking a romantic rela-

tionship," "Pursuing another character romantically," or "Being a flirt."

Ambiguous questions are one form of poor communication, but another example is useless questions. These are questions that sound like good ideas to put on a form, but actually yield little or no usable information while casting. In some cases, this is because the question simply never had any merit, but these are not the majority of cases. In other cases, it is because a question sounds reasonable on the surface, but does not actually reflect the reality of the game. An example of this would be asking players for their opinions on public speaking, with the intention of using this to cast a politician who, theoretically, would give lots of speeches, but who actually has very little opportunity to give speeches during the game. Another would be asking if players want to 'build machines' for a game in which mechanical crafting is represented by a Scrabble puzzle. The player has no way of knowing what 'building machines' implies in this context, and thus, the intent of the question is poorly communicated.

In the vast majority of other cases, useless questions are a result of player demographics. That is to say, if you ask a group of players used to playing Parisian high society games whether or not they want romance or status-based etiquette, you will get an overwhelming majority of yesses. That's all well and good if your game has lots of romance plots and you need to cast the few characters who don't. However, if your game has only three romance plots, the question becomes somewhat moot and may result in player disappointment when they do not receive one of the characters with a romance plot. Unfortunately, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to this problem, as it will largely depend on your familiarity with local demographics. However, there are some ways to mitigate the issue. One example of a question that most players will answer 'yes' to is the equivalent of "having lots of information." In general, in secret-based games, knowledge is power, and players will enjoy being 'in-the-know.' Responses will tend to shift towards having more information and away from "having little information." But there is a simple way to mitigate this, and it once again involves better communication practices. Asking the players if they want to have "little information," frames the question in a negative sense, and implies to the players that characters that fit this description will have a handicap. However, often this is not the case. Characters who do not start game with a great deal of information will be undergoing a journey of discovery through the game, as all the secrets the other players started out with are slowly made public knowledge. This is what you want to try to communicate to your players when you ask this question. A better way to phrase that question, then, would be "uncovering hidden information." Now the question is no longer framed as a negative, and more effectively communicates the reality of the situation.

Now, I've talked a lot about casting forms from a writer or GM perspective. However, I do want to take a moment to talk about the player side of things. As a player, when you fill out a casting form, it is important to make just as much of an effort to communicate with the GM as the GM makes to communicate with you. This can be more difficult, as you do not have control over the format of the form, which is why GMs should include at least one free-response catch-all field for players to clarify any decisions they feel need clarification. One decision I, personally, like to clarify when I fill out forms is when I fill out a form that asks, in two separate questions, whether I want to be good and whether I want to be evil. I tend to answer 'yes,' or the highest rank on the number scale for both these questions. My reason for doing this is because I like to play characters that are either very good or very evil, and have less interest in ideologically neutral characters. However, from the perspective of a GM, seeing a five out of five for both good and evil, it is not unreasonable to assume that I meant to say that alignment does not matter to me at all. It is important, when filling out a casting form, to be conscious of these decisions that go against the design of the form itself, and to consider how such a deviation may be interpreted from a GM standpoint.

It is also important for players, when filling out a casting form, to strive to provide useful information for the GM to use to cast you. Filling out a form with a neutral response to every question, although possibly accurate, is not useful from a GM perspective when trying to determine which characters you would enjoy. Just as useless, and

functionally equivalent, is the "give me anything" form, in which the player responds with the highest possible interest level to every response. A GM will look at a neutral or "give me anything" form and realize that you would be okay with just about any character in game. What this means to them is that they can take the rest of the forms, which did provide specific interests and criteria, and arrange the best fit possible out of those forms, and then slot you into whatever gaps they have in the responses. The unfortunate reality of this is that this form is functionally equivalent to asking for the hard-to-cast characters. If everyone said they did not want a romance plot, and you said you were neutral to romance, you will most likely get the romance plot in game. Additionally, if there is a somewhat bland, unexceptional character in game, GMs are likely to give it to you, as they give those characters with strong trait alignments to players who specifically requested them. In an ideal LARP, there would be no bland characters, but these characters do crop up from time to time. In this case, being okay with anything can be interpreted as being okay having nothing. Now, if you're actually okay with whatever character you get slotted into you, then by all means, continue filling out forms as such, and please come play more of my games. GMs will love you, because you will take the characters no one else wants. However, be conscious, when filling out a form this way, that this is what you are asking for, and don't be afraid to make demands of the GMs if this is not what you want.

That said, when players do make demands of the GMs, it is important for the player to understand that those demands may not be fulfilled. As was mentioned, casting is the fine art of taking all the square players, and fitting them into the round characters. What this means is that there will not always be a perfect fit for each player. As such, the common practice of "apping for a character" is not always the best practice, and may communicate the wrong message. For example, filling out a form with the clear intention of asking for the mustache-twirling villain, while definitively communicating specific information to the GM, will leave the GM at somewhat of a loss when there is no mustache-twirling villain to be found among the cast of ideologically opposed, but very well-intentioned characters. When this occurs, the GM will be forced to pull whatever information they can

from the response, and fit it to the characters they have available. Now, suddenly, the five out of five you put for politics, hoping to be the megalomaniacal, corrupt official, may land you the beleaguered bureaucrat, just trying to push his unpopular proposal through congress. As such, it is important to remember to evaluate each question independently of each other question as you are responding. If you are only okay with politics if you are abusing the system, it is probably not a good idea to put a five out of five for it. A better practice would be to put a one or two out of five, and then, in whatever free-response section you have available, explain that you would be okay with politics in these specific situations. This means you are clearly stating your intent to the GM, rather than forcing them to guess what character you had in mind as you filled out the form.

Above all, it is important for GMs to understand how players will interpret the form they hand them, and for players to consider how GMs will interpret the response they hand back. As has been mentioned before, casting is the art of taking square players, and fitting them into round characters, which means it will almost always be imperfect, and all one can hope for is the best fit. By clearly communicating intent from both sides of the interaction, a lot less is left to fumbling around in the dark until the first possible fit is found. To extend the metaphor further, good communication from GM to player can allow the square player to mold themselves to better fit the round characters, and good communication from player to GM will give the GM a better idea of the exact shape of the square player. Communication is about GMs helping players help GMs by giving more useful information for casting them, and players helping GMs help players by giving them better casts. No one is the enemy in these situations, and no one (unfortunately) is psychic. Players and GMs alike have only what they give each other to go off of, so it is crucial that each give the other what they need.

■

The
LARPS

MYTHARC
A Narrative-Focused LARP Methodology

By Caroline Murphy

Mytharc is a methodology and supporting system intended for game-runners that would like to focus on creating narrative-driven live action games.

My decision to create Mytharc came out of a general feeling of dissatisfaction with available systems to both handle narrative progression as well as elegantly handle conflict and combat resolution. It is my feeling that systems should be employed when they support or reinforce the themes of a game, but that many systems over-complicate a creator's intention. Mytharc is an attempt to create navigable systems that are lightweight enough to support story without becoming the focus of the story. The goal is to focus both game creators as well as players on how they can collaborate to create meaningful, enriching stories together.

This document is divided up into a few distinct parts.

The methodology explains the thought process behind system choices; the safety section sets out some expectations to create a fun and safe environment; and the system section lays out rules to support the framework in order to encourage collaborative, story-driven games.

Mytharc is heavily inspired by Nordic LARP[1] tradition and the FATE RPG[2] system, taking the tack that great characters and stories are not defined by their stats or abilities, but by their choices and interactions. At the same time, Mytharc takes into consideration some traditions from more well-known LARP systems such as Accelerant[3] and Cthulhu Live[4].

Mytharc is setting-less, and is intended to be flexible enough that any setting desired can be created and applied to the system. In general, Mytharc's systems support the type of game that is more gritty and deadly than epic and dashing, but the system could be reasonably tweaked to support either.

Mytharc is not intended to be the "right" way to run games—many games are perfectly suited with other systems. Mytharc is focused primarily on collaborative narrative, and secondarily on simulation, and in any case where the two clash, Mytharc takes the position that the story should drive the outcome.

1   http://nordiclarp.org/wiki/Nordic_Larp
2   http://www.faterpg.com/
3   http://www.accelerantgames.com/
4   http://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/56207/Cthulhu-Live-3rd-Edition-LARP

METHODOLOGY

Core components of a Mytharc game

- Players "play to lose."
- Equality in Design: Abilities are not tied to race, gender, orientation, beliefs, etc. Equality and uniqueness are not mutually exclusive.
- The Journey: Players are the protagonists; their choices impact the world and themselves. Narrative arcs are the driving force behind choices. Completion of arcs and stories is heavily encouraged.
- Constructivist Pedagogy: Connections to others, sharing, and self discovery through experiences are the driving forces behind growing in knowledge. Knowledge is power; power can be lost.

Play to Lose

Players in a Mytharc game are expected to "play to lose." This does not mean that a character can never win or succeed, but rather that players are aiming for the type of story that includes failure and subsequent growth from that failure. Playing to lose is about being generous with your roleplay, it's about yielding the scene to someone that will get more benefit from it than you, and it's about taking a dive in a battle so that others are included in the story. When you play to lose, you allow your character to experience failure and loss. The point of play-to-lose is to create dramatic, interesting dynamics, and encourage collaborative play.

Equality in Design

One of the core tenants in a Mytharc game is that all people are created, at their very centers, to be equal. Similarly, every person is unique and special. It is not their race or socioeconomic status that makes them unique, but their own personal journeys, and therefore, their personalities. As such, Mytharc does not use any traits based on race, class, gender, orientation, or beliefs.

While all people are equal, our environments are influential to our perspectives, and as such the concept of cultures is important. Knowledge of certain cultural or group-associated aspects can be represented through taking skills favored by those groups, but again, are not restricted as long as the appropriate context for knowing them exists. Certain cultures may have knowledge that tends to be known among all their members, but others are not precluded from a similar understanding, so long as they put in the work needed to learn that knowledge.

In a Mytharc game, all players can start with the same base skills. These skills should fit a character's background and story. Specialized skills can be unlocked through many different means, and players can be creative about how they approach this. A game creator can decide what skills are open, and what are restricted or hidden.

Similarly, each person is unique and has something special that helps make them who they are. This is represented in Mytharc by the "True Self" ability, which is a special ability unique to an individual, but can be learned by others with the aide of the individual. This system is further explained in the later part of this methodology.

The Journey

Stories are how we create meaning from experience, and Mytharc seeks to create meaning from a player's experience, both personally as well as within their greater community. In Mytharc, players are the protagonists; their choices impact the world and should drive the narrative just as much as the vision of the Game Creators. Completion of arcs and stories is heavily encouraged via use of the character progression mechanics (see the Experience and Red Token system), as well as the fact that death and character exit are built into the system in a way that is meant to encourage a story full of growth, change, failure and triumph, love and loss.

Constructivist Pedagogy

Understanding, whether initial or deeper, can only be developed by sharing knowledge. Central to the concept of the Mytharc story is the notion that people can only understand the meaning behind things when they are able to share with others

and learn from the multitudes of perspectives. By teaching and sharing, we grow, and can only further our own development by including others. This is represented in a Mytharc game by the fact that no single character can advance along a knowledge path past a certain point unless there are others sharing in that knowledge with whom they can speak and share. The more who share in the knowledge, the greater the ability for progress.

SAFETY

Physical Safety

There are two words used for physical safety in a number of LARP traditions, Mytharc included, that are recommended for running games of any type. These words are "Caution" and "Emergency."

"Caution"— this is a warning that a player is about to be in physical danger. The statement following should describe that danger clearly.

"Emergency"—there is a medical or physical emergency. Game ceases entirely until the situation is resolved.

Emotional Safety[5]

There are two words used for emotional safety in some LARP traditions that are recommended in a heavily narrative game like Mytharc. These words are "Brake" and "Cut."

"**Brake**"—this is a warning, this player is feeling uncomfortable out-of-character and the scene can continue at that same level of intensity, but no further. The player does not need to explain themselves afterwards. If in a situation where the player cannot speak, they can double tap (tap twice on any surface) for a brake.

"**Cut**"—this player is feeling overwhelmed; the scene ends, no questions asked. In a situation where a player cannot speak, they can triple tap for a cut.

Simulated Intimacy

When we develop our connections to others, we often grow as people. Since intimacy can be difficult to simulate in a game, players are encouraged to participate in whatever context they find most comfortable. Ars Amandi is a system that uses certain forms of physical contact to simulate other, more intimate forms of contact. Some players may wish to participate in Ars Amandi[6] as an expression of their character's connection and intimacy to another, but this is by no means required. Systems for simulating intimacy are opt-in only, and no one need ever explain any reason why they refuse an exchange.

