THE
OD&D PRIMER

Musings on the Original Rules for
Fantastic Medieval Wargames
Campaigns and Settings

By Jason Cone
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Philotomy's Musing's
By Jason Cone

The Original D&D Setting
By Wayne Rossi

# PHILOTOMY'S MUSINGS

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

What This Book Is About

This booklet is about OD&D, as it is played when I run the game. When I talk about "OD&D," I'm referring to Original Dungeons & Dragons (published in 1974), which included three booklets: Men & Magic, Monsters & Treasure, and The Underworld & Wilderness Adventures. There were multiple rules supplements released for OD&D, including Greyhawk, Blackmoor, Eldritch Wizardry, and Gods, Demi-gods, & Heroes. There is also Swords & Spells, a set of miniature rules based on D&D and Chainmail. Lastly, I consider the Holmes Basic Set as a close relation of the OD&D family. My personal OD&D game consists of rules from the three brown books, plus house-rules (i.e. I'm not using many rules from the supplements). It also owes a great deal to Meepo's Holmes Companion, which got me started down the OD&D path. I hope the thoughts in this book will be helpful to someone that is thinking about running an OD&D game.

What This Is Not About

Many people use the term "OD&D" in a much broader sense than I do, including what I would call "Classic D&D" in the definition. This book is NOT about the 1981 B/X sets (Moldvay/ Cook/Marsh), the BECMI sets (starting with 1983's Basic Set by Frank Mentzer), or the Rules Cyclopedia. It is also not about AD&D (When played using most of the rules from the supplements, OD&D is similar to 1st edition AD&D, but as I mentioned, I don't use much from the supplements) or 3rd edition/d20-based D&D. I have played all of those versions and enjoyed them to one degree or another, but I find the most enjoyment with the OD&D rules.
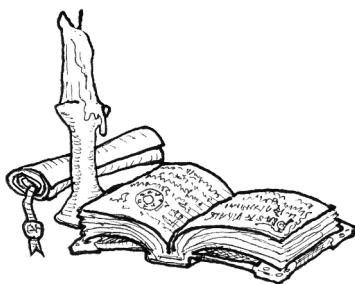
CONSIDERING OD&D?

So you're thinking about trying OD&D? That's great! If you're experienced with other versions, I have some suggestions that might help you get the most of the system:

Approach it fresh

Read the rules, and don't assume that you know how things work. There are differences that may surprise you.

Play it for what it is

Don't try to make it into 3E (or whatever), approach it as its own game. If you find yourself saying "that's broken," consider that you may be looking at it from a completely different perspective than the original designers. Try to see how the rule could be interpreted in a way that dœsn't seem broken. You might be surprised to find that it isn't broken, it's just operating under a different set of assumptions than you're used to. Embrace the design assumptions, and you'll enjoy the game more.

Restrain yourself

This is related to "play it for what it is." First, let me state up front that part of what makes OD&D great is its openness and the ease with which it can be house-ruled and tweaked (in fact, some might argue that it demands house-rules). However, in the beginning you should try and keep your house rules to a minimum. Where you do house-rule (and you will), try to keep the changes small (q.v. Ability Scores & Bonuses). Develop understanding of the basics of the game and its "spirit" before making major changes or additions.

ROSE COLORED GLASSES

For some reason, when I tell other gamers I'm playing OD&D (or AD&D, or B/X, et cetera), I often hear comments about my "nostalgia" or my "rose colored glasses." I find this both odd and annoying. The idea behind "rose colored glasses" is that your perception is being altered, and that you aren't seeing things as they truly are. If you're "looking back through rose colored glasses," it means that you're not seeing clearly, with the implication that time has tricked your memory, making the past seem better than it actually was. You only see the good stuff through the rose colored glasses. So this is a neat turn of phrase, a flippant dismissal of any fond feelings for older editions like OD&D. Nevertheless, while glib, the phrase dœsn't apply to me and my enthusiasm for OD&D.

Rose colored glasses only "work" when you're looking back on an experience. Once you actually go back and experience it, again, the glasses stop working. At that point, the experience must stand or fall on its own merits (or lack thereof). I'm not looking back fondly on OD&D, I'm currently playing it. When I say I like it, it's not because rose colored glasses have skewed my perception of the past; it's because I like the experience I'm currently having. Rose colored glasses? Nope.

ESSENTIAL & RECOMMENDED MATERIAL

Essentials

OD&D Rules (the three little/brown books)
Dice

Highly Recommended

Chainmail
Judges Guild Ready Ref Sheets, Volume I
Monster & Treasure Assortment Sets One-Three
Best of Dragon Magazine Volume I
Fight On! Magazine

Recommended for Inspiration

Supplement I: Greyhawk
Supplement II: Blackmoor
Supplement III: Eldritch Wizardry
Supplement IV: Gods, Demigods, & Heroes
Judges Guild First Fantasy Campaign
Judges Guild Dungeoneer Compendium
Empire of the Petal Throne

Obviously, the only real essential is the OD&D rules. However, Chainmail is valuable for filling in gaps in the combat rules, including things like missile ranges, rates of fire, initiative, et cetera (and some OD&D referees even use Chainmail's man-to-man system instead of the OD&D "alternate" combat system). Early issues of Dragon magazine are also filled with a wealth of information and inspiration, and give you a window into how the game was played and developed. Best of the Dragon, Volume I collects some of the choice articles. If you can find a copy of the Dragon CD-ROM archive, that's even better. The Judges Guild Ready Ref Sheets, Volume I are a fantastic resource, filled with charts and tables similar to the appendices in the 1E Dungeon Masters Guide.

Another incredibly useful resource is the Monster & Treasure Assortments; these are tables of dungeon encounters and dungeon treasures for levels 1 through 9. They offer referees a handy guide for stocking dungeons. And don't forget about Fight On! magazine, which is a currently in print periodical that focuses on OD&D and old-school gaming. I'm very impressed by the first issue; you can really tell it's a labor of love that is being put together by people who are enthusiastic about the game.

Supplements I-IV are, of course, interesting and potentially useful as a source of inspiration and house-rules. If you use them, I suggest picking and choosing, rather than simply adopting everything in them. Much of the material in them were additions and house-rules from various individual campaigns. The Judges Guild First Fantasy Campaign is similar; it's a book which details Dave Arneson's Blackmoor campaign, including dungeon maps and a rough key for the Blackmoor dungeon. Tita's House of Games offers a reprint of the original Empire of the Petal Throne, which is a game with rules derived from OD&D, as a starting point (also, a PDF, and world and Jakálla city maps are available from DriveThruRPG). Empire of the Petal Throne is another excellent example of how individuals adapted OD&D for their own games. (It also includes some interesting rules additions or interpretations that could be applied directly to OD&D (e.g. the 'roll all your hit dice when you advance a level' rule). Lastly, The Dungeoneer was a magazine put out by Judges Guild. They published a Compendium of the first six issues which has some interesting inspirational material (e.g. I love the article on magic which describes how spellcasting works, calls Supplement I "almost canon," and ends by saying that you may have worked out your own system for handling spellcasting, so feel free to ignore the article...), but especially the great adventure, "Night of the Walking Wet."

MEN & MAGIC

ABILITY SCORES AND BONUSES

One of OD&D's most distinctive qualities is its rules for handling ability bonuses, and its philosophy of bonuses, in general. Compared to later versions of the game, OD&D bonuses are uncommon. This means that a +1 bonus in OD&D is a bigger deal than a +1 bonus in B/X, BECM, AD&D, or 3E D&D; you need a truly significant advantage before receiving a +1 bonus (e.g. a magic sword). Consider that Str dœs not affect attack or damage rolls. Dex dœs not affect Armor Class. Dex dœs affect attack rolls with ranged attacks, but the largest bonuses you can receive from high Dex is +1. Et cetera.

One effect of this approach is a de-emphasis on the mechanical importance of ability scores. A Fighting Man with a Str of 17 and a Fighting Man with a Str of 10

will be equally effective with their swords; the only mechanical difference is that the high-strength Fighting Man will advance through the levels faster (it just comes easier to him). In game-terms, there isn't a significant difference in getting slashed by a sword-wielding man with 17 Str and a sword-wielding man with 10 Str. Some gamers sneer that this is completely unrealistic, and the stronger man would have a big advantage. But again, you need to look at it from the same scope and scale as the game. Consider that an OD&D ogre does 1d6+2 points of damage, due to its size and strength, and OD&D ogres are bigger and stronger than any man. Even small bonuses like +1 and +2 are big deals, in OD&D.

The de-emphasis on the mechanical importance of ability scores does not mean that ability scores are useless, or that it is necessarily superfluous to have a 3-18 range when it really comes down to "low, average, or high." On the contrary, ability scores remain an integral part of describing and defining the PC. However, the OD&D approach demands creativity and judgment from the players and the referee, apart from defined rules. For example, consider this quotation about the effects of Charisma: "...the charisma score is usable to decide such things as whether or not a witch capturing a player will turn him into a swine or keep him enchanted as a lover." (Men & Magic p. 11) In other words, your ability scores are still meant to be taken into account, but exactly how they apply is left up to the players and the referee.

Another effect of this approach is that bonuses from other sources increase in their relative value. A magical axe +1 is a big deal. Any item which decreases an enemy's chance to hit you (e.g. magic armor) is a big deal, even if it is only a +1 item. Even the +1 benefit from a regular (non-magic) shield is significant. In general, increases of all sorts (including increases in PC level) have greater significance in OD&D, relative to later editions of the game. It also affects things like the significance of better armor. It's certainly possible for a 1st level Fighting Man to start the game with chain mail, or even plate mail. That's a significant advantage over most of the foes he'll face; there aren't a lot of modifiers to negate the difference.

Also consider how OD&D's philosophy affects rolling for ability scores. The original concept behind ability scores was a 3-18 range with "bell curve probability"; this is easily generated using 3d6. Later versions of the game started making bonuses higher and more common, introducing "bonus inflation." Bonuses became much more important in the game mechanics, and so the importance of ability scores increased. However, the nature of the 3-18 bell curve means very high ability scores are much less likely than average ability scores. Characters that would be perfectly acceptable and viable under the original rules were hopeless characters under the "inflated" systems, so later editions introduced new methods of generating ability scores to address this.

Consider this quotation from the AD&D Players Handbook: "It is usually essential to the character's survival to be exceptional (with a rating of 15 or above) in no fewer than two ability characteristics." That may be true under AD&D's system of bonuses and penalties, but it is not true under the original OD&D system. Rolling a character using 3d6 is a perfectly suitable approach in OD&D.

CLASS AND RACE

In original OD&D, there are three classes: Fighting Man, Magic User, and Cleric. In addition to humans, PCs can also be Elves, Dwarves, and Hobbits (Halflings). Humans may be any class. PC Elves are a combination of Fighting Man and Magic User. PC Dwarves are Fighting Men. PC Hobbits are also Fighting Men. I like the three-class scheme, and in particular I think that having no Thief class has a positive effect on the game, eliminating the special skills and making all the PCs active participants in searching, stealthy-movement, et cetera. As time goes by, I'm less and less fond of the demi-human races, though. I don't restrict players from choosing a non-human race, but I tend to prefer human PCs in my games (and thus approve of the level limitations placed on non-human PCs.)
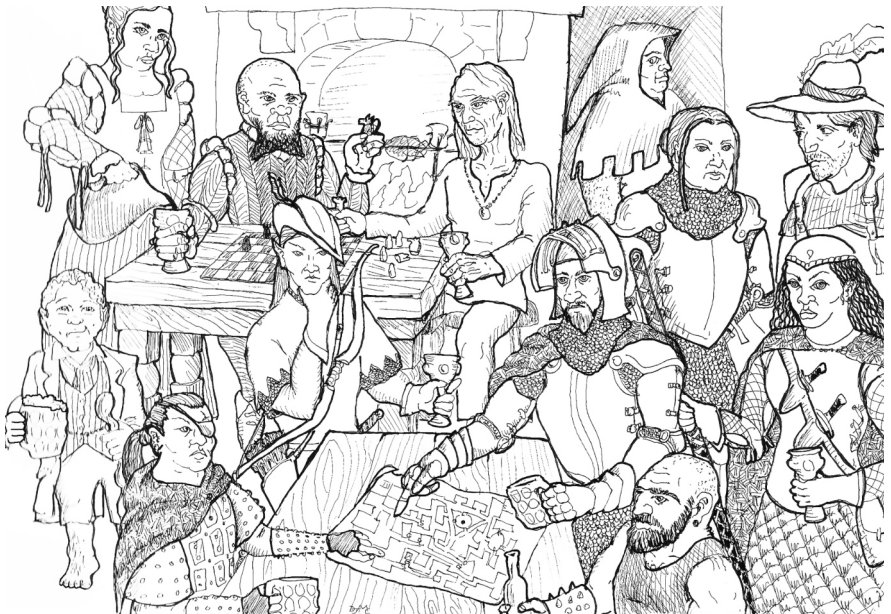
A few brief notes on specific classes and races in my OD&D games:

CLERICS: In my game, all priests are not members of the Cleric class. Instead, Clerics are rare and devoted holy men that can perform miracles (i.e. Cleric spells) and are usually militants of one sort or another. Clerics are rarely found in common shrines and temples; they tend to be action-oriented, smiting evil fœs and performing holy missions. Successful and famous Clerics often form their own temples and orders, so they can also be found in the upper ranks of the church hierarchies. (Note that only humans may be Clerics. This dœsn't mean that demi-humans don't have priests or holy men, but only that these demi-human priests are not members of the Cleric class.)

ELVES: The OD&D rules on the Elf leave a great deal of room for interpretation, and individual referees handle elves in different ways. In my game, Elves start as both Fighting Man and Magic User (i.e. Veteran and Medium). For starting hit points, the Elf rolls 1d6+1 (i.e. Veteran hit dice) and 1d6 (Medium hit dice), taking the higher of the two rolls. He tracks experience for each class separately. At the beginning of each adventure session (loosely defined as the from the start of an adventure until XP is awarded in a safe place), the Elf's player declares whether he is adventuring as a Fighter or as a Magic User. During that session, the Elf's earned XP gœs to the declared class, and he fights and saves as the declared class. Regardless of declared class, the Elf can use any weapon, and may cast spells if he is not wearing armor, or if he is wearing magical armor. The Elf maintains a single hit point total. When the Elf advances a level, he rolls the total hit dice for his new level (e.g. if he advanced to Hero, he rolls 4d6), and takes the greater of his roll or his current hit point total). Elves are, of course, limited to 4th level Fighting Man (Hero) and 8th level Magic User (Warlock). The Elf abilities from Chainmail are translated as +1 to hit against kobolds, goblins, and hobgoblins, and orcs (the greater bonuses in Chainmail are interpreted as coming from magical weapons and from mass-combat tactics against certain fœs). Elves possess infravision and can see in the dark (however, this special vision may not work in supernatural or mythic underworld settings). Note that while Chainmail mentions elvish invisibility, this is not translated as an individual ability, but as the use of magical elven cloaks or invisibility spells.

DWARVES: Dwarven PCs are Fighting Men, limited to 6th level (Myrmidon). In addition to the abilities listed in Men & Magic, dwarves only take 1/2 damage from ogres, trolls, and giants (this is an adaptation of the Chainmail bonus). Dwarves possess infravision and can see in the dark (however, this special vision may not work in supernatural or mythic underworld settings).

