Forum

A Muslim Reflection on *Dangerous Games: What the Moral Panic over Role-Playing Games Says about Play, Religion, and Imagined Worlds*

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Abstract

For over two decades, a moral panic over fantasy role-playing games has swept America, fuelled by a minority of fundamentalist Christians who have campaigned against games such as Dungeons & Dragons on the grounds that they led youth to Satanism, suicide, and violent crime. In his 2015 book, *Dangerous Games: What the Moral Panic over Role-Playing Games says about Play, Religion, and Imagined Worlds*, David Laycock explores why fantasy role-playing games seem similar enough to religion to provoke fear, as well as the dynamics of this moral panic. While he, apparently, did not set out to write a book about Islam, his insights about religion, fantasy, and narrative opened my eyes to the dynamics of twentieth-century Islam. Additionally, as a Muslim reader living during a "moral panic" over Islam, Laycock's analysis helped me understand that today's Islamophobia in America has little to do with Islam. Lastly, although Muslim gamers, fantasy/science-fiction authors, and game developers are usually underacknowledged, there is increasing interest in Muslims and fantasy/science-fiction. I hope to call attention to this invisible cohort.

Keywords: Islam, fantasy, science fiction, role-playing games, imaginary worlds, Islamophobia, M. A. R. Barker

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Introduction

"You worship gods from books […] gods from *Dungeons & Dragons* books!"[1] Even as a sixth-grader, Joseph Laycock knew this accusation was strange, but could not articulate why. Surely, *Dungeons & Dragons* was a game, not a religion, and he and his friends did not use it to "worship gods." But beyond that, did not all Jews, Christians, and Muslims worship "a God from a book"? What was it about fantasy role-playing games like *Dungeons & Dragons* that made them too close to religion for comfort, and why did they spawn a moral panic in the United States that lasted until 9/11? As an adult, Laycock answers these questions in *Dangerous Games: What the Moral Panic over Role-Playing Games Says about Play, Religion, and Imagined Worlds*, a thought-provoking and insightful read on the nature of religion, narrative, play, and America itself. Although not his intended subject, it also left me with more than a few insights about Islam.

This is a book review – but a book review by an unlikely reader, and hence a review that will encroach upon the territory of an essay. As a female and a Muslim, I doubt I was the expected audience. Fantasy role-playing games are seen as an adolescent white male pastime (especially enjoyed by the pimply, socially awkward type) and as quintessentially American as Protestantism and apple pie.[2] In reality, minorities – ethnic, religious, and even women – also play fantasy role-playing games, both the traditional and computerized versions, as evinced by websites like *Geeky Muslim* and *PakGamers: Play the Pakistani Way!*[3] While I am unaware of statistics on how many Muslims play such games, anecdotally, I have met many practicing Muslims (even seminary students) who confessed a fondness for the hobby and give serious thought to the question of whether it is Islamically appropriate to play games that can glorify mayhem, thieving, killing, and magic.

In fact, one of the first fantasy role-playing games was designed by an American Muslim, Muhammad Abd al-Rahman Barker (d. 2012), who, in a 1984 interview with *Space Gamer*, expressed his own ambivalence over the compatibility of his game world with Islam.[4] Today, the dialogue on Muslims and fantasy/science fiction has moved beyond the notion that Muslims are culturally incapable of producing it to a recognition of contemporary Muslim authors in this genre, such as Saladin Ahmed and Sabaa Tahir.[5] With that in mind, it is an ideal time to move toward offering more Muslim perspectives on the vast world of fantasy gaming. Beyond that, the insights in *Dangerous Games* regarding religion, fantasy, and modernity are applicable to people of any faith or no faith.

Before proceeding, it is necessary to explain what these games actually are for the uninitiated. The first mass-produced fantasy role-playing game was *Dungeons & Dragons*. Released in 1974, it was a synthesis of wargaming (mathematically modeled battle simulations) with storytelling. In *Dungeons & Dragons*, each player controls a character defined by numerical attributes (e.g., strength, wisdom, or charisma), a class (e.g., fighter, thief, or mage), and a race (e.g., human, elf, or dwarf). Guided by a "dungeon master," the players sit around, pretend to be their characters, and verbally embark on adventures such as fighting orcs or saving the world. Initially, *Dungeons & Dragons* was derived from Tolkien's Middle Earth and was envisioned in an idealized mediaeval Europe, although today, numerous settings and other fantasy role-playing games abound. In short, it is just a game – but a game that "somehow smacked of religion in a way that wargaming had not."[6]

Previous authors who dared the ridicule of their peers to write about role-playing games have compared such games to religions. "My devotion to the game became almost religious," confesses Mark Barrowcliffe in *The Elfish Gene*.[7] In *Fantasy Freaks and Gaming Geeks*, Ethan Gilsdorf calls role-playing games "a form of secular ritualism."[8] In his seminal study, *Shared Fantasy: Role-Playing Games as Social Worlds*, Gary Alan Fine does an excellent job of breaking down fantasy role-playing games as a social phenomenon with academic rigor. However, Laycock is the first to employ the frameworks of anthropology and sociology to uncover why role-playing games seem more akin to religion than, say, chess.