The Meta Room[7]

Mytharc games have a special place set aside called the Meta Room. This room is where players may go out of character to be "off screen" while something would be happening in the game. The Meta Room can be used for taking an OOC break to think through something, resolve an OOG discussion about an IG story, or play out a symbolic version of something happening in game such as a duel or romantic encounter.

A Note on Bleed and Debriefs

In games with high emotional content, players can experience what is known as "Bleed"[8]. This is when the emotions of their characters are so strong that they are carried back to the player and impacts them in an out-of-game way, or vise versa. Bleed is often the goal of a very emotional story, and it can be very positive to experience. By the same token, experiencing too much bleed can be a negative experience for some people.

Mitigating the negative effects of bleed is important, and after-game debriefs[9] can be a great way to handle this. This can take a few different forms, and Game Creators are encouraged to use whatever form best suits their style of game.

5   http://nordiclarp.org/wiki/Safewords

6   http://nordiclarp.org/wiki/Ars_Amandi
7   http://nordiclarp.org/wiki/Meta_Room
8   http://nordiclarp.org/wiki/Bleed
9   http://nordiclarp.org/wiki/Debriefing

SYSTEM

Character Creation

Characters in a Mytharc game are created as follows:

1. Picking a character's culture
2. Deciding upon their personal beliefs and writing their corresponding history
3. Deciding attributes and skills
4. Gaining a unique ability based on a character's history and experiences
5. Other details—outfit, etc.

Culture

Everyone comes from somewhere, and our places of origin can have a great influence over the way we see the world. Mytharc encourages Game Creators to make up worlds that have elaborate economic, ideological, and social climates, and allow your players to choose whatever cultural background is appealing to them from a story perspective.

Game Creators are encouraged to think about areas of knowledge that might be special to or preferred by a culture, and note what they are and their reasoning in writeups about the cultures. Players are not required to incorporate those into their character, but should also have a sound reasoning for why they would not.

Personal Beliefs

Everyone believes in something. Whether that belief is in a military industrial scientific society or a spiritual path makes no difference in the Mytharc system—belief systems make up the core of how people interact with one another. Discovering your character's own personal belief system is key to their growth and development. Like in our own lives, these beliefs can change and grow over time, and no one idea is more "correct" or "true" than another. Mytharc's character creation process encourages players to develop out these ideas about their character, but does not represent these in any way on a character sheet or via skills.

Attributes and Skills

Attributes are meant to represent a person's actual physical and mental being, and help to arbitrate things like when a person is injured or exhausted, etc.

Skills are meant to represent the things that a person does or knows. Everyone has talents and crafts that they may cultivate over their lifetime. Mytharc encourages social skills to be represented and generated via interpersonal roleplaying (and social skills are not represented on a character sheet), while knowledge skills and physical skills can be represented on a character sheet and have corresponding in-game mechanics to support these aspects of roleplay.

True Self

In order to represent the special unique qualities of an individual, every character has a special skill that is linked uniquely to them. Game Creators are encouraged to create skills that fit a character's background and story while adding balance and intrigue to their game world.

This special skill can be called anything a Game Creator wishes (in case they want to build in a narrative surrounding it such as super powers), but for ease of reference will be called a "True Self" in this documentation. A character may use their True Self skill once per day. If a character so wishes, they may, when they have a deep interpersonal connection to another character, allow them to access this skill by bestowing it upon them. If another character uses the skill, they must tell the person with whom they share it, and that person may not use it for that day. The intention behind this was to reflect that you would only share your True Self with someone whom you loved and trusted deeply; someone who would not misuse your trust or use it carelessly. Once you have shared this part of yourself with someone, it cannot be unlearned, even if the relationship sours. Learning someone's True Self and sharing yours also gives you a Red Token.

Attributes

In a Mytharc game, attributes are simply Body and Mind. This represents the amount of stress that your physical body or your mind can take before you need to rest or be restored in some way. All characters get 10 points to distribute in either category, which serve as their base. These points can be temporarily diminished and restored over the course of an event by physical injury, taxing mental problems, etc, but will always return to their base scores with time and rest. These attributes usually will not change through the course of a character's life. There may be exceptions; extreme situations in which one point of either Body or Mind might be permanently lost for narrative reasons.

A game cycle can be as much as once per hour, or once per battle, once per day, once per meal, once per event, once per season—depending on the Game Creator's preference. The Game Creator can determine what constitutes "rest" enough to gain back attributes. Further, Mind and Body could refresh at different rates, depending on the kind of game that the Game Creator wants to run. For example, a high magic, high fantasy game might have Mind refresh every few hours, but Body refresh only once an event. An esoteric horror game might have mind refresh once per season, and body refresh once per event. Anything appropriate to the game creator's world is encouraged.

Skills

In a Mytharc game, there are two types of skills—Mental skills and Physical skills.

It is worth noting that there are no skills to represent the ability to handle weapons or armor in a Mytharc game. This reflects a fundamental design philosophy of Mytharc; anyone may pick up any weapon at any time and use it, and that using it effectively is simply a matter of knowledge, time and energy invested. The knowledge of using a weapon can easily be reflected in a knowledge-based skill, and would create the ability for a character to then invest the time and physical training into a physical-based skill. Similarly, anyone may wear as much or as little armor as they like, and expect it to protect their body accordingly.

For example, in a Star Trek game, there may be a secret call known only to those who understand "Vulcan Martial Arts" that allows them to put an opponent to sleep with a single touch. After learning the appropriate Knowledge skill, the Physical skill "Sleep" then becomes available for investment.

Mental Skills

There are two categories of mental skills in a Mytharc game. One is Knowledge, which comprises the vast bulk of what can should be invested in. The other is Special Mental Abilities that equate to things like powers and spells. These are unlocked through knowledges much the same way that restricted Physical skills are, but draw from the Mind pool to enact, as opposed to requiring further skill point or experience investment. This is because, as a mental skill, by investing the time into the knowledge, it has already been learned, as opposed to a physical discipline that takes time and practice in addition to knowledge.

Knowledge-Based Skills

In a Mytharc game, knowledge is the basis for much of the story. Characters engage in soft skill-checks based on their knowledges at almost every turn. What they know defines how they interact with their environment and others, and open the door for many creative possibilities, both created by Game Creator, as well as driven by the player.

Knowledge skills are meant to be a general area of knowledge, which allow for a diversity of specialization under those categories. For example, say a character wanted to be a masterful cook, they might find themselves with a basic education of "Services", and a highly specialized education in "Culinary Arts"—or perhaps alternately an education in "Arts" and a specialization in "Cooking".

At character creation, a character starts with Knowledge-Based Skill points equal to that character's Mind score multiplied by 3. The reason why knowledge is so much more abundant at creation than physical skills is because in Mytharc, what you know is far more powerful than what your body can do. Any unused points may be banked (in the category) and used later when characters gain experience.

The cost for a skill is 1 point for the core skill, and specializations cannot be purchased without the core skill being taken. Cost for specializations are 1 point for a the first level, 2 points for a second level, and so forth. Specializations may grow to 3x with a lone player's investment, and up to 5 using shared learning (see Constructive Pedagogy explanation). A game creator can decide how many individuals must be studying together in order to open the following level, and they can be PC or NPC, Mytharc recommends three and five, for the 4th and 5th tiers, respectively.

This list of skills is co-opted from a list of higher education majors, and is highly mutable.

Agriculture
Arts
Biology
Business
Communications
Computer/Information
  Science
Education
Engineering
Environmental Science
Health Care
Languages
Literature
Law
Mathematics/Statistics
Mechanics

Military Science/
  Protective Services
Philosophy & Religion
Physical Sciences
Protective Services
Psychology & Counseling
Recreation & Fitness
  Services
Skilled Trades and
  Construction
Social Sciences & Liberal
  Arts
Social Services
Transportation

It is incumbent on Game Creators to create a list of skills (and specializations) that will be relevant to the game they are creating, and to react to the kinds of skills that characters in their game take by creating opportunities for those skills to be useful in their game world where possible. Different skills can be created at a Game Creator's discretion, and creating hidden knowledge skills that can only be discovered as a character grows is highly encouraged. Examples might be an ancient language unknown to most, or the business dealings of a secret society. Players and Game Creator's should keep an open dialogue about a character's goals and interests, and react accordingly, keeping in mind that points on a sheet do not equal a great character.

Special Mental Abilities

It is also possible for knowledge to unlock mentally-based powers, especially in systems that utilize magic or science-fiction technology. Game Creators may create appropriate systems for these based on their setting that draw from a character's temporary Mind pool.

An example of this might be in a esoteric horror game, learning a dark and dangerous spell to summon an impish creature to do one's bidding. Learning the spell would require a specialized Knowledge, perhaps a deep understanding of the Occult. Enacting the spell would require spending Mind. The spell itself could be learned by anyone who put the time into learning it, given an appropriate reason for doing so.

Physical Skills

In a live action game, people often would like to represent their characters as having a different set of physical attributes or limitations than they themselves have. It is important to take that into account in a system. This is handled in many LARP systems with "calls" or gestures that represent these abilities or limitations. Game Creator's are welcome to use whatever calls or gestures they deem appropriate to their setting. The Mytharc methodology recommends open calls that are disabling effects that last 3 seconds or are instantaneous, rather than things that outright end a conflict—for example a "Trip" versus a "Sleep".

At character creation, a character starts with Physical Skill Points equal to that character's Body score. Any unused points may be banked and used later when characters gain experience.

Calls or gestures can be purchased for 1 point for the first level, 2 points for the second level, and so forth, and cannot grow to more than 3x without constructive pedagogy, which allows up to 5. The number of levels taken is the number of times that the call or gesture can be used in a cycle. The cycle is determined by the Game Creators (and is discussed above under Attributes).

Recommended Open calls:

Disarm *Drop a weapon*
Knock Back *Push back 3 steps*
Parry *Negates a call delivered by melee*

Stun *Disorients for 3 seconds*
Trip *Fall to the ground*

Recommended Restricted or Secret that require special knowledge:

Dodge *Instantly negates a call*
Maim *Breaks a limb*
Sleep *Knocks unconscious for 3 min*

Tend *Temporarily bandages wounds*
Waylay *Knocks unconscious with melee for 3 min*

Arms & Armor

Players may outfit a character however they like. The only thing that determines how armored a character is at any given time is the armor they are actually wearing at that moment. The reasoning behind why armor and physical skills are different is that anyone can get armor and come up with a narrative reason to do so, that is easy—but learning a physical skill is hard and takes investment of time/energy.

Armor can give up to 5 points of "hits" before it must be repaired or replaced (repairing should simply be roleplayed accordingly). Game Creators will look at a character's outfitting and decide how many points are given—typically 1–3 is the average. Five points would be very unusual and be someone in full heavy plate or space marine armor.

Characters may carry whatever weapons they would like to physically represent, and similarly, should have an understanding for themselves of where the weapon came from, whether it is special to them, etc.

Items

Game Creators are highly discouraged from creating or giving any items that have any sort of attribute or skill attached to them that is not widely and generally accessible by the entire game world. Items in a Mytharc game might require certain knowledges in order to use appropriately, or to access, but in general, items should *require* something from a player, not *bestow* something to a player.

Game Creators can go another step, and make it so that without Constructivist Pedagogy at work, some items are inaccessible, but working together, they become available for all. For example, in a game where bullets are a scarce resource, enough players who invested the time and energy into Engineering and Manufacturing would be able to create a means by which everyone could obtain bullets each session.

Mytharc is of the opinion that systems with items that bestow attributes or skills can lead to item hoarding, negative player-versus-player interactions, and can create an environment that is destructive to collaborative narrative storytelling. Similarly, Mytharc does not have any in-game professions or wealth mechanics. This is so that players may feel free to roleplay whatever character they feel is the most interesting to them.

PROGRESSION

Discovery of the World—The "Experience" System

Players receive normal experience at a rate of typically 2 experience points per game event that their character attends. A Game Creator may have other systems for gaining more experience, such as in-game discovery, contribution to the community, etc., but that is up to each Game Creator individually.

Experience is spent to purchase Mental skills and Physical skills, for the same cost progression that is described at character creation (i.e., 1 point for first level, 2 for second, etc.). Game Creators may wish to represent experience with a token of some kind, but they can also choose to not do this.

Discovery of the Self—The "Red Token" System

As in our real lives, there are experiences that broaden our understanding of ourselves at our very core. These are things like love, loss, accomplishing a major goal, failing at something important, and more. No one gets through life without experiencing these things, and as we gain these experiences, our perspectives shift and we are able to approach things differently.