HOBBITS: Hobbit PCs are Fighting Men, limited to 4th level (Hero). Their "deadly accuracy with missiles" is translated from Chainmail as a +1 to hit with slings.

They are extremely good at hiding in brush or woods (adjudicated by the referee based

PLAYER SKILL VS. PC SKILL

The original OD&D rules do not include a defined skill system. As a result, OD&D sometimes calls on the player to use his own skills and creativity when adventuring. This is a different approach than many gamers are used to, and running with it can take some adjustment if you're in the habit of handling all PC actions with some sort of skill system that models that PC's capabilities. Some players don't like the idea at all, arguing that the game should be testing their PC's capabilities, not their own: relying on player skill goes against the idea of the character. They have a point, but I think there is room for a different approach in role-playing. It boils down to the fact that relying on player skill for some situations is fun. I think it also encourages thinking outside the box, and immersion in the situation the character is in.

Consider the following observation from Mike Mearls (a lead developer for 4E D&D):

> I think that OD&D's open nature makes the players more likely to accept things in the game as elements of fiction, rather than as game elements. The players reacted more by thinking "What's the logical thing for an adventurer to do?" rather than "What's the logical thing to do according to the rules?"

> OD&D and D&D 4 are such different games that they cater to very different needs. For me, in OD&D things are fast, loose, and improvised...[OD&D players] are probably more likely to accept...a game that requires a bit more deductive reasoning (I disable a trap by wedging an iron spike into the lever that activates it) as opposed to D&D 4 (I disable a trap by finding the lever then making a skill check.)

I think Mike nails it when he says OD&D's approach caters to a different need than the skill-based approach used in some other editions. If you've never tried running D&D without skills, I encourage you to give it a shot. It might be different from what you're used to, but it's fun.

THIEVES & THIEF SKILLS

The Thief class is not part of the original three OD&D books, but was added in Supplement I. Weak in combat and casting no spells, the main feature of the class is its special skills like climbing sheer walls, disarming small mechanical

traps, moving without making a sound, hiding in shadows, executing surprise backstabs, et cetera. Over time, I've come to prefer the game without the Thief class (i.e. using only the original three classes). The role the thief usually plays (scout/sneaky-guy) is easily filled by the other classes; everyone can attempt to be stealthy, search for traps, et cetera. Also, without the Thief and his special abilities, these activities are often performed by the player describing how he goes about it, rather than rolling against a skill, which I think is a lot of fun.

The following quote from Mike Mearls (a lead developer for 4E D&D) sums it up, for me:

> I've thought a lot about this for my OD&D game, and I decided to stick to the original three [classes] without the thief.
>
> As others have mentioned, the thief is a self-justifying class. More importantly, I'd rather the players use critical thinking and deduction to figure out traps, unlock doors, and so on. I'd prefer to allow any player of sufficient creativity and wits to figure a way past an obstacle. To me, that's the appeal of original D&D. (link to original post)

While I prefer to run without the Thief class, there are campaigns where I've allowed them. When I allow Thieves, their class skills are treated as extraordinary capabilities. That is, anyone can hide, but a Thief can hide in shadows. Anyone can move quietly, but a Thief can move silently, without even making a sound. Anyone can climb, but a Thief can climb sheer walls. Et cetera.

As an example, consider the act of sneaking up behind a human sentry. The Fighting Man takes off his mail and hard boots, and makes an effort to be quiet on his approach. I'd probably give him an increased chance of surprising the sentry: maybe 3 or 4 in 6, depending on the exact circumstances. If a Thief were trying the same thing, he'd use his move silently ability. If the Thief makes his roll, he's moving without making any audible noise, and since he's out of the sentry's line of sight (i.e. behind him), I'd give him automatic surprise. If the Thief failed his move silently roll, he made some noise, but he's still moving quietly; I'd give him the same chance to surprise as the stealthy Fighting Man (i.e. 3 or 4 in 6).

I previously posted a few ideas on an alternate OD&D Thief class. The main difference is that the mechanics use a more OD&D-ish approach, and the descriptions make it clear how the abilities relate to similar, but less extraordinary actions by other classes.

Level/HD/Attacks as Supplement I Thief

Stealth - When actively sneaking or hiding, the Thief gets +1 to surprise (e.g. instead of a standard 2:6 chance of surprise, the Thief gets a 3:6 chance of surprise). At level 9, this increases to +2 to surprise. (Note that a group uses the surprise chance of the least stealthy group member.)

Perceptive - The Thief is only surprised on a 1:6, rather than the standard 2:6. He can detect secret doors on a roll of 1-3. When listening, he hears noises on a roll of 1-2. At level 6, his ability to hear noises improves to 3-6.

Mechanical Manipulation - With proper tools, the Thief has a chance of opening mechanical locks without damaging them, or of removing or disabling small mechanical traps, like spring-loaded poison needles and the like. (Note that traps can also be disabled or bypassed with other precautions, described in-play.) His chances to do so are as follows:

    Level 1-4 = 2:6 (roll 1-2 on 1d6)
    Level 5-8 = 3:6 (roll 1-3 on 1d6)
    Level 9+ = 4:6 (roll 1-4 on 1d6)
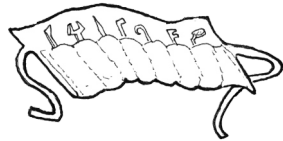
Sneak Attack - When making a melee attack on an enemy who is unaware of the PC, a successful attack deals maximum damage. At level 5, this improves to maximum damage + 1d6. At level 9, this improves to maximum damage + 2d6.

Amazing Climber - The Thief can climb sheer surfaces that most would find impossible without ropes and climbing gear. His chances to climb such surfaces are as follows:

    Level 1-4 = 17:20 (roll 4-20 on a d20)
    Level 5-8 = 18:20 (roll 3-20 on a d20)
    Level 9+ = 19:20 (roll 2-20 on a d20)

EXPERIENCE & ADVANCEMENT

The OD&D rules specify two ways characters acquire experience points: defeating monsters and obtaining treasure. Experience awards are adjusted by modifiers from the PC's prime requisite scores and by relative levels (e.g. an 6th level PC facing a 3rd level threat will only gain 1/2 of the normal experience award), although never above a 1:1 ratio (e.g. a 1st level PC facing a 3rd level threat does not gain three times the normal experience). Treasure awards 1 XP for every 1 GP value. Defeated monsters award 100 XP per hit die. Note that this is a big difference from the way later editions award experience for monsters.

OD&D Supplement I offered a new system (adopted by later editions) with much smaller awards, and even called the original award scheme "ridiculous." However, I don't find it ridiculous. The original XP award scheme tends to advance PCs through the low levels more rapidly than the Greyhawk method, but slows down in the higher levels. I like that effect. The original XP award scheme also has the benefit of being drop-dead simple.

My first OD&D campaign used the Greyhawk awards, when it began. However, I've switched all my OD&D games to the original method. PCs tend to advance at a faster rate, but so far that's working out fine; we don't play as often as the Lake Geneva groups back in the 70s, so the faster advancement hasn't been a problem. Also, I treat the 100xp per hit die formula as a guideline which can be varied, not a rule set in stone.

Many gamers sneer at the notion of awarding XP for treasure, preferring goal or story-based awards and similar schemes. I see their point, but I don't find XP awards for treasure objectionable. On the contrary, I see it as a story award. I also see it as a convenient abstraction, much like hit points. Dœs it make sense that a magic user gains experience by hauling loot out of the ground? Nope. Dœs it work well in the context of the game? Absolutely. If a given adventure dœsn't include much (or any) treasure, then I'll substitute some other form of "story award," instead, but in most cases using treasure works just fine.

Like all the older editions, OD&D uses different XP advancement tables for the various classes. That is, fighting men require 2000 XP to advance to second level, while magic users require 2500 XP, and clerics only need 1500 XP. This is one way that OD&D addresses class balance, rather than using a universal advancement table and attempting to make the power-level of each class equal at every level. Some gamers object to this approach, but I like having a different dynamic for different classes (q.v. my comments about magic users and vancian magic). I object to the idea that a "universal advancement / equal power-level" approach works better (a claim I often hear). In practice, I think that approach is difficult to pull off, especially if the powers are variable (e.g. feats or powers that are chosen by the player); you inevitably end up with this-or-that combination being unbalanced, or this class being too powerful, or this power being "broken," or whatever. Perfect balance is a questing beast that forever eludes those who pursue it. Both approaches have drawbacks, and both approaches can achieve a sort of "ballpark balance." While either approach works, I prefer the unhomogenized flavor the OD&D approach offers; I think it's okay — even interesting — for the classes to have different power curves.

When advancing a level, I do not require that a PC train, but I do require the PC to return to a safe area before leveling up; you can't advance a level while in the dungeon, for example.

LEVEL SCALING

By default, OD&D does not have any upper-boundary on PC levels, and this is how I currently run my games (see the Addendum, below).

However, when I first started running OD&D, I applied de facto level limits for all PCs, as a "soft boundary." Under this scheme, an average "normal" man is a 0-level character with 1d6 hit points. A 1st level PC has more skill and experience than average. A 4th to 7th level PC is a heroic figure with a reputation. An 8th to 10th level PC is a superheroic and legendary figure like Conan or John Carter. Thus, 10th level is the de facto level limit in my game, and all PCs and NPCs can be gauged against the scale. Note that I called 10th level a de facto limit, rather than a de jure limit. Levels above 10th are possible under this scheme, but extraordinary circumstances are required for this type of advancement.

Individuals who advance beyond 10th level are always driven and focused, and they may be obsessed or insane in one way or another. Attaining such power always requires sacrifices of some sort, and usually requires magical aid (e.g. longevity, lichdom, etc.) or supernatural aid from divine or infernal powers. Thus, 10th level defines a "mortal limit," and those who force their way past this barrier are risking much to do so (perhaps even their humanity). It is no accident that there are so many stories of insane arch-mages or demon-ridden anti-heroes that find their power has been bought at terrible cost.

Setting a scale like this can help the referee put his campaign world into perspective, and helps in setting the power-level of any NPC or creature he devises. Also, this scale has some history behind it. OD&D grew out of the Chainmail miniatures combat game, and a "Hero" had the fighting capability of four men (i.e. fourth level), while a "Superhero" had the fighting capability of eight men (i.e. eighth level). The 1-10 scale also makes demihuman level limits more palatable for players, since the demihuman limits top-out at the low-end of "high level." Under this scheme, demihumans have the following level limits:

Dwarf: 7th lvl. Fighting Man
Elf: 4th lvl. Fighting Man / 6th level Magic User
Hobbit: 4th lvl. Fighting Man / 6th level Thief

Addendum: I've been giving additional thought to level scales, and am wondering if even the "soft boundary" of a de facto level cap is necessary. I still

think 10th level or so should be a peak/stopping point of sorts, but realized that the standard approach to levels alreday dœs this with its concept of "name level," where hit dice stop accruing. Name level is a sort of "soft boundary," already, it's just up to the referee to model his campaign with that level scale in mind.

HIT DICE

In OD&D, six points of damage is enough to kill an average man (q.v. Damage & Hit Points). The original rules use a d6 as the basic hit die for all PCs and monsters, granting modifiers (e.g. +1) or additional hit dice (e.g. 2d6) as levels increased. In my first OD&D campaign, I used the system introduced in the Greyhawk supplement (and the Holmes rules), where each class gets its own hit die type (e.g. d8 for Fighting Men, d6 for Clerics, d4 for Magic Users, etc.), and monsters use 1d8 as their base hit die.

Addendum: My current OD&D campaigns do not not use these values, above. Instead, they use the original hit die progression from the Three Little Books, for both PCs and monsters. PCs roll all of their hit dice each time they advance a level; if the new hit point total is less than the old total, the old total will be retained. If they lose a level, they roll all their hit dice for the lower level; if the new total is greater than the old total, the old total is retained. Thus, a Fighting Man who has advanced to 2nd level rolls 2d6, and takes whichever is greater: his current total or his new roll. When he advances to 3rd level, he rolls 3d6 and takes the higher of his current total or his roll, and so on. This is quite different from the way hit points accrue in later editions, but it works well with the unique hit die values of OD&D.

HIT POINTS & DAMAGE

In OD&D, hit points are an abstract measure of a PC's well-being and fitness for combat. Hit points include factors like physical well-being, mental well-being or morale, how tired the PC is, how lucky he is, and even skill. As a PC takes damage, the declining hit points represent his resources being used up in combat. Not only is it physical damage, but it's also his muscles getting tired, sweat getting in his eyes, his breath running short, his resolve weakening, his reactions slowing, and his reserves of skill and luck being used. This means that the referee's description of combat should take these factors into account. Consider a 10th level Fighting Man with 50 hit points and a 1st level Fighting Man with 5 hit points. Each of these Fighting Men enters combat and each receives 6 points of damage from an enemy swordsman. This damage runs the 1st level Fighting Man through, killing him. However, the 10th level Fighting Man is still up, fighting, and not even terribly diminished. He's not really ten times as tough, physically, it's just that his superior luck and skill allowed him to evade or deflect the blow which would've killed a 1st level fighter. Instead of killing him, it just used up some of his resources.

In OD&D, a normal man has 1-6 hit points, and all weapons do 1-6 hit points of damage. In other words, the average man can be slain with a single damage roll from any weapon. This makes perfect sense given D&D's abstract system: a dagger thrust can kill you just as readily as a chop from a greataxe. When describing OD&D combat, I only describe severe or mortal wounds when the last 6 hit points are reached. Prior to that, damage is described as near-misses, parried blows that would've slain a lesser warrior, scratches, bruises, et cetera. This means that players can get a sense of how tough and skilled an enemy is by the effect their damage rolls have. If the PCs have dished out 14 points of damage, and I'm describing how the bad guy just got nicked on his forearm and is starting to sweat, they know that this guy has some serious hit points. On the other hand, if the first four points of damage they inflict opens a gaping, bleeding wound and their fœ cries out in anguish, they know this probably isn't an 8th level superhero they're fighting.

(A common criticism of this view is that monsters do not seem to adhere to this concept, with monster hit points usually seeming to be a more direct reflection of physical capability to withstand damage. This never bothered me; I don't think monsters and PCs need to be built on or abide by exactly the same rules and concepts. As in many other areas, the referee should use his judgment on exactly what hit points represent for a given creature or situation.)

In my OD&D game, two-handed weapons roll two dice for damage, taking the larger of the two values as the actual damage inflicted. This gives some benefit

to those PCs who choose to use a two-handed weapon instead of carrying a shield. A similar rule applies to PCs fighting with a weapon in each hand.

Most monsters also do 1-6 points of damage, with exceptions being made for exceptionally large or strong creatures (using the damage values from Monsters & Treasure as a guide).

ARMOR CLASS

In OD&D, Armor Class is much more of a fixed value than in other editions. As it applies to PCs (and to most humanoid monsters), it is more like "armor type." The main reason this is true is because there are not many modifiers to AC. Dex dœsn't modify it. Magic armor and shields don't modify it (they modify the opponent's attack roll). Rings of protection don't modify it (they work like magic armor). Et cetera. Additionally, there is no "overlap" in the armor classes. That is, plate armor is AC3, and there is no other combination that makes up AC3 (e.g. no splint mail + shield). The fact that OD&D AC is so closely related to armor type makes using the weapon vs. AC rules from Supplement I easier to use, if one is so inclined.