First, according to Laycock, unlike most games, *Dungeons & Dragons* involves morality and religious elements. From the outset, players must choose whether their characters will be "good," "evil," or "neutral." Even a player who argues against this on the grounds that real people are neither all good nor all evil then becomes "ipso facto an amateur moral philosopher."[9] This game's inventors, Gary Gygax (d. 2008) and Dave Arenson (d. 2009), mined the Christian tradition for inspiration, and game manuals published over the years featured an increasing panorama of supernatural opponents, such as demons and succubi, as well as Biblically inspired magical spells, such as "sticks to snakes" (an allusion to Moses) and "raise dead" (an allusion to Jesus – but also quite practical). A handful of Christians feared that speaking of these demons would invoke them; that is, to them, the game was no longer simply a game.

However, others simply failed to recognize the Biblical origins of these game concepts. "For some reason, elements of Christian cosmology that should have been familiar were identified as strange and demonic."[10] In an

interview, Laycock attributes this to declining Biblical literacy among American Christians which led these opponents of the game to become "alienated from their own cultural tradition."[11] It should be emphasized that Laycock does not present this Christian opposition as representative of all Christians or of Christianity itself – co-founder Gygax was a committed Christian – and Laycock identifies features of modern fundamentalist Christianity that led to this backlash.

However, beyond these surface-level similarities, Laycock uncovers subtler, more profound reasons why fantasy games tread on the realm of religion. If, by definition, the "sacred" is what is set apart from everyday life, then a player who enters a fantasy world enters a sacred space. As in religious ritual, this sacred space is idealized and meaningful; and in this sacred space, ordinary social structures, such as social class, are broken down. Characters exist for a purpose, act for a reason, and transcend their earthly limitations to become heroes. "The fantasy world is not only more bright and vivid, it is the realm of moral meaning."[12] Modern science and warfare have led many people to a crisis of meaning, and many people who turn away from traditional religion still yearn for an idealized sacred past and a meaningful present. Fantasy worlds provide this – albeit imperfectly – and hence feel "religious." Herein, perhaps, lies the true fear – if a group of adolescents can sit around and sustain an idealized, sacralized world, then who is to say that Christianity (or any other religion) is not a mass shared fantasy of "worshipping gods from books"?

Fantasy worlds also threaten religious hegemony by allowing players to travel outside of the ordinary world and examine it in new ways. Some players may return to "real life" with new insights about themselves; others may question larger concepts such as science or religion itself. This exploration is threatening because it cannot be controlled. "What is really at stake here is not proper reverence for God but control. Or rather, submission to hegemony has become synonymous with submission to God."[13] Historically, novels and the theatre met with the same suspicion; however, Laycock makes a convincing case that suspicion of the imagination is not endemic to Christianity, and instead is a product of the Enlightenment, the Victorian era, and the Puritan movement, which glorified efficiency and productivity. In defense of escapism through fantasy, he cites J. R. R. Tolkien: "Why should a man be scorned if, finding himself in a prison, he tries to get out and go home? Or if, when he cannot do so, he thinks about and talks about other topics than jailers and prison-walls?"[14] As the author notes, this image is undeniably religious and calls to mind the Prophetic saying that "the world is a prison for a believer."

Although Laycock is largely engaging with Christianity, all of the above resonated with me, as a Muslim reader. Muslims too yearn for a sacred past and a meaningful present. Islam is rumored to provide that quite nicely, and many Muslims envision the time of the Prophet and his Companions as being part of the sacred present, not the past. An attempt to return to that pristine era underpins one of the most literalist and dogmatic Muslim movements, that of the Salafis. Do Salafis and gamers have more in common than they think? Muslims, like Christians, had to respond to the rise of an empirical worldview and a dominant twentieth-century trend that has emphasized a materialistic view of Islam, in which miracles are explained by science, science explains the Qur'an, and salvation comes from outer obedience to religious laws. These interpretations are particularly popular in the West, where the diversity and vibrancy of the Islamic tradition is often reduced to dry sermons delivered in repurposed office buildings. Stripping away spiritual mystery results in a spiritual hunger, and some Muslims might subconsciously approach fantasy worlds as a means of spiritual exploration. And as for resistance to questioning religious hegemony – I shall decline comment here.