This is represented in Mytharc games by a system called the "Red Token" system. When a character experiences a major event, they gain a Red Token. This Red Token opens up knowledges to them that they could have never known before (secret paths that are at the Game Creator's discretion). The Red Token also gives them an advantage in conflicts (see the dueling system below), as they're more

likely to have experienced similar things in their lives before this.

There are certain events that will automatically mean gaining a Red Token, such as those described in the Death & Exit, and the True Self mechanics. Game Creators should also feel free to create a manifold of narrative means by which a character can have this happen. This can also be a collaboration between player and Game Creator.

As the character's story goes on, and they accumulate Red Tokens, their narrative arc unfolds, and their self-discovery finally comes to a point where the arc is over. After a number of Red Tokens decided upon by the Game Creators (Mytharc recommends 5) are gained, the character's arc is completed. The player then works with the Game Creators to end the character's story, whether by that character's death, retirement, or other exit.

COMBAT & CONFLICT

Physical Combat Resolution versus Conflict Resolution

One of the most fun parts of a live action game can be the rush of a battle. In a Mytharc game, battles can be extremely deadly. For this reason, Mytharc supports two different systems of play—combat resolution as well as conflict resolution. Combat resolution is represented by boffer combat, and conflict resolution is represented by the dueling system.

Boffer Combat

In a Mytharc game, real-time combat is represented by latex weapons, boffer weapons, dart guns, or other weapons at the Game Creator's discretion. There is no called damage in a Mytharc game; each hit represents a wound which temporarily lowers a character's Body. Some Game Creators may wish to have weapons of certain types do more damage; they can adjust accordingly, but but in the standard Mytharc design philosophy, access to those weapons should be accessible via many different means and not closed off to someone thinking creatively (see above section on items for explanation of this reasoning).

When Body is at 0, a character falls unconscious. They will awaken in 3 minutes unless bandaged and cared for by whatever means appropriate to the setting, which can shorten that time. A character will not die unless they are death struck (see below on Death & Exit for an explanation of death strikes).

Dueling

A duel may be requested at any time between a player and an NPC or another player. Game Creators are encouraged to come up with a phrase that is recognizable as an invitation to engage in a duel that a character can accept or reject, such as "It seems as though we cannot settle our differences with words."

If accepted, both parties will exit the scene and meet in the Meta Room. There they will quickly talk out of game and decide the outcome of the duel. This is the preferred way of resolving a conflict, and can lead to fun dramatic interactions on both sides at no major risk to the parties involved.

If no agreement can be made, each party must bid experience (or skills points if no experience has been gained/spent) or Red Tokens, in secret.

Game Creators should have appropriate dice set aside in their Meta Room.

- 1 Experience/1 Skill Point—Give 1 d2
- Red Tokens—Give 1 d6

Any Experience that is bid is lost, regardless of the outcome, and players must adjust their builds accordingly. Any Red Token bid will create a permanent Impairment, but Red Tokens are never lost. This represents the fact that in a conflict of this type, people are injured and will experience loss, and is meant to encourage people to collaboratively come up with interesting scenes without the use of mechanics (remember—Play to Lose!). A player's willingness to sacrifice may make the difference between their loss or victory, and when things like their life are on the line, the sacrifice may be well worth it.

Each party rolls their bid and adds up the total. The party with the higher roll wins the Duel. They now exit the Meta Room and act out a dramatic fight, predetermined by the previous rolls.

Physical Healing
Physical healing of all types (even magical in nature) only grants temporary Body, which expires in 1 hour (or other time period Game Creator deems appropriate). This temporary Body cannot exceed the player's maximum Body. After the expiration, if the player is at zero Body, they must take a temporary impairment. Impairments can include a broken limb, or temporary loss of a physical skill (Disarm, Trip). They must roleplay this impairment for the remainder of the cycle.

The only way to heal permanently is to rest, or extraordinary extenuating circumstances, at a Game Creator's narrative discretion. Rest can be at a Game Creator's discretion as is appropriate for their setting, but Mytharc recommends a full night's sleep at minimum.

Physical Impairment
Impairments can be temporary or permanent. Temporary impairments should be player-arbitrated—if a character has gotten into such grievous physical situations that they are beaten bloody, this should be roleplayed accordingly.

Putting one's life in extreme danger can cause physical impairments that are permanent. These situations can arise narratively, as presented by a Game Creator, or may also happen with specific mechanics in place like Dueling and Death. The Impairment can be anything from roleplayed injuries (e.g. the character walks with a limp, the character has a nasty scar across their face) to loss of physical skills (e.g. the character loses the ability to disarm others forever). Whatever the impairment, it should be interesting, befitting the situation that caused it, and add to a character's story. Permanent impairments can be a collaboration between Game Creator and player.

Mental Taxation/Stress
Game Creators may wish to create systems that require mental exertion in order to complete, such as magic systems, superpowers, mentally taxing scenarios, or something else.

Game Creators can create whatever system they choose and use the Mind attribute as the pool from which people can draw for these systems.

Mental Healing
Mental healing of all types (even magical in nature) only grants temporary Mind, which expires in 1 hour (or time period deemed appropriate by the Game Creators). This temporary Mind cannot exceed the players max Mind. After the expiration, if the player is at zero Mind, they must take a temporary mental impairment.

The only way to mentally heal permanently is to rest, or extraordinary extenuating circumstances, at a Game Creator's narrative discretion.

Mental Impairment
When a person becomes mentally exhausted, they can become impaired.

Impairments can be temporary or permanent. Temporary impairments should be player-arbitrated—if a character has exhausted themselves mentally so completely that they are barely able to function, this should be roleplayed accordingly. Players are cautioned to think about this as a mental exhaustion or stress, not as a mental disability

or mental health issue, and to be sensitive about their choices.

Other situations can cause extreme mental stress, which are permanent. These situations can arise narratively, as presented by a Game Creator, or may also happen with specific mechanics in place like Dueling and Death. The Impairment can be anything from roleplayed post traumatic stress, to the loss of permanent knowledge or mental-based skills. Whatever the impairment, it should be interesting, befitting the situation that caused it, and add to a character's story. Permanent impairments can be a collaboration between Game Creator and player.

Death & Exit

Death in a Mytharc game represents the end of a character's arc. Characters can also complete their arcs in other ways and choose to retire or exit the character in a manner suitable to them.

Because of the extreme focus on narrative, being death struck in Mytharc is very dramatic and far more rare than in many other LARP systems. Being death struck results in an immediate Red Token, and causes a permanent Physical Impairment. If a character is death struck and they already have the max number of Red Tokens, they are killed permanently. If they are not at their maximum number of Red Tokens, roleplay for repairing the critically wounded character should be undertaken in a manner appropriate with the game setting.

A death strike in a Mytharc game is as simple as walking to a beaten opponent (who is at 0 Body), and calling "Death" while ending their life in some setting appropriate means. Killing someone gives a character an immediate Red Token, and causes a permanent Mental Impairment.

Caroline Murphy is a game designer, community organizer, Director of Marketing at Intrepid and Chief Creative Officer at Incantrix Productions. She is a founder and CEO of the Boston Festival of Indie Games, leader of Boston Indies, a member of the Board of Directors for Be Epic, Inc., and a founder of the LARP Forum. Caroline has been designing Live Action experiences since 2001.

GRAVEYARD OF THE SACRIFICE
An Edu-Larp About WWII

by Muriel Algayres

Organizer Presentation

These are a few notes that I've compiled after the game, for anyone that would be interested in running it. This document concerns the first version of the game, which was originally created for 16 students.

Presentation

"Graveyard of the Sacrifice," an Edularp about WWII, memory duty, the building of History and survivors' war stories
Created by: Muriel Algayres
Players: 16 (original run)
Running time: about 6 hours
Pre-game workshops: 3x45minutes
Game time: about 2 hours
Post-game workshop: 45 minutes

Choice of design

The game was created as a narrativist approach to issues regarding World War II, especially memory duty, the creation of History, and surviving the war. I wanted to focus on survivors' tales and the civilian population's experience of the war (which we usually address less frequently in general classes).

The character design was a duplicate of the template that was created by the Danish organization rollespilsfabrikken, with courteous authorization on their part. It is a very practical format that enables to give all the necessary information in a succinct way, while enabling the players to get into character and make them their own.

Running the game

These are the sequences I used for running the game. It should be noted that I didn't start with the game, I did it with second-year students, who were trained in roleplaying exercises before, so were already familiar with the process when I introduced the game. Starting with shorter roleplaying exercises is, to me, very useful.

1. Game presentation, defining what the exercise is about, discussing costumes: where I give the students instructions, and also the presentation to the parents, get the necessary authorizations

2. Characters preparation: the students get the characters, have to read them. First workshop session where they discuss the characters, create connections, learn about the characters they'll be playing

3. Memorial visit: for legal reasons, it was forbidden to do the visit in character. Any memorial site could be considered to run the game. Before the visit, I ask them to imagine what it would feel for their character, to visit that site.

4. Character preparation, second workshop: 45 minutes of roleplaying by groups of 4, according to their nationality. A good time to calibrate the roleplaying, to tone down the most energetic students so that they will leave room for the others, to encourage the shy ones.

5. The game: around a meeting or a picnic. The students discuss the memorial visit and the war, as their characters.

6. Exit workshop and debriefing: we make a circle, ask each student what they thought of the experience, how they feel. On an extra sequence, it is possible to play a last meeting of the characters, months later, and have them talk about what they're doing with their life.

The teacher's role:

The teacher is present as Mr/Ms Green, the handler of the group. He interviews the students so that they will each have an occasion to talk and express themselves, even the more discreet ones. We can also intervene to make sure all students remain in characters (there can be the occasional slip or contemporary reference appearing, but it is best in my opinion to put the student back on track in a discreet way). If English is not the students first language, making sure they don't revert to their mother tongue is also part of the teacher's work.

Communication to the parents

The following document was originally written in French and used to present the project to the parents. They were at the end asked to sign their authorization for their children to be part of the project. On the first run of the project, they all did. Instructions for costumes, which I include there, were given to the students at the same time on a separate paper.

Presentation of the project « Graveyard of the sacrifice »

Coordinator:

Mme ALGAYRES, Professor « agrégé », History-Geography, teacher « DNL », History Geography in English (note : these are French titles. It means that I have a double qualification, both for teaching History, with the highest rank for secondary school teachers, and for the English practice optional course)

Definition of the project

« Graveyard of the sacrifice » is an educational Larp for the 11th grade. It was originally written for 16 students. It is an educational project about memory duty, the construction of History, and survivors' guilt.

What is Edu-Larp?

Edu-Larp is an abbreviation for *educational live action role playing game,* used to describe all pratice using roleplaying as a performing art for educational purpose.

This practice can be defined as a collective act of learning, through the creation of a common narrative that develops students' participation, attention, and social skills.

This activity can be defined as a form of improvisation theatre, with the absence of any audience. The activity is based on freestyle interaction between students, through their characters, that they all build together.

This game is created in the European section, it will be written and played entirely in English.

What is the purpose of Edu-Larp ?

Many researchers, Dr Sarah Lynne Bowman at the forefront, have shown the interest of using improvisation and roleplaying as educational tools. This practice enables developing many skills simultaneously and to learn contents more easily.

In the European section, the Edu-Larp approach has an additional advantage where language practice is concerned. For more timid or self-conscious students, the character's alibi represents a protection against fear of failure. For students more comfortable with oral practice, it is a way to learn more vocabulary, strenghten their self-confidence and boost creativity.

Therefore, Edu-Larp can be considered as an innovative form of pedagogy, which will enable us to explore content and work a thematic approach in a deeper way (the duty of remembrance in this instance). It should be noted that, if that practice is rare in France (and this experimentation could be a first of its kind), it is more frequent in Nordic countries, especially Denmark where it is regularly used in the primary circle.

The project

This project will be built around the visit that has been organised around the visit of a memorial site at Mont-Valerien (note: a site near Paris where about a thousand Resistants and hostages were executed during the German occupation of France). The visit will be used as a background for the project.

The students will be asked to work on characters close to their own age, students aged 16 to 18 in 1951. These characters will have lived through the war years as children. The students will then have to transcribe the visit using their character's point of view, and present it has historical fiction.

They will have to adopt both the inner and outer point of view, working both on fiction and documentary research, to learn about the historical fact, but also reflect on the population's life experience. The purpose of the exercise is to consider History and memory duty in a vivid manner, analytically and empathically.

Planning, costumes, authorization

Authorizations, planning and costume were then addressed in the original document. Parents were asked to give permission for the game (as there was a visit outside the school, it is mandatory to have an authorization) and for me to use pictures that would be taken for the communication around the game.