HELMETS

OD&D lists helmets among the items your PC can purchase, but no game mechanic benefit is mentioned. This implies that helmets are assumed, and would thus just be part of your overall AC. However, this raises the question, "what about when you don't wear a helmet?" Obviously, an enemy facing an armored man with a bare head will try to hit the bare head, but also wouldn't pass up any opportunities to hit armored parts of the body, as well. On the other hand, the bare-headed warrior would obviously know his head was vulnerable, and would try to protect it. In keeping with D&D's abstract system of combat, I apply the following house rule to this situation:

Wearing a suit of armor (i.e. dœsn't include "shield only") without a helmet grants attackers a +1 bonus to the attack roll. (I followed the OD&D practice where an armor bonus/penalty applies to the enemy's attack roll rather than to the PC's armor class. This practice helps to preserve the concept of AC as armor type, which can be significant if you use the weapon vs. AC adjustments from the Greyhawk Supplement.)

Wearing a helmet while otherwise unarmored grants no mechanical benefit to AC, and no penalty to an attackers "to hit" roll. (To grant such a benefit would be to equate the protective value of a helmet with that of a shield, and I don't think that's the case. In a melee, I'd want a helmet and a shield, but if I had to pick

just one, I'd take the shield.) Even though an otherwise unarmored man gains no normal benefit from a helmet, it still might be worthwhile in some situations. For example, if kobolds are dumping baskets of stones down from a clifftop, the referee might rule that a helmet will halve any damage the PC takes. If green slime falls on the PC's head, wearing a helm would offer some benefit. Et cetera.

THAC0?

Just about everyone who has played TSR versions of D&D is familiar with the concept of THAC0, even if they didn't use it. Even many "new school" D&D players know what THAC0 is. For those who aren't familiar with it, it means "To Hit Armor Class 0." It's a number than indicates what roll on a d20 your PC would need to hit an enemy with AC0. To figure out what you need to hit other armor classes, you subtract the enemy's AC from your THAC0 (e.g. if your THAC0 is 17, and you're attacking an enemy with in chainmail (AC5), you need to roll a 17-5=12).

Opinions on THAC0 and its utility vary within the D&D community. Some find it easier to eschew any formulas at all, continuing to use the "to hit" attack tables rather than perform a calculation (this is especially easy for players, since they only need to write down a single line from the appropriate chart onto their character sheet, and it's very fast and simple to reference). Players of original AD&D (i.e. first edition) also have the "repeating 20s" issue to consider, which complicates the THAC0 concept, although it's something of an edge case. Many prefer the "higher AC is better" and "base attack bonus" approach of the d20 system. In that system, you add an attack bonus to your die roll, and the result indicates what AC you hit (e.g. your bonus is +3, and you roll a 12, meaning you'd hit an AC of 15 or less). All the math is addition, which many find easier.

To my mind, this issue is not critical. The formulas are different methods of arriving at the same end result (generally). Nevertheless, I tend to prefer the traditional "lower is better" AC values. Part of the reason is habit; I've used those values for a long time, and it seems natural that platemail and shield is AC2, or chainmail is AC5. Part of it is that most of the gaming material I use is statted for the traditional AC approach. Lastly, I also like the implied model where AC0 is a "balance point," and negative AC values represent a sort of "supernatural" defensive ability. (In fact, some OD&D referees require magic weapons to hit negative ACs.) I think this gives armor class a sense of scale (and implied limits). I prefer that over a more open-ended feel.

I'm adopting a slightly different formula from THAC0. It keeps the traditional AC system (i.e. AC2 is platemail and shield), but uses an attack bonus with addition, like the formula of the d20 system. PCs and monsters have an attack bonus

(calculated from 20 - THAC0, although I'm using a "smoothed" progression). When rolling to hit, add your die roll + your attack bonus + your enemy's AC. If the total is 20 or higher, you hit.

Following are the (smoothed) attack bonuses that I'm using:

Level	Fighting Men	Magic Users	Cleric
1	+1	+1	+1
2	+2	+1	+1
3	+2	+1	+2
4	+3	+2	+2
5	+4	+2	+3
6	+5	+3	+3
7	+6	+3	+4
8	+7	+4	+5
9	+7	+4	+6
10	+8	+5	+6
11	+8	+6	+7
12	+9	+6	+7
13	+10	+6	+8
14	+11	+7	+8
15	+12	+7	+9
16	+13	+8	+9

Monster HD	Bonus
Up to 1	+1
1+1	+2
2 to 3	+5
4+1 to 6	+6
6+1 to 8+x	+7
9 to 10+x	+9
11+	+11
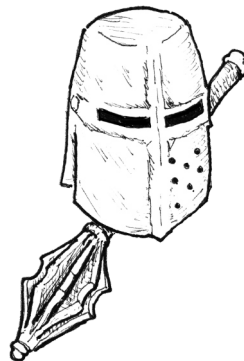
TURNING UNDEAD

The Cleric's ability to turn undead is one of those areas of the D&D rules that leaves much open to referee interpretation. Common questions on the subject includes things like:

- What, exactly, happens when he succeeds?
- Can the cleric make multiple attempts?
- How long do the effects of a successful turn attempt last?
- Is there a range limit?

The rules do not provide comprehensive answers to all of these questions, but here's how I handle it. I view turning as an ability that stems from the Cleric's faith, allowing him to channel divine power against the undead. A successful turning attempt causes affected undead to flee from the Cleric. As the OD&D rules state, a successful turn attempt affects 2d6 of undead. I allow one turning attempt per round. In the case of mixed groups of undead, the least powerful are affected first. I allow the Cleric to continue making attempts to turn more undead on subsequent rounds, until he fails a turning attempt. At that point, his faith is shaken, and he may not make further attempts.

I borrow a rule from a later edition (i.e. AD&D) to cover the duration of the turn effect: 3d4 rounds. If the duration expires, the cleric may attempt to turn the undead, again (he can continue doing this as long as his turn attempts continue to succeed). However, the cleric must maintain the effect for the duration; that is, he must continue to actively exert his influence, and may not take other actions like casting spells or attacking. I do not impose a strict range limit, preferring to handle this based on the situation.

Other than the cleric ceasing to maintain the effect, I do not use the concept of "breaking the turn." Instead, I consider the undead as being under a strong compulsion to flee the cleric. They act accordingly. This helps when adjudicating situations like undead being cornered or trapped. Say there are a group of ghouls in a 30x30 room with one door. The cleric is standing in the doorway, turning them. These ghouls would move away from the cleric, probably clustering in the corner or against the far wall, clawing at the stones of while hissing and moaning. If further pressure is put on them, they will react, but their actions will also be affected by the turn compulsion.

For example, if the cleric starts approaching them, the ghouls will shy away and will probably make for the door, giving the cleric a wide berth. If the cleric moves to block one, that one will attack him, but only in passing as it tries to break past and flee.

Another common example might be the cleric maintaining his position in the doorway, while his comrades fire missile weapons into the ghouls. The ghouls are intelligent; they know that this is an intolerable situation, and they won't just sit there. However, they remain under compulsion to flee the cleric. There might be a round or so of confusion, but I'd rule that the pressure would cause the ghouls to rush the door in an attempt to escape, attacking or overbearing anyone (including the cleric) in their way. Their main goal wouldn't be to kill -- just to escape and get farther away from the cleric.

I handle animated undead like skeletons or zombies in a similar fashion, keeping their lack of intelligence in mind. They would tend to react as individuals, not as a group, and would be slower to react to other pressures (like attacks). For example, replace the ghouls in the earlier example with zombies. If the cleric stood in the doorway while the fighting man fired arrows into a zombie, only that zombie would react to the attack. I see created undead as possessing a limited 'self preservation' instinct that is part of their animating magic. The zombie would try to end the immediate threat by escaping the intolerable situation -- probably by trying to kill the archer. A mindless undead that finds itself close to the cleric, for some reason, might try to escape past him (especially if it saw a long passage beyond), although it's more likely the mindless undead would simply retreat, again.

In other words, situational pressures won't break the turn, but they might influence the turned undead such that they'll get close to (or even attack) the cleric, temporarily, in order to get farther away.

VANCIAN MAGIC

The system of Vancian magic (i.e. spells which are memorized and then "forgotten" when cast) is one of the essential elements of D&D. I concede that you can play the game using a different system for handling magic (spell points, or whatever), but to my way of thinking, doing so casts aside a huge portion of the feel that makes D&D what it is. I love Vancian magic. I love grandiose names for the spells; in fact, the more grandiose and fantastic they are, the better I like them (and I encourage my players to use those kinds of names for their spells). I love the idea of magic users scheming to obtain a certain enchantment or charm. I love the concept of a magic user "equipping" himself with a certain set of spells when he sets out in the morning. For a sample of the original "Vancian" flavor, check out "Just so you know, THIS is Vancian magic."

My OD&D game will always use Vancian magic. Complaints that it is too constraining for low level magic users fail to impress me. There is no doubt that playing a low-level magic user is a challenge. However, the rewards for success are great, as higher level magic users are incredibly potent and powerful characters. Suck it up and pay your dues, and such power might be yours. I'm unwilling to cast aside the rich atmosphere and feel of Vancian magic to make things easier on low-level magic users. Besides, my current game allows low-level magic users to create magical scrolls (a rule which is has its source in my game's Holmes Basic roots), and I also allow minor "special effects" based on the spells you currently have memorized, so even with the Vancian system, magic users (and clerics) still have some options that don't require them to "take their one shot and wait for the next day."

You just can't have D&D without Vancian magic.

SCROLLS

My OD&D game had its roots in a game using the Holmes Basic rules, and consequently includes an uncommon rule for handling scroll creation. Typical old-school D&D campaigns don't allow characters to create scrolls until around 7th level. However, the Holmes Basic rules allow magic users of all levels to create scrolls, provided that the magic user pays the cost (100gp per level of spell), takes the time (1 week per level of spell), and can cast the spell to begin with (i.e. it's in his spell- book). The Holmes rules do not explicitly cover the creation of clerical scrolls (although they do mention the existence of clerical

scrolls); nevertheless, I extend the same capability to clerics. The ability to create scrolls gives low-level casters some additional power, which can be desirable or not, depending on your view. However, in practice, the ability to create scrolls can still be regulated by the referee, thus avoiding "scroll proliferation" in the campaign. As referee, I keep scrolls from getting out of hand by:

Enforcing the relative inconvenience of scrolls. That is, they're delicate to transport, you have to get them out when you need them, you can't get them wet, you need light to use them, et cetera.

Having scroll-spells take longer to cast (q.v. Initiative and the Combat Sequence)

Strictly enforcing the time required to create them. While the PCs are making scrolls, events in the campaign continue to march on and develop.

Controlling the abstraction-level of the material requirements. The 100gp per level cost is an abstraction that represents the rare and costly materials that go into making a scroll: for example, the highest quality media, giant squid ink, powdered gems, a quill from the feathers of a fantastic creature, components from various monsters, et cetera. The referee can add detail to this abstract requirement, at his option. An easy way to do this is to rule that a required component is unavailable for purchase, and must be obtained through some other method (typically an adventure). For clerical scrolls, this might mean a special pilgrimage, or an adventure to acquire the materials for a special offering.

Clerical scrolls possess some unique characteristics. In my OD&D game, clerical scrolls are prayers associated with a certain alignment or deity. They are not written in "magical language" like magic user scrolls, but rather in a "normal" language which could be the vernacular or perhaps a church-specific variant of an alignment tongue. Anyone who is capable of reading the language can glean the function of a clerical scroll, but only clerics can invoke the spells therein. Even then, a cleric may not wish to invoke the prayers if the scroll is oriented towards and alignment, deity, or ethos which is antithetical to his own. He may do so, but should be prepared to face any consequences that might arise (within the church hierarchy or in his relationship with his deity, et cetera).

SPELL SPECIAL EFFECTS

In my OD&D game, spell-casters enjoy the capability to produce minor magical effects related to the spells they have currently memorized. For example, a magic user who has fireball memorized might be able to light his pipe with a small flame from his thumb, or make smoke come from his ears when annoyed.

A sorceress with gust of wind memorized might have her hair constantly blowing in an otherwise non-existent breeze. Using a special effect dœs not cast or use up the spell it is related to; they're not so much "spells" as they are tangible evidence that the magic user has a spell memorized. I do not codify these effects, but rather rely on the players to suggest or request an effect, which I then approve or deny. While I do not have a hard-and-fast rule against special effects that have a mechanical game effect, special effects are always minor, cantrip-like effects.

I like this house-rule for several reasons. First, it adds to the weird otherworldliness of magic users, and I love weird and fantastic elements in my D&D game. Second, it gives low-level magic users something arcane and archetype-supporting to do without using up their memorized spells or abandoning the concept of Vancian magic. Third, it's just cool to play a wizard that can make his eyes glow, or make his smoke rings come out different colors, or whatever. I know that players enjoy the special effects, and also enjoy trying to figure out what spells an NPC caster has based upon what his special effects reveal. The only real danger is allowing effects which are too potent, which could erode the feel of the Vancian magic system. It's up to the referee to make that call on a case-by-case basis.

MONSTERS & TREASURE

GAZE ATTACKS

OD&D referees vary in their approach to gaze attacks. I prefer to think of these as gaze effects, rather than attacks, since they fall outside the scope of normal attacks. Indeed, no attack roll is needed; all that is required is that victim look into the eyes of the medusa, basilisk, vampire, or other monster with one of these deadly abilities. Instead of an attack roll, the mechanic for handling gaze effects is the saving throw. I look on saving throws as a "last chance" or a "disaster avoidance." That is, your character is in a disastrous situation, but he gets a chance to slip out of circumstances which would spell doom for most men. Consequently, I look on the save vs. gaze effects as "gaze avoidance" rather than "gaze resistance." Meeting the gaze means certain doom; the saving throw determines whether the character met the gaze at all. If he did, he suffers its effects; if not, then he is safe.

A monster with a gaze effect forces characters facing it to roll a saving throw each round, as follows:

- Complete Surprise -2 penalty
- Surprise -1 penalty
- Viewing Monster No modifier
- Attacking Normally +3 bonus
- Avoiding Gaze +6 bonus
- Blindfold/Eyes Closed No save required, but combat penalties apply (e.g. -4 to hit/+4 to be hit)

The referee should adjust these modifiers to suit the exact monster and circumstances under consideration.

MAGIC ARMOR & SHIELDS

OD&D has distinctive rules for handling magical armor and shields. Unlike later editions (with the exception of Holmes), the magical bonus is not added to the PC's armor class, but is subtracted from the enemy's "hit dice" (usually interpreted as meaning the enemy's "to hit" roll, when using the "alternate" combat system). This is a distinction which helps to preserve the concept of armor class as a "class" or "type," rather than merely an indication of how hard it is to hit the PC. Also, the magical bonuses from armor and shield do not stack. Instead, the rules stipulate that if the shield's bonus is superior, there is a one in three chance that the shield's bonus should be used against a given attack roll.

I like the concept of magical bonuses from armor and shield not stacking, as it assists in moderating the tendency towards bonus inflation in the system. However, I dislike the 1/3 chance for the shield's bonus to apply; I think that introduces an unnecessary complication. In my OD&D games, I've house-ruled this aspect of magical armor and shields, such that the PC simply enjoys the higher of the two bonuses in any situation where the shield could reasonably be applied (e.g. face-to-face melee).

Lastly, note that elves can cast spells while wearing magic armor, but not while wearing non-magical armor.

MAGIC SWORDS

The OD&D rules for magical swords are different from those in later versions of the game. In OD&D, magic swords grant their bonus as a bonus "to hit," but they do not grant a bonus to damage unless they have a bonus against a special category of enemy. For example, a sword +1 grants a +1 to all attack rolls, but nothing to damage rolls. A sword +1, +3 vs. dragons grants a +3 to attack and damage rolls against dragons, but +1 to attack and +0 to damage against other foes. Note that this is not true for other kinds of magic weapons. A war hammer +1, for example, grants a +1 to hit and +1 damage against all enemies.

The OD&D rules assume that magical swords are truly special items; for whatever reason (up to the referee), there is something unique about them that sets them apart from other magical weapons. ALL magical swords possess intelligence and alignment. Many magical swords will be able to communicate, and some will possess personality and ego. Some with possess potent magical powers that they will pass on to their wielder. Some will have specific purposes they will attempt to fulfill. In OD&D, a magical sword can be both boon and bane, and every magical sword the PCs find will be viewed cautiously, at first. Even picking up a magical sword can be dangerous, as touching a weapon of the "wrong" alignment will cause damage. Even like-aligned swords can be perilous, as a high-ego weapon can overwhelm and dominate its wielder, in certain situations. In my OD&D game, magic swords tend to prefer Fighting Men over Thieves, so while Thieves can technically wield a magic sword, the thief is likely to have "difficulties" with his weapon.

I love these rules. First, they make magic swords remarkable; there is no "run of the mill +1 sword" in my OD&D game. Second, they model the way magic swords are described in fiction, and I like bringing that kind of outlook to the game. Who could forget blades like Stormbringer, Excalibur, Andúril, or Terminus Est? What warrior of mettle would pass up the chance to carry a dwarf-forged blade, even at the risk of coming under its fey influence? Also, the special status

of magical swords suggests all sorts of plot elements and questions. Why do all magical swords possess intelligence? Why swords, only? Perhaps the answer to these questions are a mystery, even to those who forge and enchant the blades. Perhaps "sword cults" have grown up, driven not just by a warrior ethos, but also by the fact that there is something unique about magical swords. The whole thing puts a new spin on the "riddle of steel."

UNDERWORLD & WILDERNESS

SURPRISE

My OD&D game uses a house-ruled system of surprise that draws on the wyvern surprise example on pages 8-9 of The Underworld & Wilderness Adventures, the additional combat rules in Eldritch Wizardry, and the AD&D surprise rules. There are two categories of surprise: normal surprise and complete surprise. Normal surprise allows unsurprised enemies a single action. Complete surprise allows unsurprised enemies two actions (or a surprised enemy one action).

Die Roll	Result
1	Surprise (1 action)
2	Complete Surprise (2 actions)
3-6	No Surprise

Examples of an action include closing to striking range (if necessary), making a melee attack, nocking and firing an arrow from a bow, firing a loaded crossbow, et cetera. Spells may be started as a surprise action. Whether they take effect prior to the start of the normal round depends on the circumstances. Spells of 1st-2nd level, Power Words, Holy Words, Word of Recall, Devices, and innate abilities take effect immediately. Other spells take effect in their normal place within the round. As always, the caster may cast only one spell during the round, regardless of surprise.

The table, above, gives the results for the standard surprise situation. Circumstances may modify this. For example, some monsters surprise on 3 in 6, rather than 2 in 6. In this case, a roll of 3 would indicate the monsters are allowed three surprise actions. Similarly, some monsters or characters might only be surprised on a 1 in 6. In this case, a roll of 1 would indicate normal surprise, and a roll of 2 would indicate no surprise.

ABSTRACT COMBAT

OD&D combat is highly abstract, which is one of the reasons it moves quickly, even when many combatants are involved. I use a 10-12 second combat round in my game (OD&D defaults to using 1 minute combat rounds.) A lot can happen in that time. The combat rules assume that combatants are taking their best shots while fighting, and in standard situations, it dœs not provide for specific hit locations. Your PC's one attack roll dœs not represent a single swing or thrust, but rather an entire series of feints, swings, and maneuvers. A missed attack roll dœs not mean that you simply took a swing and missed, but rather that you failed to score any telling blows. You might have missed entirely as your enemy dodged around, or you might have hammered at him as his shield protected him from everything you dished out; this "flavor text" is up largely up to the referee, but in game- terms it works out the same: no damage inflicted. A successful attack roll means that one or more of your attempts succeeded in reducing the enemy's fighting capability. This could be because you physically hurt him, or it could mean you're tiring him out, or it could mean that you're pressing his luck and skill to the breaking point, or it could mean that you've dealt a blow to his confidence. Again, this is largely up to the referee and how he describes loss of hit points in combat.

Because of the abstract nature of combat, I am generally against more than one melee attack roll per round (although this may not apply to missile fire; q.v. Initiative & the Combat Sequence); after all, the roll dœsn't represent a single swing, merely the chance to inflict damage, regardless of the number of swings. Instead of additional rolls, it is almost always better to represent an improved chance to inflict damage by applying a bonus to the attack roll, or a modifier to damage. In my OD&D game, PCs receive a single melee attack roll per round (the only exception being high level fighters facing enemies with less than one hit die, who may attack a number of such fœs equal to their level; however, even then, the fighter gets a single melee roll for each opponent he's allowed to attack). Monsters sometimes get multiple attacks (although not as commonly as in later editions), but monsters and PCs do not necessarily need to follow the same rules. (If this seems unfair, consider that you can give more experience points for monsters with large numbers of attacks (e.g. see the Holmes XP rules); the discrepancy between PCs and monsters is accounted for by classifying the ability to make multiple attack rolls as a monster special ability.)

MOVEMENT IN COMBAT

The default OD&D rules assume a one minute combat round, but leave movement rules ambiguous (probably assuming referees would adapt rules from Chainmail). The encumbrance rules give leather armor (light) a move of 12",

chainmail (heavy) a move of 9", and plate mail (armored) a move of 6". However, the OD&D rules don't follow these rates for dwarves and elves (with dwarves in chain + shield moving at 6" and elves in chain moving at 12"), suggesting these races have lower and higher base movement rates, respectively. I've adopted the following rates (light/heavy/armored):

- Humans 12" 9" 6"
- Elves 15" 12" 6"
- Dwarves 9" 6" 3"
- Hobbits 9" 6" 3"

Note that the movement rates I'm using for elves would probably be considered non-standard, by most. I like the idea of fleet-footed elves, so I grant them an unencumbered rate of 15" (quite fast) and a rate of 12" when wearing chain. However, I don't like the idea of an armored elf (i.e. wearing plate mail) being faster than a human, so I make them equal, there. This is just my interpretation. It would probably be more "by-the-book" to give elves the same movement rates as humans (i.e. 12"/9"/6), assuming that the elves' movement rate in chain reflected the use of unencumbering elven chain, which would be considered "light" instead of "heavy."

My OD&D games use a 10-12 second combat round, so I needed to convert the movement rates, above, into distances at that tactical/encounter scale. After making calculations based on 4.5 feet- per-second average walking pace, I came to the conclusion that the B/X rule of encounter speed equaling movement rate divided by three is a reasonable (and convenient) approximation. Thus:

- 24" 80′ per round (160′ per round charge)
- 21" 70′ per round (140′ per round charge)
- 18" 60′ per round (120′ per round charge)
- 15" 50′ per round (100′ per round charge)
- 12" 40′ per round (80′ per round charge)
- 9" 30′ per round (60′ per round charge)
- 6" 20′ per round (40′ per round charge)
- 3" 10′ per round (20′ per round charge)

MULTIPLE ATTACKS

Multiple attacks by a single PC occur infrequently in OD&D; normally, a PC will only get a single melee attack roll per round. This is also true of monsters. In the three brown books, most monsters get a single attack in fantastic combat, rather than an attack routine (e.g. claw/claw/bite). The single attack roll represents their

entire attack routine. This includes monsters like ghouls and trolls, which get multiple attacks in later supplements and editions. In three brown book OD&D, only very special monsters like multi-headed hydras get more than one attack in fantastic combat. A major exception to this rule is Fighting Men in melee with opponents of 1HD or less. A Fighting Man who is in a melee where all his engaged foes are 1HD or less may make a number of melee attacks equal to his level. Thus, a Hero (4th level) battling a group of goblins may attack four times in a single round. A Superhero (8th level) facing the same goblins would attack eight times each round! I see this as OD&D's "mow down the mooks" rule; a higher level Fighting Man is a force that normal men rightly fear.

Note that even a single higher HD opponent in the melee will negate this ability, being a more skilled or dangerous threat that demands the high-level Fighting Man's attention. This is a great boon for PC henchmen and hirelings, since it allows even a Veteran (i.e. a 1st level Fighting Man has 1+1 HD) to prevent the massacre of weaker party members when confronted by a dangerous foe (such as an evil Hero). This rule has its origin in Chainmail's concept of fantastic vs. non- fantastic melee (and its use is illustrated in the OD&D FAQ originally published in the Strategic Review). Since monsters in Chainmail's non-fantastic melee get multiple attacks, I extend the multiple attacks to monsters in OD&D, as well. That is, an Ogre attacking a group of normal men will attack four times. However, if there's a Veteran guard amongst those men, the combat is considered fantastic, and the Ogre is limited to a single attack.

(This rule also exists for Fighters in AD&D, but was modified to only work against enemies of less than 1HD. I speculate that this may have been done because a 1st level Fighter in AD&D is considered a 1HD foe, where a 1st level Fighting Man in OD&D is considered a 1+1HD foe.)

TWO-WEAPON FIGHTING

In my OD&D game, PCs typically receive a single melee attack roll per round (q.v. Abstract Combat), so I needed a rule to handle PCs that fought with a weapon in each hand. I reasoned that two weapons would likely do more damage, assuming they were used competently, but that it would be harder to use two weapons effectively. My house rule states that Fighting Men, Thieves, Elves, and Halflings can use a weapon in each hand, making a single attack roll each round. If they hit and they have a Dex of 13+, they roll 2 damage dice (i.e. 2d6) and take the highest of the two rolls as the damage. Those with Dex of 12 or less inflict standard damage (they lack the dexterity to gain a significant benefit from wielding two weapons).

Addendum: I'm also kicking around a different idea for two-wepon fighting. Instead of altering the way damage is rolled, wielding two weapons could result in an increased chance to hit (i.e. +1). Going this route gives you three basic options: weapon + shield (increased defense), weapon + weapon (increased chance to hit), or two-handed weapon (increased average damage), which is nice, mechanically.

CRITICAL HITS

I am not a huge fan of critical hit systems in D&D; I don't think they're a good fit, given the abstract nature of combat and damage. Also, since the referee gets to make many more rolls than the players, critical hit systems tend to favor the

monsters/enemies, in the long run. Nevertheless, players enjoy a game-mechanic that rewards lucky and high rolls, so I do use critical hits in my OD&D game. (See the update, below.)

In deciding how to incorporate critical hits, I knew that I didn't want to add any additional rolls to combat. I also didn't want to start down the "damage/bonus inflation" path that other versions of D&D have followed; I wanted to stay with the basic concept behind damage in OD&D (i.e. 6 points is enough to kill the average man). This led me directly to my house rule: on a natural 20 that hits, the attack does maximum damage. Thus, if you do 1-6 points of damage, and you roll a natural 20 that hits, you do a full 6 points of damage. This represents your "best shot." No additional rolls are required (in fact, you need one less roll than normal), and the results fit the idea of a critical hit while respecting the underlying philosophies of the game. Of course, critical successes imply that critical failures are possible, too, so on a natural 1 that misses, your enemy gets a free attack on you, or a referee- mandated mishap occurs (e.g. you drop your weapon, slip and fall, et cetera).

Another system I considered (but rejected due to the additional rolling, potential for excessive damage, and possible complexity), is "exploding" damage dice. The idea is that critical hits should be based on the damage roll, not the "to hit" roll, because the damage roll is what really determines how well you did. Thus, a maximum result on your damage roll would indicate a critical hit, and you get to roll an extra damage die. If that one is maximum, too, you get to add another die roll, and so on. However, with a 1d6 damage die, that means roughly one in six damaging attacks will be a critical hit. That may be a bit high. If you were to use exploding dice, you might want to switch both damage dice and the basic hit die to 1d12 instead of 1d6; then only 8% of damaging attacks would be critical hits. Another variant is to halve the exploded die: thus, if you're rolling a 1d12 and get a 12, then you add a 1d6, then a 1d3, and then 1 point. While I think exploding dice are an interesting approach, I prefer the "max damage" approach, overall.

Addendum: After being on the receiving end of critical hits, the players in my OD&D game have voted to dispense with a critical hit system. I'm pleased with this development. My game no longer uses critical hits; it uses standard rolled damage.

BURNING OIL

Using flaming oil to cover a retreat or attack an enemy is a time- honored technique in D&D. The typical approach is to prepare flasks of oil as firebombs, lighting the rags and hurling the flasks at the enemy. Another common technique to is simply hurl the flask and coat the enemy or area with oil, and

then follow this up with a hurled torch or other source of ignition. Oil is also simply poured on the ground in a strategic location and subsequently lit, either as a trap or as a deterrent to pursuit.

Flaming oil is a potent weapon in most editions of D&D. In fact, it offers low-level PCs one of their best damage-dealing tactics. Oil is cheap, readily available, and very effective. It's so effective that some referees frown on its use, ruling that common lamp oil is not adequate fuel for a firebomb. Sometimes, these referees will allow "greek fire" variants that are designed and intended for combat use. Obviously, "greek fire" variants cost more than a vial of common lamp oil.

I like the use of oil as a weapon. I think it adds all sorts of opportunities for interesting tactics and terrible screw-ups. Consequently, I don't worry about the quality or effectiveness of "common lamp oil" (especially real-world medieval lamp oil) as a factor in the use of flaming oil. In a campaign world full of fantastic flora and fauna, I think it's possible that the common lamp oil might be derived from a source that produces potent fuel. I think that if the circumstances of its use are considered, the employment of flaming oil as a weapon does not disrupt or unbalance the game. Here's how I handle burning oil in my game:

- A flask of oil will create a pool of oil 5-6 feet in diameter that will burn for approximately 1 turn.
- A thrown flask has a 90% chance of shattering (roll 1d10, with a roll of 1 indicating a failure to shatter)
- Anyone within 5 ft. of the impact point must save vs. Death Ray or be splashed. An ignited splash does 1-3 points of damage.
- A direct hit with ignited oil does 1d6 damage for 2 rounds. (This assumes the victim and/or his friends are actively trying to wipe off the oil and douse the flames.)
- A missed throw will miss by 1-10 feet. The direction of the miss will be determined by rolling 1d8.