Some costumes could be provided if needed. In the end, most students brought their own clothing, only 5 students were provided a full costume.
- Male costume: retro appearance, basic shirt and vest, standard pants (no jeans), leather shoes
- Female costume: dress or shirt and skirt, leather shoes.

Presentation and instruction for the students

"Graveyard of the sacrifice" is an Edu-Larp about the duty of remembrance, the teaching of History and survivor's guilt after WWII. It is created for 16 players as a template for reflecting about WWII and English practice.

What is Edularp?

Edularp stands for educational Live action Role playing. Larp is an activity where all participants create a common fictional situation through the interpretation of characters. It as bit like an improvisational theatre, only with no audience except the participants themselves.

For this exercise, it is useful to get us to discuss more easily in English, and work about topics regarding the war trying to adopt a different point of view.

The setting

The year is 1951. The war has been over for 6 years, and European rebuilding is under way. On the 9th May 1950, the Schuman declaration proposes the establishment of a supranational community in Europe. It is followed by the treaty of Paris on the 18th of April 1951 that founds the European Coal and Steel Community.

Your characters are high school students aged 16 to 18 at most. They only have childhood memories of the war, but though they were too young to be involved in the military or actual fighting, they have actual memories of the war, the Nuremberg trials, and the harsh years following the war. They have known deprivation and food shortages, having to clean up the street, and walk to school among the rumble.

Though their scolarity has been disturbed by the war, they have caught up with their studies, and are now considered to be all good, or even exceptional students. They have been selected for a European writing competition financed by the council of Europe. Coming from the founding countries of the united Europe (France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxemburg, the Netherlands), they must

visit a war memorial together (in our example, at Suresnes) and then write about their experience. The best writings are to be selected and published in an upcoming memoir of war stories recollections, which could be a great opportunity for most. Aspiring writers, journalists or politicians among the students are aware of the remembrance duty at that time, but also of the good opportunities that might arise for them, should their own text be published.

The students have arrived in groups of 4 from each country the day before (the Benelux group starting as a single group from Brussels). Some have undergone the selection process together, but most don't know each other yet.

How will it work?

The students will get a week and two hours preparation time in class to learn about their character and define them. Specific workshops will be used to help them flesh out their character's story and get into characters. You will get a specific document regarding costuming. Some clothing will be provided by the organization, if needed.

The visit will be done out of character, but you will afterwards imagine it as your character might have experienced it.

Language will be English and English only. Even students playing French-speaking characters should refrain from speaking French, if only for politeness reasons.

After the game, there will be a proper debriefing time. Then students will be required to write a paper on the visit from their character's point of view (as if it was to be submitted for the context, as stated by the setting description). These papers will be graded for the year's final term.

Over the course of the game, pictures might be taken to document the game process. They will be used only for private use and academic documentation, and only with the families' authorization

Registration to the writing context and writing instruction

You have registered for the Council of Europe writing contest of 1951 about war memorials and the duty of remembrance. You will have to submit, by the end of the month, a 500–1000 words summary of your visit and experience. You might add testimonies that you have gathered along the way. Keep your descriptions as personal as possible. Try to answer the following questions in your opinion:

- Why is the duty of remembrance so important for us?
- What role should war memorials play in this regard?
- How do you feel the European construction can be an answer to the need for peace in Europe?

Prepping for character

1. Answer the 5 questions on your character sheet
2. Find 1–5 more things that you could do during the course of the game (different from the first 5 suggestions on your character sheet)
3. Class exercise: discuss with other characters of the same country and research the situation of the country or area your character was in during the war. How did the character live their experience of the war? (France, Germany, Italy, Benelux)
4. Class exercise: discuss characters by type (Resistant, Collaborator, War victim). Which aspect do you think should be discussed during the game?
5. Calibration exercise: enact the first day of the writing contest and each character's meeting with the others (from the same country).

E. Vandereyden

Nationality: Dutch
Type: Victim
Age: Young (16–18 yrs)
Profession: Student
Group: Benelux
Keywords: fragile, shocked, antimilitarist, angry

Description

You were born to a very ancient Dutch family, your family is descended from a long line of international traders. But war divided your parents. When Germany invaded, your father was close to the government that wanted to collaborate with Germany. He was among the few that believed that the Netherlands would be considered as an Aryan nation too. Your father was very arrogant on that subject, and quite racist, he believed that he, along with a minority of the Dutch population, had their place as a "superior race". He worked a lot with Germany, trading goods, and made a lot of money.

However, most of the population didn't believe that, because the Netherlands were created as a humanist and free country when Europe was mostly absolute monarchies. Your mother especially wanted to oppose the hold of Germany on the country. They had a lot of fights together. They were hard years for you, always hearing your father yelling at each other, and suffering from hunger in the final years of the war.

And then your mother was caught actively resisting the German occupation and executed among other people considered as traitors. You were horribly shocked at this. You fought with your father, blaming him for your mother's death. You were so furious when you heard the news that you left home, going in the streets past curfew time. Of course, you were arrested by a police patrol and got a severe beating. Fortunately, the police knew that your father was working with the government and let him take you back home. You realize that you were lucky, that you could have died. The idea is enough to make you tremble.

After that incident, you were mostly locked at home until the end of the war. Your father wouldn't let you out. You're barely talking to him anymore, the situation has been very tense since your mother's death. After the war you resumed your studies, but you are not very interested. You have difficulties finding hope and a reason to live. The only solace you've found is being part of an artist group that defends pacifism and antimilitarism. You were even part of an international meeting of young artists in Switzerland last year. In that aspect, the project of European construction is particularly interesting to you.

From your artist group you heard about the writing contest, and decided to join, if only to escape your home and the heavy silence that exists between you and your father, which is almost unbearable these days. You want to write to talk about your mother, and losing loved ones to the war, finding a way to live after all that.

Light / Dark

Light Side: you are generally positive and try to see the good in everyone. In your opinion, everyone can make mistakes and be vulnerable someday, and deserves a second chance. You can be a positive influence on others

Dark Side: you are still shocked after being arrested and beaten by the police, and can suffer from episodes of depression. You are still angry over your mother's death, you hold your father responsible, haven't forgiven him for that. Because of that, collaborators with Germany are particularly hateful to you, even worse than the German themselves

Questions

1. Do you feel you can ever forgive your father for supporting Germany, and letting your mother be executed?
2. What do you see yourself becoming in a couple of years? Do you want to study, have a career, have a family?
3. Do you have any friends in the group? Who do you feel the closest to?
4. What are your beliefs? Are you religious? Do you belong to a political organization?

5. What do you want for the European construction? How do you think a hope for peace can be achieved?

What to do?
1. Tell about life in the Netherlands during the war, the occupation, lack of food, violence against the population. Express anger that some people (like your father) believed in the Nazi ideal of the superior race, even if they were a minority.
2. Interview other participants to find ideas for your articles. Focus on other people who like you were victims of violence, or lost close relatives.
3. Tell someone about your mother's death, and express genuine sadness at her loss.
4. Find another participant that seems sad or broken by war, and try to find arguments to make them hope in the future
5. Decide whether you'll try to forgive your father once your home of if you'll leave your family to move to another place (going to the United States, maybe?)

Relationships
- V. Mozzato: an Italian participant and another young artist
- R. Willensee: a participant from Luxembourg that comes from a wealthy family in the banking system
- F. and T. Labbet: siblings from Belgium, with very different personalities, and who seems to have grown apart during the war

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R. Willensee

Nationality: Luxembourgian
Type: Collaborator
Age: Young (16–18 yrs)
Profession: Student
Group: Benelux
Keywords: cynical, detached, unsympathetic, survivor

Description
You were born to a wealthy family that own one of the great banks in Luxembourg. Your father as well as your brother work in finance. When Luxembourg was invaded by the German and a military government was established, business didn't change much. The Bank, as you well know, doesn't care about affiliation or ideologies. Luxembourg was such a small country, it had to carefully maintain a semblance of neutrality. So your family worked both with the Allies and the Germans, usually through assets in Switzerland, a country that generally remained neutral.

Life in Luxembourg was usually not that hard. Everything that was of Franch origin, names, places, had to be removed to please the German invaders. Since your family is of Flemish origin, your name was pleasing to them, and you were generally well-treated. You suffered from shortages of food and the occasional roughness of the soldiers, but you know you had it better than most people. Like the rest of your family, you learned a lot about politeness and hypocrisy. People needed the Banks working, so as long as your family was making money, you were generally left in peace.

You knew about persecution and deportation, of course. The Jewish population of Luxembourg wasn't spared. Some people pretend they couldn't possibly know about it, you find that they were either naïve or stupid, how is it possible, not to have seen it? You knew, but you didn't care, it was none of your concern, you were glad that your family was generally spared.

You are quite ambitious and are not sure you want to make all your career in the bank. So the writing contest was an opportunity to you to show your writing skills, it might be useful if you decide to try your hand at journalism or politics. Again, you're not sure about what you want to do with your life, but you're sure you'll succeed if you want to.

Light / Dark
Light Side: you are ambitious, self-confident and determined. You are not afraid to express your

opinion, even if they might shock or hurt people a bit. You like to think unconventionally and question people's beliefs, even if you might have to play the Devil's advocate for that

Dark Side: you can be cynical and unsympathetic. To you, people who dwell on their past suffering miss on the opportunity to build their future. You can therefore be quite harsh while dealing with other people. Perhaps you just have never confronted these issues directly.

Questions
1. What was the hardest thing that you lived or experienced during the war? Compare with other people's hardest experiences
2. How do you feel about the critic against the banks who helped hide Nazi money and assets after the war? Do you agree with them, or find them unfair?
3. Have you made any friends within the rest of the group? Who do you feel the closest to?
4. What is your opinion about the European construction? Do you think it is a good opportunity for peace? For business?
5. What do you feel about the war crimes and violence of the war? Are you shocked? Horrified? Indifferent?

What to do?
1. Tell people about the history of Luxembourg during the war and the military occupation
2. Interview the other participants to find ideas for your article. Focus on the civilian populations that had to collaborate with Germany
3. Defend the idea that Banks (or business in general) should not mind the ideology of people they work with, and that the banking industry has to keep working even during war time
4. Listen to people tell about their war stories, and express some sympathy towards their suffering (even if it is just to be polite)
5. Decide whether you'll be shocked by the horrors of the war, or will just remain indifferent

Relationships
• P. Ebert: a German participant whose family was high ranking in the Nazi party. They have hidden money in your bank in Luxembourg
• E. Vandereyden: a participant from the Netherlands, that seems to have bad memories from the war
• F. and T. Labbet: siblings from Belgium, with very different personalities, and who seems to have grown apart during the war

F. Labbet

Nationality: Belgian
Type: Resistant
Age: Young (16–18 yrs)
Profession: Student
Group: Benelux
Keywords: survivor, smart, brave, modest, altruistic

Description
You and your twin sibling T. (you're false twins) were born to a single mother. You never knew who your father was, they had an affair but he left her upon discovering she was pregnant. It was quite common before the war. Your mother worked hard to make sure you and your twin wouldn't lack any-

thing, but it was hard, and it became harder after the war.

When the war started, Belgium was occupied by the German military. The whole country was exploited. Your mother worked in a weapons factory, it was hard to make ends meet. Both your twin and you started roaming the street to find menial jobs in exchange for food.

You started working with people on the black market. You would be a lookout for German patrols, carry messages or crates, all sorts of things. After a while people starting noticing you, and asked if you would carry messages for the Resistance. It was dangerous, but working the Black Market

could also get you arrested, and the compensations given by the Resistance were good. You didn't feel that strongly towards them, you just wanted to eat, but after a while it felt good to resist the German invasion.

So you started carrying messages around and spying the German troops. As a kid, you could go where adults would be shot on sight. You started to feel proud about what you were doing, even though you try not to brag about it. Thanks to your contacts with the Resistance, you managed to warn a few families in your neighborhood about German patrols, probably saved a few families too. They were small actions, but it was better than staying passive and doing nothing.

After the war your name was quoted among the youngest resistants ever. You might get a citation for that. You also was offered an opportunity to be part of the writing contest, because they think your experience would be valuable. You feel thay might exaggerate a bit, but you're still glad to be part of the project. Your twin decided to register with you. You're also glad you're in this together, you grew apart a bit during the war, it is time you got close again.

Light / Dark
Light Side: you are more experienced and mature than most people your own age, but you don't brag about it. You always try to do what feels right to you, you are very moral in most instances. You also try to help others if you find an opportunity to do so

Dark Side: you are very discreet and exceedingly modest, to the point of not admitting to your own accomplishment. You feel that you should not be afraid to express more pride in your abilities, but you are always afraid of other people's opinion, that they might find you arrogant. You need to find a better balance in your life.