Considerations in the use of flaming oil:

- Storage (bulk and weight) of multiple flasks
- Relative fragility of flasks in dungeoneering situations (e.g. falls, et cetera)
- Time required to retrieve stored flasks
- Time required to prepare a flask (unstopper, insert a rag, et cetera)
- Source of ignition
- Smell/smoke/wandering monsters
- Enemies who learn and adapt to the PCs tactics

CALLED SHOTS

I think the concept of the called shot is a poor fit for D&D because of the abstract nature of the combat system. Unless there is a special reason for targeting a specific area, D&D combat assumes that combatants will take the best shots they can get. For example, consider the situation of a PC fighter facing off against an orc warrior wearing chainmail and a helm. The player might say "I swing at his head with my sword." Since this combat is a completely normal situation, it follows the standard assumptions of the rules, and the PC should not receive any special modifiers to his attack roll, or to damage if his attack succeeds. Rather, I would treat his statement as flavor. I might respond, "Okay, make a standard attack roll..." If the attack succeeds, but only does a single point of damage, I might say "You step forward, raining blows down around the orc's head and shoulders; he manages to fend off most of your strikes, but one glances off his helm, drawing a thin trickle of blood from his temple. He grunts and snarls at you." If the attack hits and does six points of damage, I might say "You step forward, raining blows down around the orc's head and shoulders; he parries wildly, grimacing as you nearly knock his weapon from his hand, then a vicious backswing connects solidly, ringing his cloven helm like a gong. Gore splatters across your sword-arm, and his falling body almost pulls the hilt from your grasp, but you hold on and jerk the weapon free." If the attack missed, I might say "You step forward, raining blows down around the orc's head and shoulders; he parries easily, guiding your attacks to the side while sneering at you with yellowed tusks..."

Nevertheless, there may be special situations that fall outside of standard combat assumptions. For example, an arrow shot to pin clothing to the wall, an attack intended to shatter the potion bottle in an enemy's hand, et cetera. There is also precedent in D&D for striking a specific spot on certain creatures (e.g. a beholder's eye); typically, the monster description assigns a separate AC for this location, as appropriate. I think this approach is superior to an approach that applies a standard modifier for called shots (e.g. -4). Rather than a "one-size-fits-all" modifier for such actions, each called shot should be handled separately, with the referee determining difficulty and assigning a target AC or die roll modifier that he believes appropriate.

INITIATIVE & THE COMBAT SEQUENCE

OD&D does not define rules for initiative (or a combat round sequence, for that matter), leaving the matter for the referee to resolve. Common solutions include importing the rules from Chainmail or from later versions of D&D. Using the turn sequence from Swords & Spells is another possibility (more on this, below).

I've often kept initiative and the combat sequence nebulous and flexible. First, intentions are declared. Next, the referee adjudicates the action. It is often obvious that certain actions will be faster/go first. Where there is some question, the referee can use relative Dex values or weapons used to make a judgment call, or he can request initiative checks. Often, a combat will begin without using initiative rolls, but once the general chaos of melee begins, initiative rolls will begin to be more common. (Also see Robert Fisher's thoughts on dynamic combat in classic D&D. http://web.fisher.cx/robert/rpg/dnd/dynamic.html)

Lately, however, I've desired a more defined approach. I wanted a sequence that made use of miniatures and tactical positioning, accounted for different spell-casting times (similar to the use of segments in AD&D), and accounted for the traditional rates-of-fire D&D lists for some missile weapons. I found a possible answer in a Knights & Knaves Alehouse forum post by T. Foster, who suggested using the combat sequence from Swords & Spells with OD&D. I found this appealing. The system provided the elements I sought, worked well with other traditional D&D elements like weapon reach and disengaging/retreat, and springs directly from the Chainmail roots of the game. While designed with the use of miniatures in mind, the system is easily modified for use without minis.

Detailed Combat Sequence

1. Initiative: Both sides roll 1d6 for initiative; high roll wins.
2. Missile/spell: In initiative order, both sides fire missiles, cast spells, etc.
3. Movement: Side with initiative moves up to half move
4. Movement: Side without initiative moves up to half move
5. Missile/spell: In initiative order, both sides fire missiles, cast spells, etc.
6. Movement: Side without initiative moves the remaining half move
7. Movement: Side with initiative moves the remaining half move
8. Missile/Spell: Unengaged combatants fire missile, cast spells, etc.
9. Melee: Engaged combatants fight one round of melee.

Rules for Missile/Ranged Attacks

- Archers standing still may fire twice (in phase 2 or 5, and phase 8)
- Archers taking a half-move may fire once (in phase 2 or 8). However, archers with split-move-and-fire ability (e.g. elves, mounted archers) that take a half-move may fire once in a missile phase of their choice (2, 5, or 8).
- Archers taking a full-move may not fire. However, archers with split-move-and-fire ability (e.g. elves, mounted archers), may take a full-move and fire once in phase 5, only.
- Slingers standing still may fire once (in phase 2, 5, or 8)
- Slingers taking a half-move may fire once (in phase 2 or 8).
- Slingers taking a full-move may not fire.
- Crossbowmen standing still may fire once (in phase 2 or 5) and reload (Heavy crossbowmen require a full round, with no movement, to reload.)
- Crossbowmen standing still may reload* and fire once (in phase 5 or 8).
- Crossbowmen taking a half-move may fire once (in phase 2 or 8) or reload*
- Crossbowmen taking a full-move may reload*, but may not fire
- Combatants hurling spears, axes, or hammers may fire once (in phase 2, 5, or 8) and take a full-move, including charge, if desired.
- Combatants hurling daggers or javelins may fire once (in phase 2, 5, or 8) and take a full-move with charge.
- Combatants hurling daggers or javelins may fire twice (in phase 2 or 5, and phase 8) and take a full-move without charge.

Rules for Spellcasting

- A spell caster cannot move and cast a spell in the same round.
- A spell caster may not cast a spell while engaged in melee. If the caster becomes engaged while casting, but before the spell is finished, the spell is interrupted and lost.
- A spell caster may cast a maximum of one spell per round.
- Casting time for spells depends on the level and type of spell

1st-2nd level spells, Power Words, Holy Words, Word of Recall, Devices, Innate Abilities	IMMEDIATE/NO DELAY
3rd-6th level spells, 1st-2nd level scrolls	+1 SPELL PHASE
7th-9th level spells, 3rd-6th level scrolls	FULL ROUND
7th-9th level scrolls	FULL ROUND +1 SPELL PHASE

Rules for Melee & Movement

(Also see Movement in Combat)

- Combatants who take a full-move may not engage in melee unless they charge.
- Combatants are considered engaged in melee when the distance between them is equal to or less than the longest reach (e.g. weapon reach, et cetera). Alternatively, this may be simplified to 10 ft.
- A moving combatant who becomes engaged may not leave engagement or continue movement to the flanks or rear of his opponent during the initial round of engagement. A combatant not already engaged in melee may move a maximum of 5' right or left in order to confront and contact an enemy attempting to bypass or move into a flanking position.
- If one combatant in a melee has allies to his immediate left or right which are not engaged with other enemies, these allies may move into flanking positions against their common enemy after the first round of melee.
- Flanking position grants a +1 bonus to hit and negates any benefit from the target's shield.
- Rear positioning grants a +2 bonus to hit, and negates any benefit from the target's shield.

- Disengage: a combatant with a clear path (i.e. through an area out of enemy reach) may attempt to disengage with up to a half-move.
- Retreat: a combatant may retreat from melee with movement in excess of a half-move. However, he loses the benefit of his shield, and his opponent gets a free attack with a +2 bonus to hit.

Background

This combat sequence is a slightly modified version of the combat rules in Swords & Spells (which is based on the original Chainmail medieval miniature combat rules). I find these rules satisfying for a number of reasons. First, they use precise positioning and miniatures to give a tactical feel to combat. Second, they provide a simple way to include spell casting times into the combat. Third, they provide rules for firing multiple missiles in a combat round. Fourth, I like the way movement is divided up so that opposing forces "meet in the middle" rather than one side closing all the distance on their turn. Lastly, I like the way these rules pull together and work with concepts from D&D (rate of fire, weapon reach, facing, spell-casting time, et cetera), and that they are firmly rooted in the traditional sources of the game. Special thanks to T. Foster (and his posts on the Knights & Knaves Alehouse forums) for the suggestion to use this sequence with OD&D, and for his assistance and advice in compiling and adapting these rules for man-to-man combat.

For those who prefer a lighter set of rules to govern combat, or who do not use miniatures, a simplified version of these rules may suffice.

Simple Combat Sequence

1. Both sides roll 1d6 for initiative; high roll wins.
2. Winning side fires missiles, starts spells (and finishes spells of level 1-2)
3. Losing side fires missiles, starts spells (and finishes spells of level 1-2)
4. Both sides move
5. Spells that were started in 2-3 take effect; archers who didn't move and haven't been engaged in melee may fire again
6. Melee

Obviously, this simplified version of the full combat sequence may require some interpretation and adjudication by the referee. I suggest using the details of the full sequence to inform and assist in making such judgments.

MOVEMENT WHILE EXPLORING

OD&D handles movement while exploring the dungeon in ten minute turns. A character gets two moves (calculated in feet) during a ten minute turn. (Note that this is different from some later editions, which give a single move during a ten minute turn.) Thus, a man in plate mail (move of 6"), would move 60 ft. x 2, or 120 ft. This assumes cautious, exploratory movement and mapping; flight or pursuit situations allow faster movement (i.e. double), but no mapping.

The Holmes Basic rulebook offers an interesting variation. It uses the OD&D rates (e.g. a man in plate mail moves 120 ft. in a turn, while exploring), but gives a double movement rate to "normal movement" (i.e not cautious/no mapping), and a triple movement rate to flight or pursuit. It also stipulates that a "heavy load" halves the movement rate.Thus, a fully armored man with a heavy load of gear/treasure will move 60 ft. per turn while exploring.

CREATING AN "OLD-SCHOOL" DUNGEON

You're all excited about the idea of running a traditional, old-school dungeon. You sit down with some graph paper and pencils. You spend some time drawing a nice map of the first level, and start keying. Hours go by. Your wife asks when you're coming to bed. Suddenly the weight and enormity of the task descends on you, stopping you in your tracks. How can you finish? How can you get the whole thing done? How do you keep things fresh and interesting for the players going through it? How do you even begin to go about designing this thing?

I don't have a one-true-way, guaranteed method to offer, but I do have some advice that might help. Most of this is nothing I've dreamed up on my own, but rather bits of wisdom I've gathered from various sources.

Gary Gygax's words in the original D&D rule books are a primary source, but I also gleaned much from online sources, including the ideas of T. Foster (Trent Foster), Evreaux, Melan (Gabor Lux), Wheggi, Stormgiant, grodog, and many others. This is also a very broad look at the subject, not delving down into the details of the task.

One thing to keep in mind is that you don't have to create the whole the right off the bat, before you start playing. In fact, attempting that is probably setting yourself up to fail. You can sketch out a "Skull- mountain"-style elevation or side-view of the dungeon, including some deeper levels, but you needn't draw and key the entire thing. Instead, start off with the first three levels, and start running it. You can certainly have a framework or general idea of what you'll be placing in the deeper areas, but you don't need to finish (or even map) those areas, yet.

You'll develop the deeper levels (as well as continuing to develop and modify the upper levels) as the game continues.

This is a very cool, and very "old school" approach. Your dungeon will evolve in a very organic manner. During play, the players are going to ask questions and take actions that make you think and give you ideas that never occurred to you. Actual play is going to shape the direction and design of your dungeon, often in unexpected fashion. You and the players will be in a sort of creativity feedback loop, and your dungeon will be all the better for it.

When creating your first three (or so) levels, there are a few general concepts that you should keep in mind. First, remember to offer the players plenty of choices. Even at the entrance to the place, don't give them one path to follow, give them four or five choices to make, right off the bat. For that matter, there needn't be only a single entrance. Have several ways in, with a few of the entrances going directly to deeper areas. Maybe new entrances open up or are discovered as play continues. Another important way to give players choices is to offer them many opportunities to move up and down through the levels. You want the players to decide when they want to go deeper. This isn't a video game where you play through the level to the end with the boss monster, then find the stairs. If they're a group of 1st level PCs, but they want to try their luck and skill on the 4th level of the dungeon, that's their decision.

Also, remember that stairs needn't go up or down a single level, and that's it. Give the players ways to go down multiple levels. Some paths up or down may skip one or more levels. You may be leery of including a stair, shaft, or elevator that spans multiple levels, fearing that your players will go down into undeveloped areas of the dungeon. That's true; they might. However, it's more likely that they will be fearful of going too deep, and even if they do descend to a level you haven't developed, they'll be very jumpy and very likely to stick close to their line of retreat. You can wing a hall or a room, or even an encounter from the appropriate wandering monster table. Usually a group dipping down below their comfort-zone will retreat after a quick look around and maybe a scare (even hearing a threatening sound can be enough to send them scurrying back to safer ground). Once you know that the PCs are dipping down into those

areas, you'll also have the motivation to work on and develop them. There's no goad like regular play to break dungeon-writers' block.

When drawing your maps, include multiple paths and choices, but also keep in mind that you want your players to be able to embark in meaningful exploration. You want them to be able to use their minds and their skill to make real discoveries. Include some dead ends, and leave some space on the map where you might later add stairs, shafts, and secret areas, as your dungeon continues to develop through play. Other desirable features include things like long, twisty passages, where they can't see the end. These will play on their fear (i.e. the unknown), and offer opportunities for interesting pursuit and evasion. A similar desirable feature are "pinch points" on the map. These are locations where access to a larger area or section is controlled by one or two points. Knowledge of and control of these pinch points can be an important factor if the PCs are being pursed and need a place to mount a defense.

Related to pinch points is the concept of a sublevel. A dungeon sublevel is an area that is isolated from the main level, usually by some sort of secret pinch point. In many old school dungeons, sublevels are a kind of reward in and of themselves. They tend to be smaller than full levels, and are often themed, although neither of these is a rule that cannot be broken. Sublevels often contain fantastic elements and large treasures, but they can also be more dangerous than normal. One of the great things about sublevels is that they can easily be added to an existing dungeon layout. This is a good way to incorporate third-party modules into your dungeon, as well.

A large consideration when drawing your maps is how to lay them out. One common choice is graph paper with 6 squares per inch, but that varies by taste, and by the size of the level. I've also seen dungeon maps (especially cavern maps) drawn on hex-paper (e.g. Isle of the Ape uses this approach). However, there is something to be said for eschewing graph paper, entirely, and drawing your maps on plain white paper. This frees you from the contstraints of the grid, and you might be surprised to find that your mapping takes on an entirely fresh character, with levels stretching out or sprawling in a much more organic and natural manner. Varying your approach from level to level is another good technique for keeping things fresh. One level might be very maze and grid-like, with relatively thin walls and not much rock, stone or earth between areas. Another might use large chambers, widely spaced, with curving tunnels through thick areas of stone. Trying different approaches to the act of mapping will naturally result in different styles of map, in many cases.

How big to make your levels is another question that will come up almost immediately. There is no one correct answer, but the considerations I've already

listed will have an impact. Another important consideration is the "density" of your dungeon, defined by the distribution of monsters. The traditional approach is to create a dungeon with about a third of encounter areas (e.g. rooms) containing monsters. That may seem to be a very "empty" dungeon. However, that empty space serves multiple purposes. It acts as a buffer between dangerous areas. It presents a measure of uncertainty to the players, and they need to balance their desire to search everything and everywhere with the danger of wandering monsters. It offers the benefit of repeat play, since they are unlikely to be able to explore everything on a level before continuing to the next. It offers room to run, allowing for meaningful evasion and pursuit, where the PCs can use the space and multiple paths along with techniques like hold portal and dropping food or treasure in order to extricate themselves from situations beyond their capabilities. It also offers the referee the ability to naturally re- stock, change, and add features (a secret stair to the newly completed sixth level could be penciled into the dusty and unvisited area of the first level, for example).

The question which naturally follows the distribution of monsters is the distribution of treasure. The traditional guideline is that half of the encounter areas with monsters will have treasure. Additionally, one- sixth of the "empty" encounter areas will have treasure, although such unguarded treasure will, no doubt, be craftily hidden and perhaps long- forgotten or guarded by ancient traps or magic. Treasure guarded by monsters may or may not be hidden or trapped. If it includes magic items, those will often be carried or used by the creatures, of course.

A very important consideration, and one that impacts the size of the levels, is just how much treasure should be placed. In the vast majority of old-school D&D games, treasure is the main goal (i.e. the PCs are seeking fortune and glory), and will provide the bulk of the XP. A typical old school campaign might have 80% of the XP coming from treasure, and the remaining 20% coming from defeating monsters. So the amount of treasure you stock your dungeon with will impact how many experience points the PCs earn. You need to provide enough XP to allow them to progress.

For the first level, especially, keep in mind that it's likely that the PCs will "lose" XP through attrition. That is, PCs will loot treasure (and thus XP) from the dungeon, but then die in a later encounter. They'll also overlook some treasure, simply not finding it. They may acquire XP from unexpected sources or side-adventures outside the dungeon, as well, and they may also acquire XP from dipping down into the lower levels, so judging the "correct" amount of treasure (i.e. XP) to place is more of a loose art than a science.

I suggest taking the average XP required to advance for a party of around 5 PCs and using that as a guideline for the amount of treasure you should place. For example, if a first level party needs around 10,000 XP for everyone to advance to second level, you need at least 8,000 XP worth of treasure (i.e. 80% of the 10,000, with the balance coming from monsters). However, taking attrition and missed treasure into consideration, you probably need to at least double that amount. There are several approaches you can take, given this guideline. You can use the treasure tables from the rule books or from various collections of monster and treasure assortments to assist with the process. The exact distribution will vary, of course. If you have a first level of 100 rooms or encounter areas, you might end up with something like this:

20 areas with monsters and treasure
15 areas with monsters (no treasure)
15 areas with treasure (no monster)
50 areas without monsters or treasure

That would mean 35 treasures, varying in value from hoard-to- hoard, and with the more valuable caches well-hidden and possibly defended by tougher monsters or more dangerous traps. These would be the major encounter areas that most PCs will be seeking.

With some idea of the required treasure out of the way, attention must turn to the monsters that will be placed on the level. As with treasure, the rule book tables and additional monster and treasure assortments that are organized by level provide an extremely valuable tool for the referee. I don't suggest simply rolling everything randomly, but rather using the tables as a springboard for your creativity. Also, examination of the traditional table will show that not all monsters on the first level of the dungeon are "first level" monsters. (Part of skillful old-school play being the ability to evaluate an encounter and know when to run.) The tables indicate a chance for more powerful and dangerous encounters, as well. The referee should choose a handful of monsters he wants to use, or a theme, and then perhaps use random rolls to "fill in" the gaps. When using random rolls, don't be afraid to discard results that don't work. However, one of the benefits of random rolls is their utility as a spur to your creativity. If you get a result that seems odd, don't immediately reject it; instead, give it some thought to see if you can imagine a way that such-and-such combination or situation would make some sense. You might be surprised to that this results is

cool ideas and encounters that you might not have considered, otherwise. Lastly, don't feel bound by the monsters on the tables. The tables provide a useful measure for an "appropriate" encounter difficulty for a given level, but you can certainly swap-out monsters of similar difficulty and number. Another useful technique is "re-skinning" well known monsters, giving them a different appearance while using the same stats as the original.

In addition to the difficulty of the monsters, the referee should consider how forgiving to make their exact placement. For example, on the first level, it's likely that any given fight may serious deplete a party of adventurers. Therefore, encounters on the first level of the dungeon might be fairly widely spaced, with small enclaves of monsters, rather than large lairs of closely-placed and coordinated groups. The larger and more coordinated groups are more properly placed on the lower levels. That's not to say that you can't have a well-coordinated lair on the first level, but if all the encounter areas on the level are well- coordinated and closely placed, it will be extremely difficult for a first level party.

When choosing monsters to populate a level, do not overlook the opportunity to introduce opposed factions, tension, and NPCs that might offer the chance for smart play, dialogue, and "politics" within the dungeon. A common criticism of dungeon-based play is that it lacks the sophistication and opportunities for interesting interaction and role-play that are present in cities and such. This doesn't have to be the case. There's no reason a dungeon, even a mythic underworld that operates according to its own rules, must be a random, non-sensical place of simplistic and one-dimensional play. The dungeon can be filled with just as much intrigue and opportunity for dialogue as the King's court; it's up to the players (and the referee, of course), to take advantages of those opportunities.

When considering the second, and deeper, levels, the referee can follow a similar approach for determining the number of monsters and the total value of the treasure. However, keep in mind that you will have less PC attrition as the characters increase in hit points and power, so you won't need to double the treasure, like you might on the upper levels. The first few levels will probably be fairly large, but deeper levels can often be smaller and less sprawling, although this is not a hard- and-fast rule.

I mentioned wandering monsters, earlier, in passing. In an old-school dungeon, the purpose of wandering monsters is to provide a challenge that helps encourage good play. Wandering monsters present a danger that drains resources (e.g. hit points, spells, magic items) from a party for very little or no reward (i.e. treasure). Since monsters are not worth much XP, compared to

treasure, wandering monsters are something to be avoided. Smart players will try to avoid, evade, distract, or otherwise bypass wandering monsters. They don't want to spend their resources on wandering monsters, but rather on areas and encounters that will provide a larger reward. They will try to stay focused and avoid wasting time in the dungeon, since wandering monsters encountered are a function of time.

Wandering monsters are typically rolled from a table, by level. Often, the table will include a chance of a roll on a deeper-level's table, as well. I typically include the following elements in my wandering monster tables:

1. Strange or unexplained noises, smells, or events
2. Encounters with monsters from keyed areas on the level. Killing these monsters reduces the total number of monsters from that area.
3. Encounters with truly wandering monsters that are not from keyed areas. Killing these monsters does not reduce the total from keyed areas.
4. A chance for a roll on a harder table.

I also like to set up my wandering monster tables with a bell-shaped probability curve, so that I can divide them into results that are common, uncommon, rare, and very rare.

This brief treatment of old school dungeon creation barely scratches the surface. I have not mentioned anything about tricks, barely touched on traps, environmental hazards, puzzles, teleporters, light and darkness, air, water, fungus, factions, red herrings, sublevels, and a myriad of similar topics. However, I'm hopeful that this musing might assist a referee contemplating the task of megadungeon creation, and help him on his way. For more advice and details, I highly recommend checking out the various old-school forums, which hold a great wealth of wisdom and experience on creating and running interesting and fun dungeons.

THE DUNGEON AS A MYTHIC UNDERWORLD

There are many interpretations of "the dungeon" in D&D. OD&D, in particular, lends itself to a certain type of dungeon that is often called a "megadungeon" and that I usually refer to as "the underworld." There is a school of thought on dungeons that says they should have been built with a distinct purpose, should "make sense" as far as the inhabitants and their ecology, and shouldn't necessarily be the centerpiece of the game (after all, the Mines of Moria were just a place to get through). None of that need be true for a megadungeon underworld. There might be a reason the dungeon exists, but there might not; it

might simply be. It certainly can, and perhaps should, be the centerpiece of the game. As for ecology, a megadungeon should have a certain amount of verisimilitude and internal consistency, but it is an underworld: a place where the normal laws of reality may not apply, and may be bent, warped, or broken. Not merely an underground site or a lair, not sane, the underworld gnaws on the physical world like some chaotic cancer. It is inimical to men; the dungeon, itself, opposes and obstructs the adventurers brave enough to explore it. For example, consider the OD&D approach to doors and to vision in the underworld:

Generally, doors will not open by turning the handle or by a push. Doors must be forced open by strength...Most doors will automatically close, despite the difficulty in opening them. Doors will automatically open for monsters, unless they are held shut against them by characters. Doors can be wedged open by means of spikes, but there is a one-third chance (die 5-6) that the spike will slip and the door will shut...In the underworld some light source or an infravision spell must be used. Torches, lanterns, and magic swords will illuminate the way, but they also allow monsters to "see" the users so that monsters will never be surprised unless coming through a door. Also, torches can be blown out by a strong gust of wind. Monsters are assumed to have permanent infravision as long as they are not serving some character. (The Underworld & Wilderness Adventures, pg 9)

Special Ability functions are generally as indicated in CHAINMAIL where not contradictory to the information stated hereinafter, and it is generally true that any monster or man can see in total darkness as far as the dungeons are concerned except player characters. (Monsters & Treasure, pg 5)

Notice that all characters, including those which can see in normal darkness (e.g. elves, dwarves. This ability is not specified in the three brown books, but is found in Chainmail.) require a light source in the underworld, while all denizens of the place possess infravision or the ability to see in total darkness. Even more telling, a monster that enters the service of a character loses this special vision. Similarly, characters must force their way through doors and have difficulty keeping them open; however, these same doors automatically open for monsters. This is a clear example of how the normal rules do not apply to the underworld, and how the underworld, itself, works against the characters exploring it.

Of course, none of this demands that every dungeon need be a mythic underworld; there could be natural caves and delved dungeon sites that are not in the "underworld" category, and follow more natural laws. Nevertheless, the central dungeon of the campaign benefits from the strange other-worldliness that characterizes a mythic underworld.

A mythic underworld should not be confused with the concept of the "underdark." The underdark concept is that of an underground wilderness composed of miles of caves, tunnels, delved sites, and even whole underground cities. This is a cool fantasy concept, but is distinct from the concept of a mythic underworld that obeys its own laws and is weird, otherworldly, and apart from the natural order of things. (There is no reason a referee couldn't join the two concepts of underworld and underdark, though.)

Some common characteristics and philosophies for a mythic underworld or megadungeon (keep these in mind when creating your dungeon):

1. It's big, and has many levels; in fact, it may be endless
2. It follows its own ecological and physical rules
3. It is not static; the inhabitants and even the layout may grow or change over time
4. It is not linear; there are many possible paths and interconnections
5. There are many ways to move up and down through the levels
6. Its purpose is mysterious or shrouded in legend
7. It's inimical to those exploring it
8. Deeper or farther levels are more dangerous
9. It's a (the?) central feature of the campaign

If you embrace these concepts, you'll be playing OD&D according to some of the original assumptions of the game. And boy, is it fun.

THE ORIGINAL SETTING

The Outdoor Survival Map

Squares = settlements   Circles = castles   Diamonds = lairs
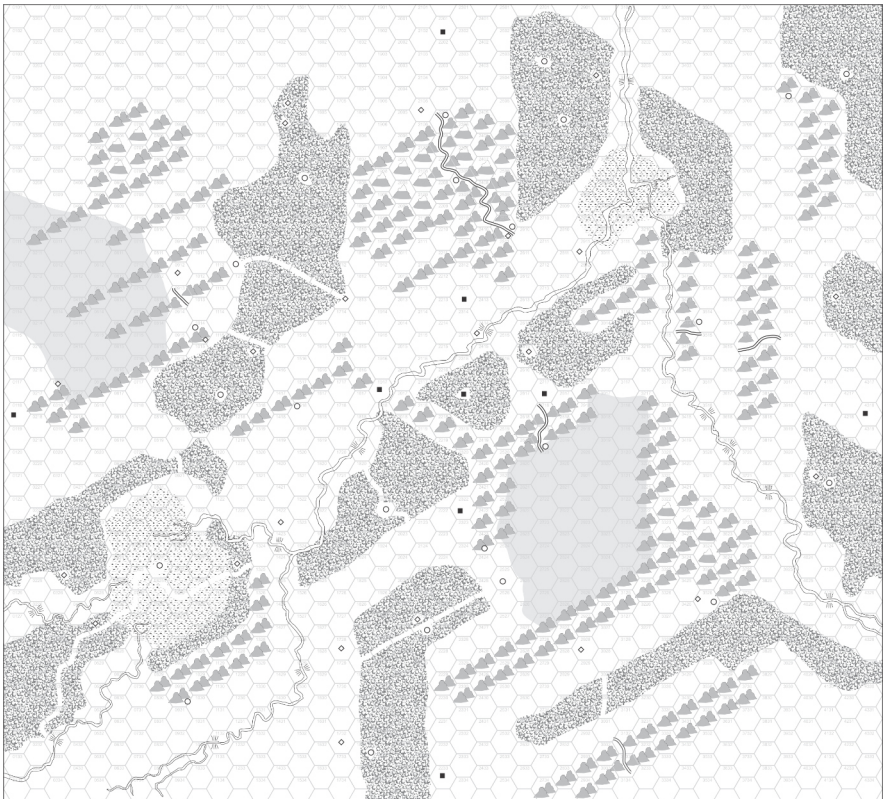
ON OD&D'S SETTING

The map from Avalon Hill's Outdoor Survival was the stated setting of original Dungeons & Dragons, and it's gotten a lot of love as a simple world for hexcrawling. If the hexes are 5 miles across, then it's about 175 miles by 180 miles - or 31,500 square miles, a heavily forested inland area that's around the size of South Carolina or the Czech Republic. Here is the description of this world:

The so-called Wilderness really consists of unexplored land, cities and castles, not to mention the area immediately surrounding the castle (ruined or otherwise) which housed the dungeons.

If you actually read the wilderness description in OD&D volume 3: The Underworld & Wilderness Adventures, it turns out that the implied details of the setting are weird. Fighters in castles demand to be jousted, magic-users cast Geas and send them out after treasure, clerics demand a tithe or send the characters on a Quest.

But the real weirdness, and this was apparently confirmed in Gary Gygax's campaigns, is what is there when you start wandering about the wilderness. Mountains are haunted by cavemen and necromancers; deserts are home of nomads and dervishes. The "Optional" animal listings turns swampland into the Mesozoic Era - rather than alligators and snakes it is full of tyrannosaurs and triceratops. Arid plains are Barsoomian, with banths, thoats, calots and the lot, while mountains are outright paleolithic, peopled by mammoths, titanotheres, mastodons, and sabre-tooth cats. Gygax confirms this:

When I was using the pre-World of Greyhawk map for my world setting, the West Coast of North America was the Pleistocene region inhabited by savage cavemen and their contemporary fauna.

This makes the Outdoor Survival map a truly wild place. That huge desert towards the center? That's running with weird creatures of Mars - and maybe Tharks, Red Martians and so on. The mountains surrounding them are the home of cavemen who hunt sabre-toothed cats. The marsh castle is overflown by pterodactyls - does its lord ride around on a triceratops?

Each type of region has its peculiarities. Only cities lack flying encounters, humanoids (labelled "giants" and including ents, elves, dwarves, and all humanoid and giant types in OD&D), animals and dragons. Lycanthropes haunt all but the deserts and the cities, while the undead are found mainly in cities and swamps. This is a truly wild land, and land for 20 miles distant from a

character's stronghold can be kept clear of monsters just by holding the stronghold.

Clearing 20 miles in each direction from the swamp stronghold on the lower left would clear the entire swamp and a number of points in the surrounding forest. This area (assuming it's in hexagons) is 1,299 square miles, a bit bigger than Luxembourg, but it is almost depopulated; the average area will have 5 villages with an average of 250 inhabitants, meaning that there is slightly less than 1 person per square mile. That is slightly less than the population density of Alaska. Even with the maximum 3200 people it's still sparser than Wyoming by a factor of more than two. Presumably the whole village is in a single hex (area 21.65 square miles), and the remaining hexes are simply unpopulated.