Questions
1. When were you the most afraid as you were helping the Resistance? Were you ever in any risk of being arrested and found out?
2. You and your twin have grown apart during the war, do you feel sad about it? Do you want to find a way to mend your relationship?
3. What did you feel when the Nazi war crimes were revealed to the world? How did you react to the horror of it?
4. What do you feel about the European construction? Do you see it as an actual hope for peace in Europe?
5. What do you wish for your future? Do you have any ambitions? Would you like to become a journalist?

What to do?
1. Tell other people about the life in Belgium under the military occupation by Germany and the hardship inflicted upon the population
2. Tell about your stories with the Resistance. Try to be modest about it.
3. Find someone that suffers from bad memories of the war and try to help them by giving them reasons to hope in the future.
4. Interview other participants to find ideas for your article. Focus on people whose family were also involved with the resistance.
5. Talk more to your twin to see if you can get close again, like when you were little

Relationships
* T. Labbet: your sibling, with a very different personality. You seem to have grown apart during the war
* E. Vandereyden: a participant from the Netherlands, that seems to have bad memories from the war
* R. Willensee: a participant from Luxembourg that comes from a wealthy family in the banking system

T. Labbet

Nationality: Belgian
Type: Resistant

Age: Young (16–18 yrs)
Profession: Student

Group: Benelux
Keywords: survivor, energetic, determined, selfish

Description

You and your twin sibling F. (you're false twins) were born to a single mother. You never knew who your father was, they had an affair but he left her upon discovering she was pregnant. It was quite common before the war. Your mother worked hard to make sure you and your twin wouldn't lack anything, but it was hard, and it became harder after the war.

When the war started, Belgium was occupied by the German military. The whole country was exploited. Your mother worked in a weapons factory, it was hard to make ends meet. Both your twin and you started roaming the street to find menial jobs in exchange for food.
You did what seemed quite logical at the time: you went to the authorities to see what job opportunities they could offer. The German occupation was bad, but they needed support with the population. You found some sympathetic people among the military government. You accepted to carry messages around in exchange for food, and to help find information. The Germans wanted to know where Jewish families and Resistant could be hiding, and you got a few families to talk and provide valuable information that were very well paid.

Of course, you sometimes felt guilty over collaborating this way, but it was the only way to get food without running the risk of being arrested. You were sometimes scared for your twin, you knew they'd go to the Black Market, which was a dangerous place. You were both busy trying to survive and did not talk much about what you went through during the war, even though it must have been hard on the both of you.

Now the war has ended and it is difficult to resume life as it was before. F. seems to adjust better than you. It is through F. that you heard about the writing contest, and you decided to go along with them, maybe it is a chance for the both of you to get close again.

Light / Dark

Light Side: you are determined and strong-willed, when you really want something you will do everything in your power to get it. You can put up with critics or mean people and ignore them, what is important to you is your own opinion and will to survive

Dark Side: you are quite selfish and worry first about yourself. You only appreciate the company of people who think like you and appreciate you. You tend to dismiss critics because you would feel hurt by accepting them. This can lead you to be harsh and aggressive towards other people

Questions

1. Are you ashamed that you helped the German troops during the military occupation? Do you feel guilty over it?
2. You and your twin have grown apart during the war, do you feel sad about it? Do you want to find a way to mend your relationship?
3. What did you feel when the Nazi war crimes were revealed to the world? How did you react to the horror of it?
4. Have you made friends with the rest of the group? Who do you feel the closest to?
5. What do you feel about the European construction? Do you see it as an actual hope for peace in Europe?

What to do?

1. Tell other people about the life in Belgium under the military occupation by Germany and the hardship inflicted upon the population
2. Admit to helping with the German occupation and try to justify yourself by saying that your main preoccupation was to survive
3. Find other people whose families had to work with the Nazis to see if they share your point of view
4. Feel remorse about helping during the military occupation, and find someone to talk about feeling sometimes guilty
5. Talk more to your twin to see if you can get close again, like when you were little

Relationships

- F. Labbet: your sibling, with a very different personality. You seem to have grown apart during the war
- E. Vandereyden: a participant from the Netherlands, that seems to have bad memories from the war
- R. Willensee: a participant from Luxembourg that comes from a wealthy family in the banking system

O. Georges

Nationality: French
Type: Collaborator
Age: Young (16–18 yrs)
Profession: Student
Group: French
Keywords: strong will, unsympathetic, arrogant, ambitious

Description

You were born to a wealthy and influential family. Most men in your family are involved in politics, on the conservative right. Your mother died of illness before the war, when you were very young, you don't remember much of her. Your father was always busy with work, so you were left mostly alone with a governess. It was really lonely. You wish you had siblings, but you are an only child.

When France was invaded by the Germans and the country collapsed, you moved to the city of Vichy with your father, because he was part of the new government. You lost contact with all your friends, except your cousin, M. (Gillet), who still lived in Paris, and wrote to you about how hard life was up there. In Vichy, life was pretty quiet up until the final invasion by Germany in 1943. From here the last two years were hard, but you were protected by your father's high ranking position.

Your father trained you in politics from an early age, and you have always well understood why France had been undergoing a crisis and lost in the summer of 1940. Low demographics, lazy behavior in your countrymen had led to defeat. The country had been driven to ruins by communists, anarchists, the Jews and the Freemasons. It was obvious that France needed a strong government to get out of the crisis, and could have found it by collaborating with the Germans.

When Germany lost the war and the new government was established, your father quickly found a new place in the new administration. You went back to live in Paris and now stay at your aunt's place, your father's sister, who is now a widow, and your cousin M. A lot of former people from the Vichy regime became part of the government of the new Republic, their skills are too precious to go to waste. Life is hard, however, there is still a lack of food and a lot of deprivation. Although you have resumed your studies, you and your cousin spend a lot of time out looking for food, using food stamps provided by the administration. You are also fed up with people who are ranting against Vichy and cooperation. Don't they realize people were just trying to get France out of the crisis? The socialist government brought them the defeat, it wasn't great either. You've also witnessed violence from the population and from the invading soldiers, the Allies were hardly better than some of the German troops in that regard. History is just the way people see it, in your opinion.

You heard about the writing contest and decided to join. You thought that maybe you could shed some light from what happened on the Vichy side of thing, how collaboration was at the time a necessary evil, and at least make people understand how the situation was more complicated than they could envision it. Your father encouraged you to join, he thinks your being part of it could be great as a starting point to your eventual future political career. You convinced your cousin to join too, M. was a bit reluctant at first, but finally joined too, it's nice for you to have them along.

Light / Dark

Light Side: you are well-educated, polite, self-confident, and really ambitious. You can easily imagine having a political career ahead of you. You are patient, and with your good communication skills, you can take the time necessary to get people on your side, they'll eventually get swayed by your persuasion.

Dark Side: you are so confident that you are easily convinced that you are always right, and can be dismissive of other people's opinions. You are proud of your good upbringing, and a bit arrogant. You can easily lack empathy to other people's sufferings.

Questions

1. Why are you convinced that collaboration with Germany was a necessity, or even a good thing? Define how your education and life during the war gave you these ideas?
2. What are your relationships with your cousin M.? Are you really close? Or are you forced to spend a lot of time together because of your circumstances?
3. Have you made friends with other people in the group? Who do you feel the closer to?
4. What are your beliefs? Are you religious?
5. Do you follow the same branch of politics as your father, or would you consider joining the Gaullists?
6. Do you think that the European construction is a good thing and a real hope for peace in Europe, or a utopic project, doomed from the start?

What to do?

1. Interview other participants to find ideas for your article.
2. Tell about life in France after the war, the hardship and food shortages, the occasional violence from American soldiers. People should know that your people by no means have it easy.
3. If someone tells too much about their suffering, get bored, tell them off and to man up a little. You can't stand people that always complain about themselves.
4. Defend the idea that the Vichy regime did a few good things, and was the only hope to save France at the time.
5. Question your own convictions: did you really believe in collaboration with Germany, or is it mostly your father's opinion rubbing on you?

Relationships (varies)

- P. Ebert: a participant from Germany, from a family that was involved with the Nazi regime, who you met at a meeting of the fascist youth.
- L. Paoli: a participant from Italy, from an influential fascist family, who you also met at the same meeting of the fascist youth
- M. Gillet: your cousin, who joined with you, who is more introverted than you are
- J. Combes: another French participant and an extreme communist. His brother was in the army and fought against Germany
- S. Morin: another French participant, who has a more aggressive personality in your opinion

J. Combes

Nationality: French
Type: Resistant
Age: Young (16–18 yrs)
Profession: Student
Group: France
Keywords: passionate, Resistant, tough, unforgiving

Description

You are probably one of the few among your age group that has seen actual fighting. Well, you weren't directly fighting, but were very near the combat zones.

Your family are hardcore communists, and so are you. You believe in equality for the masses and the power of revolution. You admire what the USSR

tries to build and how brave the Russian people were in the face of invasion. People in France praise mostly the American, but you feel it unfair that people should forget that Russia actually suffered the most casualties in the war.

You are the youngest of three. Your elder brother fought in Spain, went to London in June 1940 to join the General de Gaulle (which made your parents furious because they didn't find him fit to lead the Resistance). This enabled him to join the Allied troops, which liberated Paris in August 1944, and he even was part of the troops that entered Germany, going as far as Berlin. He's still stationed there. He's a true hero of the Resistance, you admire him immensely.

Your parents and middle brother joined the Resistance very early on. You lived the war years in hiding. Your family took part in sabotage missions, then in actual fighting during the liberation. You and the younger kids were kept behind the lines, of course, but you helped, carrying messages, tending to the wounded, bringing food and water to the soldiers. You saw a lot of people die. It was hard at first, and you still have occasional nightmares over it. At the same time, you wish you'd been old enough to join the fight.

In the end of the war, when the fighting got really ugly, some of the Resistant fighters were captured and executed as hostages, your father among them. You were very much broken over it, you loved your father very much. Even though peace has been signed, you still hate the Germans for it. You know the horrible war crimes they committed. Likewise, you have the French collaborators, the French "Milice" killed a lot of family friends in the Resistance. Your family was ever brave with strong convictions, and they fought and paid the price for it. People who lack that courage, in your opinion, are just weak-minded cowards.

Life in France is still hard after the war. Food is scarce. There is still the occasional violence in the streets. However, most of the people who worked with the Vichy regime are now working for the new Republic. It is as if people were trying to forget about collaboration, no one really talks about it.

So when you heard about the writing contest, you decided to join. You want to denounce the collab-

oration in France and the war crimes, so that they should not be forgotten.

Light / Dark
Light Side: you are energetic, passionate, and eager to express your opinion. You sincerely defend the idea of equality between people, men and women, different classes. You are against racism, which is still rare for your time, and against colonization. You have a lot of energy and can be convincing while talking to people.

Dark Side: you were involved with the Resistance, so you are very hard against people who didn't take a clear position during the war. Passive collaborators, supporters of fascism, they are all the same to you: cowards who did nothing while people like your father got killed to defend their beliefs and freedom. You can be aggressive on these issues.

Questions
1. Did you like your life hiding in the mountain with the Resistance, being in the open and near the fights? Or did you suffer a lot from the hardship, fear of being arrested, of violence and death?
2. Do you sincerely believe in the communist ideals, or do you follow them because all your family, and especially your father, have always followed them?
3. Do you believe that the European construction can be an actual hope for peace, or that it will probably fail?
4. Have you made any friends with the rest of the group? Who would you feel the closer to?
5. Where do you see yourself in a couple of years? Do you want to study? Have a career? A family?

What to do?
1. Interview other participants to find ideas for your article.
2. Sing a revolutionary song (see "l'Internationale") or read a communist text (from "*The Communist Manifesto*" for example)
3. Denounce violently the fascists and collaborators, and tell somebody off if they try to defend a different point of view

4. Express sadness and anger over the way your father was executed with other resistants
5. Try to convince other participants to join the Communists Youths. You can have a lot of fun there.

Relationships
- A. Friedmann : a German participant, whose family tried to resist the Nazi regime. You've seen him at a communist meeting after the war

- R. Forti : an Italian participant, whose family was also in the resistance. You met him at the same communist meeting
- O. Georges: another French participant. His family is known to have collaborated with the Germans
- S. Morin: another French participant.
- M. Gillet: another French participant, cousin to O. Georges

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S. Morin

Nationality: French
Type: Resistant
Age: Young (18 yrs)
Profession: Student
Group: France
Keywords: Resistant, brave, selfless, energetic

Description

Resisting the German occupation was hard, but you found a way to do it. Few children were involved with the Resistance, but you were one of the few.