Cities in such a place are probably small affairs. This is not the world of grand cosmopolitan wonders; it's downright post-apocalyptic and probably has a few thousand people per city. Trade is downright perilous, given that you're likely to run into dragons, or giant crabs if you follow the river, or many other horrid things.

But more and more I'm finding that I like the idea of this setting. It's radically different from, say, the more comfortable World of Greyhawk, or most other fantastic realms; it's a true outland, where civilization hangs on by a thread. It leaves open terrific possibilities; the nomads, dervishes, cavemen, and berserkers all live in the world around towns; so do centaurs and pixies and minotaurs. I want to start to go into what the oddities of this setting are, and how they fit; it's a good match for the concept of "Demon-Haunted Lands," which I'm seeing more and more as a way to make something unique out of this setting.

A LORD IN HIS CASTLE

As I indicated in my last post, when characters come across a castle in OD&D it is possible that a fighting-man will come out and challenge them to joust. This refers the reader back to Chainmail, which has some pretty simple jousting rules (a combination of rider position and aiming point determines what happens). I find this interesting in one minor sense: it implies that Chainmail is more important than some interpreters of the original rules have made it.

Talysman on the OD&D board pointed out that this brings a bit of Arthuriana to the setting. There are random knights and damsels scattered liberally throughout the OD&D world, and it's possible for a hexcrawl to look like something out of Le Morte d'Arthur, where PCs are challenged by random knights; one would hope to expand this to include being insulted by dwarves, and variously petitioned by maidens and noble ladies alike.

What's fascinating to me are the "guards / retainers" in the castle. In addition to Swashbucklers, Myrmidons, and Champions (that is, fighting-men of 5th, 6th and 7th level), a Lord or Superhero in a castle can be served by griffins (spelled "griffon"), giants, rocs or ogres. Griffins and rocs are ridden by Herœs (4th level fighting-men). This makes a lot of sense given the setting: random encounter tables often bring out "flyers" which include everything from chimeræ to dragons to balrogs.

But when you consider that A, fighting-men challenge PCs to random combat, and B, some of these fighting-men have a stable of rocs or griffins, and C, The Underworld and Wilderness Adventures dedicates three whole pages to ærial combat, this should be going somewhere a bit more fantastic than the little jousting table in Chainmail. Specifically, PCs should occasionally be challenged to an ærial joust by these fighting-men.

It also implies that there are some ærial defenses. There is a specific reference to "sling-ended catapults" - which I'd think implies a trebuchet - uses a load of small stones in a birdshot-style fashion, creating a spherical hit area. For castles without flying defenders, this is probably the main form of immediate defense from marauding dragons, balrogs, and so on. It's also stated that bombing is part of ærial warfare; basically this is equated to the largest stones that can be thrown from a catapult. Bombardier rocs, then, would be able to drop boulders on troops or fortifications in an attempt to crush them; this can deflect left or right, short or long, or both.

Little wonder that this is such a hardscrabble world! You don't just have to worry about overflights from pteranodons and balrogs and dragons, but sieges get into bombardment from above. It's interesting that this is well and thought of in OD&D's castle defenders, since it's a frequent complaint that castles would be useless against wizards and dragons; but if the castle's defenders are dropping boulders on wizards and using trebuchets to knock the dragons out of the sky, things start to make a lot more sense.
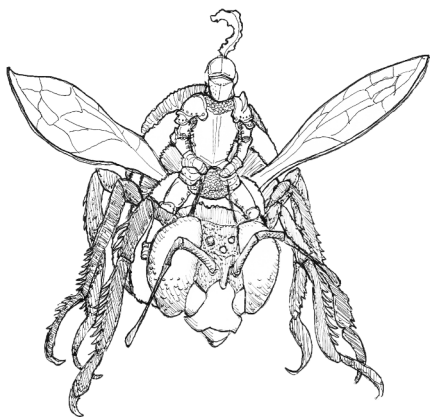
It also makes the Charm Monster spell a lot more essential - the next time you run into a roc, you should try and make it your party fighter's mount instead of killing it. That is the way it's done in the OD&D world.

THE WIZARD'S TOWER

In the listings for castle inhabitants, there are two types of magic-users: wizard (11th level) and necromancer (10th level). A wizard will be attended by dragons, balrogs, wyverns or basilisks; a necromancer by chimæræ, manticores, lycanthropes or gargoyles. Unlike the griffins and rocs of the fighting-men, the magic-users' retainers never have heroic mounts. In their castles, the magic-users will use Geas to send the player characters on some quest after treasure, claiming half and preferring the magic items. This is an obvious and easy way to send player characters on a perilous quest of the referee's choosing, and to make sure that the treasure thus gained dœs not enrich the PCs too heavily. The alternative of giving up a magic item as a toll is a good way to strip out any excess items from the party. All told, a very convenient and simple encounter type. So let's see what lies under the surface for our setting.

It's hardly a coincidence that the wizards who live in these castles are all able to cast 5th level spells. A necromancer has access to Animate Dead, so they can be true "necromancers" in the classic sense. A 10th level magic-user casting the spell gets 2d6 skeletons or zombies at a time; one can imagine that a necromancer's tower would commonly be stocked with zombie servants who need no food and fight without reservation.

The fifth-level of magic-user spells in OD&D is practically built for mass combat. This is the level of Cloudkill and Wall of Stone, of Transmute Rock to Mud and Pass-Wall and Conjure Elemental. It's also the level where Feeblemind comes in, the ultimate defense against magic-users attacking in such a situation. Someone laying siege to a wizard's tower could well find themselves facing a zombie army backed up by dragons or balrogs, and elementals to boot, not to mention a magic-user with three or four fireballs to throw.

There are all kinds of mini-settings here. Consider a wizard with basilisks; the basilisk-handler is reliant on his master's access to the Stone to Flesh spell, and it may be best to recruit a blind man for the task. The wizard's tower will be surrounded by a statue garden the likes of which would suggest a medusa rather than a spellcaster lives in the tower. A necromancer who keeps gargoyles may have them blend in as if they were architectural elements, and they will prove formidable fœs indeed since only magical attacks affect them. The tower will seem almost defenseless until it springs to life. If it has lycanthropes, the mild-mannered residents will appear to have nothing unusual about them, until they show their nature - perhaps a Lawful magic-user will be served by ferocious werebears. Some spells also imply interesting settings; consider the wizard who casts Hallucinatory Terrain on the lands around his tower.

A proper magic-user's tower will also have a rich library; in pre-printing times that could number in the low dozens of books, including both spellbooks and tomes of magical knowledge. They're also like to have magic items, preferring the miscellaneous ones; so a wizard in his tower may well have a Crystal Ball or Medallion of ESP and be able to see his fœs coming well in advance. Rare items that could be of tremendous use in defense include the Drums of Panic, scattering an invading army at a stroke.

So a wizard's tower should be a rich environment for the PCs to come upon. And after the wizard dies, there's always the possibility of what dungeons lie beneath it.

CLERICAL STRONGHOLDS

There are two types of clerical strongholds: those of Patriarchs and those of Evil High Priests, their Chaotic equivalents. Clerics are served by fighters of 4th level (hero) or 8th level (superhero), ents or hippogriffs. As with griffins and rocs, the hippogriffs are ridden by herœs. EHPs have trolls, vampires, white apes or spectres as their retainers. Generally clerics only request a tithe rather than a quest, although if the tithe is refused one will be commanded.

One important thing to remember is that nazgûl in OD&D are assumed to be spectres (as opposed to Chainmail which treated them as wraiths). Such riders are fearsome encounters near an EHP's castle, as are level-draining vampires. The ent, conversely, is a great subtle defender of a cleric's castle; an enemy force might ride up to the walls only to find that the trees they rode past are alive and will defend them.

The cleric in a siege is a fearsome opponent. If his castle is in a wooded area, Turn Sticks to Snakes is potentially quite deadly, as is a creative use of Speak with Plants, and Insect Plague will almost certainly turn away the footmen needed to capture the stronghold. If he has 7th level assistants casting Create Food and Create Water, or dœs it himself, there is no question of starving out a small but stalwart group of the faithful.

The impact of high-level clerics in the game world obviously stems from the Raise Dead spell. The character can only be dead a few days, at which point Constitution comes into play (low Con characters may not survive). Every cleric high enough in level to cast Raise Dead is also high enough in level to have their own castle. Since there are eighteen castles on the Outdoor Survival map and one-sixth of the castle inhabitants are (presumably Lawful) Patriarchs, that means there are three non-player clerics in this realm who can Raise a PC, unless more are in cities without a castle of their own - nothing is detailed about this, but even so one per city would give a maximum of 12 Patriarchs, none guaranteed to be within 4 days' ride of the characters.

Of course this can create an interesting opportunity. If a Patriarch is not available, perhaps an Evil High Priest could cast Raise Dead - though this would be at some terrible price. EHPs are not immediately belligerent per the rules, and could negotiate with PCs.

One reason I like the idea of clerical strongholds so much is that it reinforces the idea that a cleric is not another term for a priest. Clerics are much closer to the knight templar type, abjuring in OD&D only edged magical weapons, and leading cavalry and crossbowmen. The OD&D cleric is a templar and a vampire hunter, and I think it's interesting if their training involves the initiation into secret mysteries, only slowly being taught the true powers - after all, the cleric can't cast a single spell at first level, and must prove himself to the order in order to gain even that.

Given the castle density I would suppose that the Lawful clerics are tied to a single order rather than spread across multiple deities, while the Evil High Priests who should occupy three of the castles are each individual forces, as befits servants of Chaos. This could have interesting consequences when a PC cleric goes to build his own stronghold.

THE WOODS OF MYTH

The woodlands of the OD&D world are thick and plentiful, second only to grasslands in terms of number of hexes. Over half of the castles are actually in wooded locations, and although they only contain one town, three others sit on the border of forests. Woods surround both swamps. They are presumably the reason for the low population density of the OD&D setting, since so much of the arable land is forested. As we will see, there may be good reason that more has not been cleared for farmland.

In the encounter tables, the most common (1 in 4 chance) are lycanthropes. Werewolves, wereboars, weretigers and werebears stalk the woods in uncommonly high numbers, and by alignment, only the werebears can be Lawful. These are mostly small family packs, and lycanthrope attacks create fresh lycanthropes. Foresters and rangers in this world must prize silver weapons, and no logging

expedition would dare go out unless it was guarded by men with silver. This is a double danger since lycanthropes can be either human or animal in form, and what appears to be an encounter with bandits may suddenly turn much more dangerous.

Your "typical" humans wander the land - bandits, brigands, berserkers, and high level classed characters. These are presumably travelling parties from the leaders and defenders of the nearby castles. Bandits and brigands amass in relatively large forces, 30-300, and presumably prey upon various merchant caravans. Given the demographics, there are an extremely high number of such if you roll 30-300 men-types as per Monsters & Treasure, and each major forested area should have perhaps 2-3 groups, either bandits or brigands (like bandits but Chaotic). The brigands are presumably deserters from military service while the bandits are general outlaws from civilized society.

The real depth of the forest comes in the "Optional Woods" table of encounters which includes centaurs, unicorns, minotaurs, gorgons, pixies, manticores, dryads and medusæ. Centaurs are explicitly stated to live in hidden glens and be at least semi-intelligent. In ancient Greek myth the centaurs represented barbarism and civilization was triumphant over them; in OD&D, some centaurs are actually Lawful in alignment, and fit more of a role as ancient defenders of the wood. Unicorns are always lawful and follow medieval myth in only being approached by maidens. These are powerful creatures, and a typical encounter might be with a powerful maiden-warrior who has taken a unicorn for her mount.

Minotaurs are an interesting choice, since traditionally they are so closely associated with Dædalus's labyrinth. These are obviously the awful half-man, half-bull hybrids, and they are described as man-eaters who always attack. Gorgons are, as I discussed back in March, based on an article that showed a monster like the khalkotauros that had a poison breath. Manticores are straight-up horrors to cross, and I've already talked about medusæ and pixies.

Dryads are interesting because they're one of the encounters that is totally non-violent but can potentially remove a character from the game; they will use Charm Person when approached, with -2 (stated as 10%) to the saving throw, on 90% of the people who approach them. It's a powerful encounter but its character-removing nature is entirely optional, since an intelligent character shouldn't go up to a dryad. It's also worth mentioning that elves don't have any of their usual immunities in OD&D and would be impacted by this just like any other character.

The woods in OD&D are a truly mythical place, full of wonderful and horrible things. Humans build castles here to huddle behind the walls - and flying defenders - when they're overflown by manticores or attacked by brigands. They hire guards armed with silver or magic against raiding wereboars and weretigers. The forest is like to

be peopled by the occasional medusa and gorgon statues; their lairs take on the "statue garden" aspect. But it is possible to ally with the occasional centaur tribe, or hope for help from a unicorn-mounted maiden. It's a place where herœs can be made, or disappear never to be seen again.

TIME-FORGOTTEN SWAMPS

The swamplands in OD&D are hardly as prolific as the forests that surround them; on the map there are only two swamps of any size. Both are large and fed by rivers, so we can say that they are freshwater wetlands; both are bordered by forests and should be considered as proper forested swamps and not reedy marshes, which likely exist in the river hexes. The southwest swamp is dominated by a castle, while the northeast swamp only has the fork of the major rivers in the area.

Every move there is a 50% chance of becoming lost and moving in a random direction, making travel particularly treacherous. Visibility is poor and there are few permanent landmarks; only the rivers can realistically be used to navigate them safely. As we'll see, I think this makes the deep swamps a particularly tricky environment.

Swamp encounters have a 25% chance of undead, and as such it's likely that the castle in the southwest swamp is that of a Necromancer or an Evil High Priest. It should go without saying that if you see a body in the swamp, it may not be at rest, and a zombie or ghoul that dœsn't have to breathe could wait for weeks to find prey by hiding in the shallow waters of a swamp pool. Mummies and vampires are a bit more out of place, but a burial ground in the swamp might have some above-ground tombs reminiscent of the ones in New Orleans that could house these types.

The encounter tables also list the horrible "swimmer types," which include giant crabs, octopi, squid, snakes, leeches and fish, as well as crocodiles, mermen, nixies, sea monsters and dragon turtles. Logistically these would have to come at points where the rivers intersect with the swamps and make deeper than usual waters for habitat. Crocodiles and giant snakes being par for the course as you are going through the wetlands. Nixies are particularly nasty - rather than being physically violent, they try to charm opponents and enslave them.

It's worth talking briefly about OD&D mermen here: they are described as similar to berserkers but fighting at -1 on land. Clearly these are not mermaid-style creatures, and this is further verified in Supplement II: Blackmoor, where mermen are described as riding giant seahorses. This is a very far cry from the fish-tailed mermen that Gygax codified in the Monster Manual, more Namor than anything. They should be fearsome raiders into swamp and river territories, though - presumably eventually going to their far-off ocean homes.

But the big shift in the swamps proper is what lurks in the "optional swamps" table for animal encounters. There is an oddity in the charts - such that there is a sub-head for swamp animals, but no listing within the swamp encounter chart for "animals" that would trigger it. Obviously these are encountered somewhere, and I would suggest that it's best to substitute "Animals" out for "Swimmer" where there is no river in the swamp hex, meaning that dinosaurs are only found in the deepest reaches of the swamplands.

The inhabitants of these deep swamps include tyrannosaurs, pterodactyls, triceratops, brontosaurs (not yet changed to apatosaurs) and stegosaurs. OD&D has no entry whatsœver for any of these monsters, but given their location it's not entirely off-base to think that they represent the view of dinosaurs as lumbering, slow, lizard-like reptiles. This hints at a Lost World type of area, where swamp dwellers are at risk of tyrannosaurus attack. The potential interactions are fascinating: humans riding dinosaurs, an encounter interrupted by a tyrannosaur, hunting a wild brontosaurus. There's also the possibility for an Arzach type of character, riding on a giant pterosaur (assuming that the listing didn't limit us to smaller proper pterodactyls). Or of an animated tyrannosaurus skeleton.

Swamps are also the home of the black dragons, which take on their familiar aspect of acid-breathers who are less stupid than white dragons but not as wily as the other types. These are much more comfortable in the swamp, like the dinosaurs, and their lairs are likely to be the most fetid corners.

For humans, the swamps are difficult and treacherous lands. Travel through them is slow and difficult, and they contain possibly the most threatening types of encounters. It is a true land that time forgot, a treacherous place where you are as likely to meet a zombie as a tyrannosaur. Venturing into them is not for the faint of heart, and one should have a cleric as well as a strategy to face the dinosaurs and river monsters.

IN THE SAVAGE MOUNTAINS

Mountains are one of the more plentiful terrain types in the Outdoor Survival map that is the presumed setting of original D&D. There is a nice big range in the north and center, and both the northwest and southeast quadrants of the map have what appears to be several ridges. In Snorri's map which I used in the start of this series, there are several high mountains in white. These are probably old mountains, more like the Appalachians than the Rockies. There are six castles in the mountains (one third of the castles), and these must be hard fortresses that use their natural defenses to good effect. Most of the castles with flying defenders will be in the mountains, for logistical reasons.

The mountains run with giant types (which includes humanoids, ogres, trolls, giants, and demihumans), and dragons, each being 25% of the encounters located here. Giants proper will, naturally, live in the mountain ranges, probably with various and sundry followings; there will be hill and stone giants in the caves as well as frost giants in the frozen mountains, and possibly a cloud giant castle. Other goblinoid types are probably making forays from caves deep within the mountains. Elves are the out of place encounters here.

Dragons living in the mountain range will be primarily red, although the colder northern mountains may have a few white dragons as well. The dragon chart also includes cockatrices, basilisks, wyverns, balrogs, chimeræ and hydras - all of which could well be native to the mountains.

This is in addition to the flyer list that includes dragons and balrogs already. Combined with the giants, we need a pretty good cavern system to support these creatures; the mountains must nearly have an underground wilderness beneath them.

Under the "Men" listing we find cavemen, the only place where they appear in the encounter lists. Cavemen in OD&D are 2nd level fighting- men, wielding clubs the equivalent of morning stars but fighting at -1 to morale. Their primitive state is indicated in Neutral alignment. Given the media of the time, it's probable that these are meant as fur-wearing Neanderthals, with primitive communication and limited technology. These are hardscrabble cavemen, who compete with various magical beasts, monsters and paleolithic predators for their living space. It's no surprise that they are bigger and stronger, but canny enough to run when cornered. If you're facing a balrog there's no reason to stay and get killed.

The animal listing for Mountains is well suited to cavemen: there are cave bears, dire wolves, saber-toothed cats (called tigers in the OD&D books), mastodons, spotted lions, woolly rhinos, titanotheres and mammoths. What's funny is that despite it being a very common trope at the time (for instance One Million Years B.C.), these cavemen

are mostly distant from the dinosaurs and don't interact with them. Mammoths and mastodons make fine prey species for humans as well as the many predators of the mountains.

As with swamps, mountains are slow going, but it's harder to become lost in the ranges, and if you look, other than the north-central range, a lost party will fairly shortly find themselves outside the mountainous area; it's not hard to get to lowland if you look. In the movement rates, we also see an interesting wrinkle: the dragons can cover 24 hexes per day flying, which would get them about 2/3 of the way across the map, so a dragon could hunt 12 hexes away from its nesting area and return in a day.

Mountains are savage terrain; human toeholds barely tame them. The hardy few who live in mountain castles are seen as the defenders of the lower realms. Of course, where there are dragons there is rich treasure, and many foolhardy adventurers go off into the mountains never to be seen again.

THE DESOLATE DESERTS

In the Outdoor Survival map there are two deserts to speak of. One lies in the northwest corner, adjacent to some lines of mountains, and continues off the map to potentially more desert. The other lies in the area between two mountain ranges. Geographically, these are probably both relatively cold weather deserts, more similar to the Afghan desert than the dunes of Arabia or the sands of the Maghreb (North Africa) or the Sahara. The mountain patterns allow for the northwest desert to really be more of a steppe region, such as the Caucasus (between the Black and Caspian Seas). The southern desert is more likely caused by the rain shadow of the surrounding mountains, which absorb the wet air that blows toward it and makes the desert terribly dry.

OD&D makes its deserts particularly hard to navigate. Characters get lost in it on 1-3 in d6, and can easily find themselves wandering the desert, slowly seeking the way out as they run out of water supplies. It is not as slow going as the swamp and a party lost in a desert has a reasonable chance of finding themselves in the nearby mountains. There are no permanent settlements, either towns or castles, in either desert - indicating that they are not given to civilization at all.

The deserts are peopled, though, by nomads and dervishes. In the standard earthly desert, OD&D lists nomads as being half the encounters with humans, and the dervish type is similar enough. Random encounters will only run across a lord or a wizard, probably in transit. Nomads are the logical choice, and their mix of bowmen and mounted soldiers is generally accurate to classical and medieval dwellers who would have lived in the Caucasus or Central Asia. Dervishes are nomads who are

amazing fighters, similar to berserkers, and religious fanatics. Not to mention that they've got terrific headgear. My feeling is that there are probably at most two or three groups of each, one to two for each desert.

Blue dragons are the native flyers here, and there is something particularly satisfying about having a lightning-based monster be at home in the sand and dirt of the desert. Either desert would make a fine hunting ground for red and white dragons (at home in nearby mountains) as well. A "giant" listing (including humanoids, giant-kin and demihumans) rounds things out, which leads to the very odd result that ents could well be encountered in the deserts.

At this point the referee needs to make some choices about the deserts. The "Arid Plains" listing contains a number of Barsoomian creatures - Apts, Banths, Calots, Darseen, Orluks, Sith, Tharks, Thoats, and White Apes. Likewise the "Desert" listing under men contains Red, Black, Yellow and White Martians, as well as Tharks, listed in parentheses for "Mars." So a referee may interpret that Martian creatures and/or the races of Barsoom are also found in the deserts. The alternative, using the basic Animals chart, simply seems sadly dry and inappropriate, resulting in things like giant toads and wild boars.

If we assume that only the "Optional Arid Plains" listing applies, it uses Barsoom for some instant desert dwellers. Some feel appropriate, such as the reptilian Darseen (which may vary greatly in size and HD) or the insectoid Sith; Banths would be the terror of the desert lands. Several are polar creatures on Mars, such as the Apts, Orluks and the White Apes, but could live in the northern of the two deserts. Given the general aridity of Barsoom, perhaps some long-lost portal allowed the wildlife - and the fierce green Tharks - to migrate out into one or both of the deserts. They make it instantly an alien-dominated environment. Tharks also have the ability to communicate telepathically, which would have to be worked into the game, and it would have to be answered whether other humans have the immunity to mind-reading that John Carter possesses.

There is also some potential for cross-over here; the nomads, for instance, could have started to herd the Thoats they encountered instead of cattle, or in addition to them. Depending upon your interpretation of Orluks, they might be hunted for their fur. I think in general it may be best to limit Barsoomian creatures to a single desert, probably the northwest one where it tracks off further west and there is land for them to expand upon.

All of this gives us a desert far different from what we might have expected, i.e. a sort of Arabian style land of hot sands, shifting dunes, djinns and efreets, Berber-type nomads, etc. But it's a very rich desert to explore, and get lost in, and possibly discover something even stranger than you expected.

RAGING RIVERS

The Outdoor Survival map is dominated by a river that forks at the north swamp and cuts down across the terrain. There is just a single city that actually sits on the west river; this should technically be the largest of the various towns, since it is the one that would logically have access to trading opportunities upriver. The east river is overlooked by a castle in the mountains, which form a neat valley around them, but has no towns. This valley is probably one of the richer areas under a castle's control, and pays corresponding good rents to its lord.

It is faster to travel by river than any other method in OD&D, and parties rarely get lost. However, getting out to the north requires spending a day going through the swampy terrain, even in a fast galley. Trade with the lands north requires most of a day to reach the swamp, a full day to clear it, and less than a day to get north of the map. From the castle to the southeast exit takes a bit more than a day in either boat or galley. It remains up to the referee if there are trading opportunities downstream to the southwest - the rivers appear to get narrower there.

River lands are almost entirely plains, except in the swamps and the west river which touches on forest hexes at a few points. Since the river is likely less than a half-mile across, most of the hex should follow the "normal" wilderness rules, only switching over to the "river" charts when actually at the river. This should follow Waterborne for actual on-river encounters with men, and the local area for animals.

The "Waterbourne" (sic) chart lists Buccaneers three times, Pirates (like Buccaneers but always Chaotic) twice and Mermen once. As I mentioned back under swamps, Mermen seem to be bipedal humans who live underwater. Buccaneers are Bandits but on boats, and are either footmen or crossbowmen. Pirates are Buccaneers but they're Chaotic. River pirates prowl these waters, probably hoping to harass merchant galleys travelling north. There may be a toll at the castle on the east river if it is clear of piracy.

All such piracy is likely to be of the grapple-and-board method, with small boats being used by the pirates or buccaneers to come up alongside and the crossbowmen giving fire support to the lightly armed and armored men fighting their way aboard the target ship. Large vessels may use catapults to attempt to smash through pirate boats, but largely we're talking about the need for armed guards on each ship.

Swimmers are a freakish lot, and most of the listed swimmer encounters (25% of river encounters) will be horrors you would expect in the oceans: giant squid, giant octopi, giant crabs, sea monsters and dragon turtles. The giant leeches are frightful swamp types, as are giant snakes and crocodiles, and all are well out of their normal habitats. One thing this tells us is that the river is deep to be able to accommodate

these creatures; there may be points where it is 200-300 feet deep, and correspondingly quite wide at that point.

One curiosity is that giant squids are quite real in our world, and have a bit of a following on the Internet, but their flesh is high in ammonia content and totally inedible. However, the people in that one town along the west river may find that giant crab claws make a delicious hearty meal for a whole family. This also allows the referee to handle these as animals rather than pure monsters, and a giant squid is not necessarily out to re-enact every movie scene we've ever seen with a kraken.

River travel is the safest thing in OD&D simply because of its speed. A boat full of buccaneers or pirates is much easier than what you'll find on a swamp, and this world's ships must go with armed guards. But when you do hit a monster, it's likely to be a fierce one.

GRASSLANDS & CITIES

Clear grasslands and cities are the least unique of the terrain types in OD&D. Most of the cities and towns sit in grassland hexes, and grasslands are the most numerous single type of hex. They provide the default background against which the other hex types stand out.

The list of "basic animal" encounters gives us a listing of animal types including spiders, scorpions, lions, boars, weasels, toads, apes, ants, centipedes, snakes and beetles. A note tells us that animals will "usually be of the giant variety," which means we have a world populated by giant scorpions and giant toads. Lions, boars and apes don't need to be giant as badly as the ants and spiders do in order to be threatening encounters.

It is somewhat strange to have the toads and centipedes and snakes and apes all in the clear grassland; of course they're all available in other types of terrain as well, but this table is the only one that makes up "clear" land encounters. Judging from the terrain,
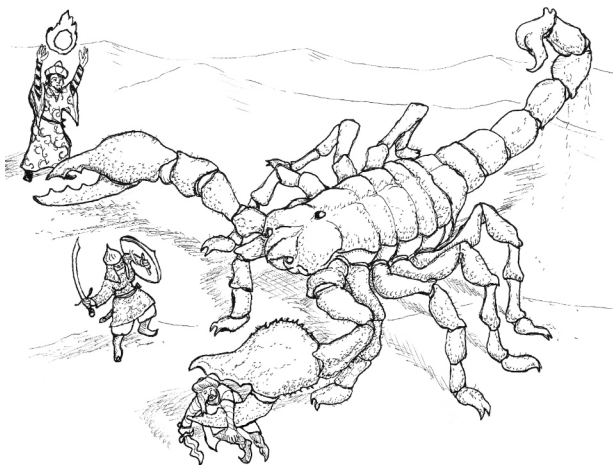
the animals may be better picked as wanderers from nearby areas: apes from the jungle, giant frogs from the swamps, giant scorpions out of the deserts and so on. Except in the northwest and southeast corners, almost every grassland hex is less than 3 hexes (1 day of travel) from a forest, swamp or mountain hex, so this is always workable. Perhaps giant ants (with suitable underground caverns) and some types of snake are "native" to the grasslands but little else.

The map gives us no indication of roads through the grasslands. If there are paths between the towns indicated, they must pass through forests or over mountains except for two towns in the center area. One of those towns is the only town on a river, which is a natural fit for the main commercial city of this region. Looking at the layout again, the five towns in the center of the map are relatively well protected by castles on different sides, and it is possible that the four closest ones form the only kingdom in the territory. Alternatively, the city in the woods could be an elven city and the others are the human cities that trade with it. Each town outside of the core five is somewhat peripheral to the map and may be more of an outpost or a frontier town.

These are towns that are separated by enough difficult miles that except for the four core towns, trade is probably difficult and extremely limited. This explains, FWIW, why trade goods in D&D are so damnably expensive: each town is basically running a frontier style economy, far from major centers of commerce, and even getting a shipment of goods through these lands requires an armed escort. As I said in the post that opened this series, these will of necessity be small towns, probably walled, with small out-populations supporting them.

Encounters in towns and cities are limited to two types: Men (fighters, clerics, wizards, brigands and bandits) and Undead (the whole classic list). They are literally half and half, so each town must have some fairly active necropolis attached to it, and the population must bar themselves indoors at night. Banditry and brigandage in the towns, and undead, are obviously combated to some extent by the humans who are also wandering with their retinues. These encounters are rarer than other locales, so it must be that these are simply the exceptional ones. But there has to be some role for the undead - as I discussed under wizard's castles and towers, it may be that high-level wizards routinely create non hostile undead to do their bidding. Brigands and bandits, meanwhile, easily become various toughs and hoodlums, lawless types in the city.

So this is the setting of original D&D: a frontier land, perhaps with a single state in its center, with wilderness populated by creatures of myth, legend and giant creature films. It is a world of Arthurian castles, knights templar, necromancers, dinosaurs and cavemen. It is wild, and it feels profoundly like the world someone who watched every cheesy science fiction movie about giant monsters and every classic horror

film would make. This is bolted onto a world with openly Tolkienesque elements - elves, goblins, orcs, balrogs, ents, hobbits - and other entries that quickly became generic fantasy because they were in the D&D books. The result is far more gonzo and funhouse than people give D&D credit for, and I think it winds up being a good mix.

Fight On!