You were born to a Jewish family in the South of France. So you were part of the free zone, but your heard tales of deportation and it was scary. Your family was not very religious, but you knew you could get arrested at any time. You suffered from lack of food and having to hide for fear of being arrested. You had very difficult childhood years. Since you had to hide a lot, you couldn't make many friends.

It was a bit better when your cousin G. (Ferro) and his father came to live with you. They had escaped fascism in Italy (G.'s mother was Italian, she died in Italy), to settle in France. G. also has a sister who stayed in Italy, to fight with the rebels. However, after the final invasion of the free zone by Germany, your father and uncle were both arrested and deported. They never came back, probably died along the way. Now there is only you, your mother and your cousin alive.

You mother started being even more overprotective with you, on top of your being and only child. But after losing your father you wanted to do something useful. You managed to find, thanks to your family housekeeper, people involved with the Resistance. You offered to help. You were used to pass messages, hidden in your bike, or to go near German troops to spy on their equipment. As a kid, you could go unsuspected where adults would have been shot on sight. You were only 12 at that time, you knew that you were a little reckless, but each time you thought of your father and it got you going.

Being near the Resistance got you more and more interested in communism, a lot of the freedom fighters were communists who opposed the racist fascist ideology, but you don't know if you would like to get into politics just yet.

Now the war has ended. Life is still hard, you spend a lot of time with your cousin hunting for food. You have seen a lot of violence during the liberation of the country, especially women with their head being shorn off, it shocked your cousin a lot. You are more indifferent. Risking your life gave you a different perspective. Actually, you find life a bit boring now. When you were a Resistant, each day was thrilling. Now it's just classes every day and having to help rebuilding the country.

When your cousin heard about the writing contest and wanted to join, you decided to do the same. You haven't told anyone about being a child resis-

tant. You kept it a secret, but now you want to tell about your experience, maybe relive a little of it in writing.

Light / Dark
Light Side: you are very mature for your age, having developed survival skills at an early age. You are attentive, quick-thinking, determined. You can find words to help, advice and comfort people quite easily, you also are a good listener

Dark Side: since the end of the war, you find yourself bored. If you don't find something to do, you get restless and irritated. You find people of your own age a bit childish, and would easily brag about your daring actions helping the Resistance

Questions
1. Did you take the time to properly mourn your parents, or are you still in denial over the suffering their deaths caused you?
2. How do you feel about your cousin G.? Have you become really closed, or do you keep apart and prefer not to get too close?
3. Your parents were not very religious people, do you feel the same? Do you want to be religious? Would you rather invest in politics? Or do you prefer having no ideology at all?
4. What do you feel towards people who followed fascism? Do you hate them? Despise them? Do you think the Nuremberg trial were enough to give justice to the populations who suffered?

5. Do you think that the European construction is a good hope for peace?

What to do?
1. Tell people about the hardships endured by the French population, during and after the war.
2. Tell about your helping the Resistance. Boast a little about it, after all, very few people actually helped the Resistance at such a young age.
3. When people dying are mentioned, get sad over your father and uncle's deportation and death. Express anger against fascism and racism, the ideologies that got so many people killed.
4. Interview other participants to find ideas for your article. Focus on those whose families were also resisting fascism.
5. Find another participants that has issues with the war, is feeling sad or downhearted, and find good words to comfort and cheer them up

Relationships
- G. Ferro: your cousin. Escaped Italy and went to live with you during the war
- O. Georges: another French participant. His family is known to have collaborated with the Germans
- J. Combes : another French participant and an extreme communist. His brother was in the army and fought against Germany
- M. Gillet : another French participant, cousin of O. Georges, and quite introverted
- F. Labbet: a participant from Belgium that was also distinguished as a very young resistant

M. Gillet

Nationality: French
Type: victim
Age: Young (16–18 yrs)
Profession: Student
Group: French
Keywords: shy, fragile, shocked, feeling guilty

Description
You were born and lived in Paris your entire life, so you saw a lot of the German invasion and occupation. Your family was generally safe: you were

not Jewish, and on your mother's side, you have a few important politicians that were huge with the government of Vichy. So generally speaking, you suffered less from food shortages and deprivation. Life went on. Of course, you saw people being arrested, but that was part of the war and the occupation.

Your mother and father believed that the German occupation was a lesser evil, if not for the Vichy government, you would have the communists tak-

ing over, and that would be the ruin of the country. So you had to learn to put up with the occupation, and it could have been worse.

When Paris was besieged, your father was drafted with a lot of the able bodied men to fight in the defense of the city. He got killed there, probably by a stray bullet. He didn't even want to fight, he was probably at the wrong place at the wrong time. This is true for most people during the war. Your brother was sent in Germany for mandatory work (the STO), he was lucky to be host with a decent family. He just came back, and it is hard for him, people who were in Germany are usually despised by the rest of the population. He works now with a bank based in Luxemburg.

After the war your uncle, your mother's brother, and your cousin O. (Georges) came to live with you in Paris. Your uncle had been an important man in the Vichy government and was employed by the new Republic, skills like his are too important to go to waste. In spite of the fact that your family have money and connections, times are hard, and you and your cousin have to spend quite some time searching for food.

You have read a lot about the war since it ended. Only then have you learned about war crimes, the collaboration, deportation of Jewish people. You were very shocked by what you heard, the vision of the German death camps. You never knew. You guess most of the population never knew. You feel guilty that you, like most people, didn't even think about it. And yet you saw people being arrested every day, you should have known.

You feel uneasy about the fact that, in France, no one seems to talk about collaboration and the problems that the country had. Of course, life must go on and we must rebuild the country, but you feel like the duty of memory is unfulfilled somehow. Your cousin feels quite differently of course, claiming that collaboration was inevitable, a necessary evil to save the country at the time.

Then your cousin decided to join the writing contest, and enticed you to do the same. You were reluctant at first but finally gave in. Perhaps, if you get to write, you can put some words on the guilty feeling that you have and that you still can quite explain.

Light / Dark
Light Side: you are serious, hard-working, organized. You are helpful whenever you can be, quite altruistic, attentive to the others. Although you have been really depressed since the end of the war, you are usually positive, trying to see the best in everything and the good in people. You want to hope in the future

Dark Side: you don't have a lot of confidence in yourself. You tend to hide behind others if you can, and can miss on opportunities because of that. Since the end of the war you have been depressed and gloomy, to you the war is proof of how fallible human beings are

Questions
1. Why didn't you resent the German occupation or rebel against it? Was it out of fear, cowardice, ignorance of what was really at stake?
2. What are your relationships with your cousin O.? Are you really close?
3. Have you made any friends within the group? Who would you feel the closest to?
4. What are your beliefs? Are you religious? What would be your political affiliation, if you have one?
5. Do you believe the European construction can be a real hope for peace? What would you wish for the future?

What to do?
1. Tell about the daily life in Paris under the occupation.
2. Interview other participants to find ideas for your article. Focus on people who just went through the war as civilians, and couldn't do much except endure their daily lives
3. Express guilt over the fact that you, like most people, never guessed about the horrors of the war crimes
4. Express sadness over your father's death. If necessary, isolate yourself for a while from the rest of the group.
5. Find someone else who feels sad or broken over their experience of the war and try to comfort them and cheer them up.

Relationships

- O. Georges : your cousin. His immediate family was involved with the collaboration.
- J. Combes : another French participant and an extreme communist. His brother was in the army and fought against Germany

- S. Morin : another participant from France, who can sound very aggressive in their speech
- N. Keller : a German participant. Your brother know their family, with whom he stayed while he was doing forced labor in Germany
- R. Willensee: a participant from Luxembourg. His family works in the bank. You know that your brother is employed there.

A. Friedmann

Nationality: German
Type: Resistant
Age: Young (16–18 yrs)
Profession: Student
Group: Germany
Keywords: hot-tempered, tough as nails, radical, determined

Description

Your parents were determined marxists and so are you. As such, your life has been all but easy. When you were a child, your parents told you how they tried to fight against the rise of the Nazis, up until the burning of the Reichstag. Then they were arrested, did some time in jail. They got married anyway, but once the Nazis were in charge they had to endure one vexation after the other. They decided not to leave Germany, to keep fighting no matter what. They were arrested and deported again, and you were left in the care of your grandparents, who did not approve of your parents radical opinions and reckless behavior. All things considered, you admired them, but felt that you could never live up to such determination and accomplishment. And sometimes you felt that your parents were not always there for you, and resented them for that.

You had an unconventional childhood, for example, you never really went to school and were homeschooled because your parents didn't want you to hear the Nazi propaganda. You spent some time in the Hitlerjugend because it was mandatory, but you felt the people here were really stupid and believed a lot of bullshit propaganda. You are quite proud to have always been smarter than the rest of the population.

When the war ended, you fell on some really hard times. You had to suffer ceaseless bombings and the invasion by the Allied soldiers. Then there were the soldiers' violence and denazification. Although your family, as resistants, were amongst the one who rejoiced of the end of nazism, all the population was treated the same, and there was no difference between you and the former Nazis. I felt really unfair at times.

When you learnt about the writing contest, you were one of the first to apply. You felt like you really had a story to tell, you wanted to tell the world that not all Germans were Nazis, and celebrate your parents' legacy. You don't care much for the rest of the German contestants, they are very much what the rest of the population was at the time of the war: ignorant, frightened, and following the regime like a bunch of sheep. However, you are determined to win.

Light / Dark

Light Side: you are determined, energetic, self-confident, and striving to succeed. You are very efficient and, when set to a task, you do all in your power to do it well. You have few friends outside of your communist comrades, but for those, you are a very loyal and supportive companion.

Dark Side: you have strong ideas and convictions, which makes you judgmental to other people who do not share your beliefs. You divide the world between the resistant and the others, and can be very mean towards people you judge as cowards. If so, you can become very spiteful and arrogant.

Questions

1. Are your parents dead in captivity or did they come back from the camps? What are your feelings towards them?
2. Germany has been military occupied and is now divided between West and East Germany. How do you feel about the situation? Do you still have friends or relatives in the East?
3. Do you really believe in communism, or are you just following the ideology out of fidelity to your parents' beliefs?
4. Have you made any friends in the rest of the group? If so, who are you the closest with? If not, why is it so?
5. Where do you see yourself in the future? Do you want to have a career? Do you want to have a family later, have children?

What to do?

1. Defend the ideal of communism to the others of the group
2. Sing a communist song with other comrades in the group (might be the French version of "l'Internationale"

3. Find someone you fancy in the group and make them a sincere compliment
4. Interview another member of the group about their experience of the war to pick ideas for your article
5. Relate harsh memories of the civilian bombings of German cities and get sad over it

Relationships

1. N. Keller: another participant from Germany, who sounds like most people, pretending that they didn't know about the regime's war crimes. They're mostly cowards
2. D. Waechter: another participant from Germany, who claims that the country should indeed pay for Germany's war crimes
3. P. Ebert: another participant from Germany, whose family was very influential within the Nazi party before the war
4. R. Forti : an Italian participant, who you met at a meeting of the young communists a year ago
5. J. Combes : a French participant, , who you also met at the same meeting of the young communists a year ago

N. Keller

Nationality: German
Type: Victim
Age: Young (16–18 yrs)
Profession: Student
Group: Germany
Keywords: self-conscious, guilty, hopeful

Description

Your history is that of many people over Germany. Your parents were simple people, they owned a grocery store in a small town by the Rhine River. You weren't particularly racist or Jew-haters, your parents supported the Christian democrats. But when the Nazis came into power you had to follow the new rules like anyone else. As a very small German middle-class family, you were left generally in peace by the new regime, as long as you followed the rules. So as a kid you were part of the Hitlerjugend and learnt the propaganda of the regime at school. It is true that the closing of all the Jewish

shops, for a while, brought your parents a new flux of customers, and your father was almost saying that maybe the Führer had it right and knew what was best for Germany. You weren't so sure yourself. You had school friends who were persecuted or had to leave. It seemed quite unfair to you, but you didn't know what to say about it.

Then the war came and it was dark times. Your older siblings were conscripted to the army and to support the war effort, but fortunately not your parents, who were already too old for that. The official news on the radio claimed that everything was going well, but people believed it less and less. There were shortages of food. Fortunately, your hometown was too small to be of much interest to the armies, so you suffered little from bombings.

The fall of the regime came as a shock. You didn't know that things had been so bad. You discovered

the German defeats long after the war. You were drafted with your parents to clear the rubble and clear the road. Only then did you see a dead body for the first time. It was shocking, but it still felt unreal.

Your town was relatively spared a lot of soldier violence, again, you were fortunate to be out of the main roads. Then there was denazification and the reveal of the extermination camps and mass murder and Jews and others. To your family it came as a shock. You never knew, of course you never knew. Or did you? Of course, in hindsight, there were arrests, people disappearing, and rumors. They had started with the handicapped, then taken the rest. People knew there were camps, but extermination to that extent, no, no one could have guessed. But you were of the people who had done nothing. You felt a dreadful guilt. So have your parents. Your father had turned to alcoholism to cope, and your mother barely speaks these days.

So when you heard about the memorial visit and the writing contest, you applied at once. Anything to get out of the gloomy atmosphere of your house. You were glad to be selected.

Light / Dark
Light Side: in spite of your guilt and the horrors of the war, you are still light-hearted and hopeful and want to believe in a better future. You are generally pleasing around people even if you are not very confident about yourself, you don't have many difficulties to connect with people

Dark Side: you are still very guilty, like most of the German people. How could you fail to realize how bad the Nazi ideology was? You feel like a coward, and this takes you to long periods of depression and melancholy

Questions
1. What did your older siblings become? Did they die during the war, or did they come back? What relationships do you have with them?
2. Germany has been military occupied and is now divided between West and East Germany. How do you feel about the situation? Do you still have friends or relatives in the East?

3. Now that Nazism is gone, do you have something to believe in? Are you religious, political? If not, why?
4. Have you made any friends in the rest of the group? If so, who are you the closest with? If not, why is it so?
5. Where do you see yourself in the future? Do you want to have a career? Do you want to have a family later, have children?

What to do?
1. Make an interview of another participant to get ideas for your article
2. Complain about the difficulties of the war, the loss and rationing
3. Defend the fact that most of the German population couldn't have known about the Nazis' war crimes
4. Feel guilty again and isolate yourself from the rest of the group for a while
5. Find a friend among the group you could confess your guilt to

Relationships
- A. Friedmann: another participant from Germany, who doesn't hide his communist affiliation
- D. Waechter: another participant from Germany, who claims that the country should indeed pay for Germany's war crimes
- P. Ebert: another participant from Germany, whose family was very influential within the Nazi party before the war
- M. Gillet : a participant from France. You knew their brother as a war prisoner in Germany, he lived with your family and was forced to work in the factory.You got along well, because your family wouldn't hurt anyone, even then.

D. Waechter

Nationality: German
Type: Victim
Age: Young (16–18 yrs)
Profession: Student
Group: Germany
Keywords: guilty**,** traumatized, strong-willed, determined

Description

You really had it bad during the war although you don't like to talk much about it. Somehow you feel like you deserve it. Your family were really strong supporters of the Nazi regime. It seemed legitimate at the time. They believed that Germany needed a strong power to get out of the crisis. They didn't care much for the Jews, the communists and other parasites. And in a way, you felt that they were right. You were part of the Hitlerjugend and felt good there, you had friends and something to believe in. Of course, all your siblings and family members old enough to fight were taken in with the army. You even had a cousin in the SS, the pride of the family.

Then Germany started to lose the war, even though the news on the radio didn't admit to it. In February 1945, as you still wanted to believe the war could be won, your home city of Dresden was bombed. Your father was killed, along with more than 20 000 people. While your mother was busy grieving, you left your home and went to your aunt in Berlin. You wanted to be part of the defense of the city. It was there you met with P. (Ebert), a Nazi extremist. You weren't very friendly, but you got close as only comrade-in-arms can be. You were there until the end, until the fall of the regime.

When the city was occupied, it became really horrible. There was violence and chaos everywhere. You were taken in by a group of soldiers once, and badly beaten, just for sports, before a French soldier rescued you. Fortunately you were too young to be taken as a war prisoner, it was just a bad case of bullying but it was still bad. And everyone knew about soldiers stealing and pillaging and raping. The Russians were the worst, the damn communists.

When the Berlin blocade started you were sent to live with another relative in another city in West-Germany, for your safety. Life is better now and more quiet, and you started to heal, but you have difficulties remembering the hard times of the war. And there is denazification and the discovery of the camps, too. You didn't know, most of the population couldn't have known. You feel quite guilty about it, but then, you have seen the violence of the Allied soldiers in Berlin. Not one side of the war really feels better than the others these days.

However, you're determined to survive and make something of yourself. So when the writing contest came in, you decided pretty quickly to register, in the hope that it will be an opportunity for you to undertake better studies and then have a better job. You're even considering leaving West Germany, trying to put the past behind you.

Light / Dark

Light Side: you are strong-willed, energetic, and ambitious. In spite of the hardship that you've had to endure, you can be a lot of fun to hand around with. You like to crack jokes, and usually make friends quite easily

Dark Side: you are really shocked and traumatized by your experience of the war, but hide it under a cheerful and determined façade. However, when alone, you suffer long bouts of depression and feel like nobody really understands you

Questions

1. Do you still keep in touch with your mother and the rest of the family? How do you mourn those who died at war or during the bombings, including your father?
2. Germany has been military occupied and is now divided between West and East Germany. How do you feel about the situation? Do you still have friends or relatives in the East?
3. Were you really convinced by the Nazi ideology, or were you following it just to please your parents?

4. Do you have any friends in the group? How do you feel about them?
5. Where do you see yourself in the future? Do you want to have a career? Do you want to have a family later, have children?

What to do?
1. Try to prevent people from talking too much about the horror of the war, defend the idea that life goes on, that people should try to move forward
2. If asked about your memories of the war, start by refusing to talk about it, and isolate yourself for some time from the rest of the group
3. Find someone you fancy and make them a sincere compliment
4. Find a friend to confide your bad memories and difficulties over your experience of the war

5. Ask the others about their plans for the future and their reasons for hope

Relationships
- A. Friedmann: another participant from Germany, who doesn't hide his communist affiliation
- N. Keller: another participant from Germany, who sounds like most people, pretending that they didn't know about the regime's war crimes. They're mostly cowards
- P. Ebert: another participant from Germany, whose family was very influential within the Nazi party before the war. You were defending Berlin together
- J. Combes : you tracked the French soldier who helped you during the siege of Berlin. Sound like a younger sibling of his is part of the meeting.

P. Ebert

Nationality: German
Type: Collaborator
Age: Young (16–18 yrs)
Profession: Student
Group: Germany
Keywords: self-confident, bitter, resentful, stubborn

Description
You come from a family that was composed of early supporters of the Nazi party. Your father had lost all of his brothers in the Great War, and was very bitter over the defeat of Germany. He registered very early with the Nazi party, and was determined to make Germany great again. Your father rose in the ranks of the Party and even got an assignment in Berlin.

Therefore you were drafted, with all your brothers and sisters, in the ideology too. You were part of the Hitlerjugend and you loved it there. You were also part of very extreme groups, which liked to chase communists and Jews in the city to beat them up. The first time you had to beat someone up and draw blood, you got a bit squeamish, but it soon came to pass.

When the war started you were convinced that Germany would win the war, that it would be revenge for the defeat in World War One, that Germany deserved to rule the world. Then the situation became worse and worse, and you realized that it was hard on your parents. Some of your siblings died during the war. Your father looked more and more ill, but kept his problems to himself, said that he couldn't talk, his work was top secret.

When Germany was invaded and Berlin besieged, you joined as a volunteer to be part of the defense of the City. You wanted to be part of the defense of the city. It was there you met with D. (Waechter). You weren't very friendly, but you got close as only comrade-in-arms can be. You were there until the end, until the fall of the regime.

When the city was occupied, it became really horrible. There was violence and chaos everywhere. And everyone knew about soldiers stealing and pillaging and raping. You had to work to clear the rubble and the dead bodies of people killed in the bombings. You know you were lucky not to be assaulted by the occupying soldiers, that's because you were smart, you knew the routes to avoid the patrols.

You didn't question your beliefs at all, in spite of the defeat of Nazism. You're still convinced you were right. But a couple of months after the end of the war, just as the Nuremberg trials were beginning, you entered the bathroom and found your father hanged to the ceiling. He didn't leave a suicide note. Just "I'm sorry".

It was a shock for the rest of your family. Your mother drowned her sorrow in alcohol, and now your last surviving older sister is taking care of the both of you. Life is still hard and depressing. You suffered food shortages, especially through the Berlin blockade.

When you heard about the writing contest, you applied because you couldn't put up with the gloomy atmosphere at home anymore. It was not difficult to get your application through, you really are that good a student. You want to be able to tell people the truth about what life was really like in Germany. But what was it actually? You're not quite sure anymore

Light / Dark
Light Side: you are smart, energetic, a good student. You've always be ambitious and always had good grades. You tend to work hard and succeed in what you do. You are self-confident and usually have no difficulty convincing people that you're right

Dark Side: you haven't given up the extremist ideas you grew up with. You're bitter and resentful over the defeat. The creation of the European community feels absurd to you. You hide these ideas, but deep down, you're a very angry person. You feel like people are giving up too easily, just like your father did.

Questions
1. How do you feel about losing all of your brothers and sisters to the war, but one? Are you sad about it, or do you feel it was a legitimate sacrifice?
2. Germany has been military occupied and is now divided between West and East Germany. How do you feel about the situation? Do you still have friends or relatives in the East?
3. Were you really convinced by the Nazi ideology, or were you following it just to please your parents? Have your opinions changed since your father's death?
4. Do you have any friends in the group? How do you feel about them?
5. Where do you see yourself in the future? Do you want to have a career? Do you want to have a family later, have children?

What to do?
1. Try to minimize the violence of the Nazis, especially when compared to the violence of the communists
2. Tell about your accomplishments, good grades, success at school and otherwise. Show off a little
3. Find a friend to tell about your father's death. Say if you feel more angry or sad over his disappearance
4. Find other people whose families supported the Nazi ideal, and interview them about their experience to get some material for your article
5. Decide if you want to start a neo-fascist group later, or if you'll change your ideologies drastically

Relationships
- A. Friedmann: another participant from Germany, who doesn't hide his communist affiliation
- N. Keller: another participant from Germany, who sounds like most people, pretending that they didn't know about the regime's war crimes. They're mostly cowards
- D. Waechter: another participant from Germany. You were defending Berlin together
- L. Paoli: the son/daughter of an influential formerly fascist family. You met as children at a gathering between the fascist and nazi parties, while you were enrolled in the fascist youths.
- R. Willensee : the son/daughter of a wealthy family of bankers that used to keep a lot of money for Nazis dignitaries

V. Mozzato

Nationality: Italian
Type: Victim
Age: Young (16–18 yrs)
Profession: Student
Group: Italy
Keywords: free spirit, artist, kind hearted, vulnerable

Description

You come from a very traditionalist catholic Italian family. Some ancestors on your mothers' side of the family were actually aristocrats, though the family has fallen on hard times ever since. Your father owned a building company and was moderately successful in business. You were the youngest of your siblings. You were the rebel of the family. You didn't want to study or make a proper marriage. You wanted to have it your own way, become an artist and live free.

Unfortunately, these ideals of artistic accomplishment and liberty made your parents very angry, and were forbidden under the strict fascist rule. Your fathers' company prospered under fascism, since he got a lot of new contracts during the great works programs decided by the new regime.

Your parents tried to force you to follow the fascist rule. Sometimes you tried to pretend you agreed with them, other times you refused to follow the orders, and got severe beatings for that.

You considered joining the antifascisti resistance, you even prepared a bag in the hope of fleeing from home to live in the mountain, but you were really too young and got scared on the way, fortunately you came back before your absence was noticed. In the end you just had to put up with your parents' abuse day in and day out.

Your real act of rebellion came when you discovered a Jewish family in hiding, the family Ferro. You lead them to a nearby barn to hide and brought them food. It was a little act of resistance in the face of fascism, and you regret there was nothing more you could have done.

When the Allied soldiers came, there were bombings and chaos everywhere. Your father died in the fights, trying to defend the fascist regime. You didn't know what to feel about it. You should have been sad, but you felt relieved. You haven't discussed it with your mother. You are not very proud that your father was fighting for the fascists. You'd rather forget all about it.

During the occupation, American soldiers settled in your home, and you got bullied for days on end before they finally left. Again, you wished you could have fought them but chose to shut up like a coward.

You're now fed up and you want to leave your family home to go study in the big city, but your mother wouldn't let you leave, not unless you could take care of yourself. The writing contest therefore is a huge opportunity for you: if you manage to publish an article, your mother will be forced to take you seriously and let you leave.

Light / Dark

Light Side: you're a positive kind of person and always try to see the good in others. You're generally helpful and understanding. You understand people's flaws and try not to judge them for it. You also are a good listener, people tend to like to confide in you. You're also very creative and always motivated by your work

Dark Side: you suffered a lot of violence in your life, from your fathers and the foreign soldiers, which has left you very fragile and vulnerable. You are therefore unwilling to take risks. You couldn't pass on the opportunity of the writing contest, but being so far from home makes you very nervous

Questions

1. How do you feel about your father's death? Were you very sad, or were you glad to be rid of his abuse?
2. How do you feel about the European construction? Do you see it as a hope for Europe, or as a failed project no matter what?
3. Do you have any beliefs? Are you religious? Do you have a political affiliation?

4. Have you made any friends in the rest of the group? If so, who are you the closest with? If not, why is it so?
5. Are you really committed to being independent from your family and becoming a student, or are you actually afraid of having to take care of yourself on your own?

What to do?
1. Find your favorite poem and read it to someone else in the group
2. Reconnect with G. (Ferro) and learn more about what they have become after escaping the fascist regime
3. Tell someone about your father dying during the war, and the sadness you felt upon first hearing it. Decide if you really felt sorry about it, and what your feelings are now.

4. Tell about how you regret you didn't have the opportunity to actually fight the fascists
5. Interview other participants to find ideas for your article. Ask them about their experience of the war.

Relationships
• R. Forti : another Italian participant, son of a famous family in the anti-fascist Resistance ?
• G. Ferro : another Italian participant, who you met when you helped their family hide in your family barn. L. Paoli : another Italian participant, who you once met at the church.
• E. Vandereyden : another participant from Natherlands, who you met at an exhibition for promising young artists.

R. Forti

Nationality: Italian
Type: Resistant
Age: Young (16–18 yrs)
Profession: Student
Group: Italy
Keywords: reckless, energetic, passionate, provocative, ambitious

Description
You come from a popular background, most of the men in your family were peasants, then factory workers, and most women worked as servants or at home. But they were generally good, hard-working people. It was not a surprise, therefore, that they were all fervent socialists, and most of them defended the Marxist ideal of the revolution.

When the fascists rose to power your family was of the resisting type. They got into fights with the fascisti, even the women, and never gave up. Your first memories as a kid were when you were standing guard to watch out for the patrolmen when your parents were vandalizing the fascists' offices. It was fun back then, but now you realize that it put you in a lot of danger, too young. It had left you with a reckless character and a knack for provocation.

When your war a kid the civil war in Spain started and your father decided to join the communist volunteers to supports the freedom fighters against the dictatorship of Franco. He died there. Your family was left heartbroken, and miserable. You fell on some very hard times, sometimes you lacked food, and it became even worse after the war started.

Your elder brother joined the Italian rebels, so there was only you and your mother at home for a while. You wished you had been able to join the fight, but you were too young to do so. And since you were the last one home, your mother started being very over protective with you, it was so annoying! Your brother came home a hero, and you feel like you won't get an opportunity to prove yourself. You are really tired of life in the country

Finally you didn't see much of the war, because your village was quite isolated. With some other kids, you escaped the village to salute and shout out after the American soldiers on the road, but that was about it. After the war, relationships with your mother became more and more tense. You joined the young communists and managed to leave last summer to attend a communist meet-

ing in Switzerland. Your mother was furious, and locked you up even more. Now you're threatening to immigrate to America.

So when the writing contest came up, you immediately registered after yet another fight with your mother. You're sorry that things fell apart like this. But if you get published, it is your ticket to a brilliant career, you can't miss on this opportunity.

Light / Dark
Light Side: you are energetic and daring, you want to accomplish things in life and take risks. You're also confident enough to get other people to follow your example by sheer force of persuasion. You always want to show people how they can do best.

Dark Side: your taste for challenge can lead to take inconsiderate risks and to be needlessly provocative in order to get a reaction or emotional response from people. Therefore, you can be seen as quite annoying.

Questions
1. Were you sincere in joining the communists, or did you just want a pretext to escape from home?
2. Do you still feel inferior to your father and brother, who did some real fighting while you were stuck at home?
3. Do you really want to leave and go to America, or were you just trying to piss your mother off?
4. Have you made any friends within the group? Who do you feel the closer to?

5. What do you expect of the European construction? Do you sincerely belief it is a hope for peace in Europe?

What to do?
1. Discuss communism with those who share the ideology and the kind of ideal society you would wish for
2. Challenge another student's beliefs, even if you have to play the Devil's advocate, just for the sake of argument
3. Tell a story about the arrival of the American troops, how impressive they were. Try to get people to share your enthusiasm for the "American Dream"
4. Interview other students to get ideas for your own articles. Be especially interested in people who have actually seen some fighting or bombings, to the point of being annoying.
5. Find another student who seems more reserved or isolated, and try to convince them to be more daring. It's for their own good.

Relationships
- V. Mozzato: another Italian participant, who seems interested in art
- G. Ferro: another Italian participant from a famous Resistant family.
- L. Paoli: another participant from a famous fascist family
- A. Friedmann: a German participant, who you met at a meeting of the young communists a year ago
- J. Combes : a French participant, , who you also met at the same meeting of the young communists a year ago

G. Ferro

Nationality: French-Italian
Type: Victim
Age: Young (16–18 yrs)
Profession: Student
Group: Italy
Keywords: survivor, bitter, strong-willed, cynical

Description
You had it rough and lost most of your family during the war. Sometimes you wonder if you still have reasons to live.

Your mother was Italian but your father was French. You lived mostly in Italy even though fascist made it difficult, although your family was

not very religious, you suffered from persecutions, even worse than the communists. Your parents had a small grocery shop but started losing clients because of fascist propaganda, and you fell on real hard times. There were often food privations, and you grew up weaker than the other kids, which was really frustrating.

You soon learnt that you had nothing to expect from life, that there was no hoping in the future. Life under fascism was a series of endless vexation, deprivation and suffering. You felt like you lived in a prison. Your elder sister however was a rebellious spirit, she was soon fed up with it all, and left to join the partisans, who fought against fascism in the mountains. You learnt that she entered the battalion of a guy named Forti, before getting no more news at all.

When your home area was invaded following the American landing in 1943, you had to flee and hide. You were helped by the child of a neighboring family, V. (Mozzato) who let you hide in the barn. Then you managed to get to the border, but you crossed a fascist patrol and your mother was shot. You managed to get at your aunt's family, who was married to a Frenchman, Mr Morin. You there met your cousin S. for the first time, and you got along pretty quickly. But misfortunes kept happening in your family. Your father and uncle were both arrested and deported, and were never heard from again. So now all people remaining from your family are you, your cousin and aunt. After the war you got a letter from your sister, she was alive, but settled in Italy and wasn't planning on coming back anytime soon.

Life in liberated France was still very hard, you could get very little food through food stamps, there were tensions and violence following the liberation. You saw women being brutalized on the streets for collaborating with the enemy, their hair shorn, in a rare display of violence. All the while, high-ranking officials were protected and were not prosecuted. It became clear to you that the persecuted people would never get justice, in spite of the Nuremberg trials.

When you heard about the writing contest, you got interested. You thought you could write about what it felt to be just shaken by the war, having to live on the road and in poverty and fear of persecu-

tion. Your cousin decided to register with you. You don't believe that you have much hope for a future, but you certainly have a story to tell.

Light / Dark
Light Side: after travelling under duress and surviving hardship, privation and loss, you have become a very resilient person. You don't usually get emotional, and not a lot of thing can unsettle you. This strength of character can be very inspirational to others, when people feel down-hearted you usually show them how a lot of people have had it worse than themselves. It's a pretty harsh way of doing things, but it's quite effective

Dark Side: you are bitter with life, still mourning your parents and the childhood you never really had. You don't really believe in better prospects for a better future. To you, the war is the symbol of the failure of humanity in general. To sum it up, you can be really depressing when you get into your dark thoughts.

Questions
1. Did you take the time to properly mourn your parents, or are you still in denial over the suffering their deaths caused you?
2. How do you feel about your cousin S.? Have you become really closed, or do you keep apart and prefer not to get too close?
3. Your parents were not very religious people, do you feel the same? Do you want to be religious? Would you rather invest in politics? Or do you prefer having no ideology at all?
4. What do you feel towards people who followed fascism? Do you hate them? Despise them? Do you think the Nuremberg trial were enough to give justice to the populations who suffered?
5. How do you imagine yourself in the future? Do you wish to have a career? A family?

What to do?
1. Tell compelling and very dramatic stories about the way the fascist soldiers persecuted the population
2. Tell others in the group about the way V. helped you by hiding you and your family in the barn. Make sure to give it the credit it deserves.

3. Interview other participants to find ideas for your article. Focus on those who have suffered from the war
4. Feel sad about your parents and the many dead of the war and isolate yourself from the rest of the group for a while.
5. Say something hard to another participant about their own experience, especially if their family supported the fascists

Relationships

- V. Mozzato : another Italian participant who you met when he helped you and your family hide to escape from Italy
- R. Forti : the younger sibling of a famous anti-fascist resistant your sister fought alongside with
- L. Paoli: another participant from Italy whose family was a strong supporter of fascism
- S. Morin: your French cousin who you've lived with since the war

L. Paoli

Nationality: Italian
Type: Collaborator
Age: Young (16–18 yrs)
Profession: Student
Group: Italy
Keywords: feeling guilty, confused, uncertain, in search for hope

Description

You are the youngest of three siblings born to a wealthy aristocratic family of Rome. Your parents were early supporters of Mussolini, when the fascists started to get huge support from the conservative families and the Roman Catholic Church. You therefore had a very comfortable early childhood before Italy started losing the war. You saw very little of it, really, unless the last two years of the war. Your father and two brothers went to fight, you were too young so you had to stay with your mother. When the American invaded you both left for the family estate in the countryside, so you saw very little fighting and violence. You know you've been fortunate that way, and often feel guilty that you were so protected by your family when so many had to suffer and die.

It doesn't mean that the aftermath of the fighting hasn't been hard on you. One of your brothers died. The other came back, but he has steadily refused to talk about the war, and is drinking a lot to put up with the pain. Your father was arrested and put on trial for war crimes. He was condemned, among others things, for shooting another Italian that wanted to entice rebellion amongst the troops, a corporal Mozzato. Now he's doing time in prison, which is really shameful and hard to admit.

After the war, the Republic was established. Your family has lost all of its power and influence. You've caught up with your studies but you really have no idea what you're going to do with your life. You've never had a lot of ambitions. You feel really useless, without any real purpose in life.

Then you thought about the man your father had killed and wondered if you could help his family. With the help of a family friend you were able to track them down and meet them at church. He had a child about your age. You managed to meet on the porch, and got friendly. They told you about the writing contest, and that V. (Mozzato) wanted to enter. You wouldn't have thought about joining originally. After a while, though, the idea took on. You still hadn't found the strength to tell V. about the truth about his father's death. They should have learnt about it from the trial, why haven't they?

So you haven't told anyone, and decided to join the contest too. Who knows, maybe you'll find a vocation or an idea about what to do with your life. Your situation is really becoming critical and your family is expecting you to make a career choice, the sooner the better.

Light / Dark
Light Side: you are very understanding of other people's flaws and indecisions, since the mirror so many of your own. You are patient, a good listener to other people's problems. You are good at giving sound advice, even if you never figured out anything for yourself.

Dark Side: you are really indecisive, because of how much you never managed to figure out what to do with your life. You often hesitate, always try to second-guess yourself. You really need a friend to help you make the right decisions.

Questions
1. What are you most ashamed of about your family? About yourself? Do you feel you can redeem yourself?
2. How do you feel about the European construction? Do you see it as a hope for the future of Europe, and Italy?
3. Do you have any beliefs? Are you religious? Do you have a political affiliation?
4. Have you made any friends in the rest of the group? If so, who are you the closest with? If not, why is it so?
5. What would you do in the future, if you could do anything you want? Do you want to stay with your family? Do you want to live on your own?

What to do?
1. Interview other participants to find ideas for your article. Ask them particularly about their plans for the future.
2. Confess about your father being in jail. Express the shame that you feel about your family.
3. Ask other participants for advice about what you should do in the future.
4. Tell V. about what really happened with their father.
5. Express hope for the new Italian Republic, that it should be able to become a great democratic country.

Relationships
- V. Mozzato : another Italian participant, whose name you now because your father executed their father for trying to desert the war front.

- R. Forti : another Italian participant that belongs to a famous family that fought against fascism
- G. Ferro : another Italian participant who currently lives in France with their cousin
- P. Ebert : a member of friends of the family, who you met at a meeting between Italians and Germans, in the fascist youth group