I also drew immediate parallels between the moral panic over *Dungeons & Dragons* and the moral panic over Muslims in America today. While some pastors once burned gaming manuals, now they burn Qur'ans. While Secret Service agents once invaded gaming publishers, they now invade mosques. While the moral panic over games was fuelled by a sensationalist media – well, one only needs to turn on Fox News. *Dungeons & Dragons* and Islam both feed into a "subversion narrative" that has resurfaced in America in different forms:

> While the imagined forces corrupting young people changed from decade to decade, the subversion narratives were always closely tied to fears of the religious and moral other – in this sense, the history of the panic over fantasy role playing games is really a history of far darker fantasies that haunted the American psyche.[15]

Critics of *Dungeons & Dragons* insisted that the game must be evil because it led youth to violent crime. Laycock dispels that notion by examining famous cases of violent crime associated with gamers to show that there were pre-existing factors (e.g., psychiatric illness) or that the investigators themselves were doing shoddy work. This, to me, mimics today's fears about Islam. Today, I am writing only a few hours after a shooting at a homosexual nightclub by a man with a Muslim name. Yes, he was remembered as "violent" and "mentally disturbed"; no, he did not have any particular commitment to

Islam; and, yes, the Qur'an forbids the killing of civilians. But the fact that he has a Muslim name proves that Islam is violent and Muslims are a threat, and this has led Republican presidential contender Donald Trump to call again for a ban on Muslims entering the country. This fits in with Laycock's frightening observation that the moral manic over *Dungeons & Dragons* itself constituted a shared fantasy – one shared by terrified parents, news reporters, pastors, and law enforcement agents. With that in mind, could the moral panic over Muslims be a grim shared fantasy and a form of "corrupted play" with far-reaching, real consequences, including the "war on terror"?

Returning back to the book, as a Muslim reader, I was particularly interested in its treatment of Islam. Non-Christians do not feature heavily in the book; Laycock mentions a total of one Muslim and one Jew. However, I would like to gently call attention to a small point. In passing, the author cites the view that the "Ottoman millet system was designed to banish infidels,"[16] whereas the millet system is best described as a means of organizing a multi-confessional society, not banishment. "Infidels" is, today, an inflammatory word and – like "negro" and "chink" – is best avoided. While his comment is tangential to his work, I felt it was important to mention it, because, ironically, it reflects the rhetoric of today's moral panic over Muslims coming to kill the infidels. (Hurry, Mr. Trump! Put up those walls!) Of course, Laycock neither presents himself as a specialist in Ottoman history, nor is he expected to be one.

Laycock's other mention of Islam was of far greater interest – namely, that the second fantasy role-playing game (published in 1975) was invented by a fellow American Muslim, Muhammad Abd-al-Rahman (also known as Philip) Barker. Hailed as "the forgotten Tolkien," Barker (d. 2012) converted to Islam on the grounds that it was "logical" and became a professor of South Asian languages.[17] He also had a passion for games. However, his game, the *Empire of the Petal Throne*, was in many ways the opposite of *Dungeons & Dragons*. While the latter was based on mediaeval Europe, Barker drew inspiration from Tamil, Mayan, and Arab cultures. While *Dungeons & Dragons* demarcates good from evil, Barker's game world features darker themes and moral ambiguities. Most notably, he introduced a distinctly Muslim approach to the construction of fantasy religions. Laycock quotes him as saying:

> Tolkien had this Britisher's sort of attitude that religion is something you do in church, and... It doesn't really do that much to your daily life... Whereas I'd been living and working in societies where religion is just permeating the atmosphere... Even the simple villagers are behaving in ways that they consider related directly to religion, rather than secular politics or something like this.[18]

Barker left behind detailed advice on how to construct fantasy religions in an essay entitled "Create a Religion in Your Spare Time for Fun and Profit," and his conceptual legacy has continued to influence fiction (e.g., Raymond Feist's *Riftwar* saga) and computer games (e.g., Bethesda's immensely popular *The Elder Scrolls)*.[19]

Overall, I found *Dangerous Games* to be simply brilliant. There are only a couple areas where I might add more food for thought. First, one of the main fears about this game was that it led impressionable youth to the occult (witchcraft, Satanism, and the like). Laycock does an excellent job of statistically debunking this view; however, he does concede a correlation between an interest in fantasy worlds and an interest in the occult. Correlation does not prove causality, and he suggests that these players probably had a pre-existing interest in the occult. However, this leaves the question hanging as to why people interested in the occult would also be drawn to fantasy worlds.

I would proffer two other correspondences: (1) People who are interested in theology (e.g., Tolkien and Barker) *also* tend to be interested in fantasy worlds and (2) in "Word and code, code as world," Daniel Pargman explores a correspondence between being a computer programmer and playing fantasy role-playing games.[20] Pargman explains this by saying that both computer programming and gaming involve ordering an abstract or imaginary world (a computer system or a fantasy world) through language – as, indeed, do both theologians and occultists. So might theologians, occultists, computer programmers, and gamers all be carrying out the same mental activity, but in different expressions?

If one is going to accuse fantasy role-playing games of leading youth away from religion and toward magic, one also has to define precisely what "religion" and "magic" are. Laycock's definition, while functional, could have used more nuance. He defines magic as the belief that "[u]nlike in many world religious traditions (certainly monotheistic ones) […] supernatural power is immanent rather than transcendent" and "can be accessed by many people and is not the sole province of a transcendent deity."[21] However, I would argue that adherents to most world religions – including the monotheist ones – do dabble in immanent spiritual power. Muslims might hang up a miniature Qur'an for blessings or wear a turquoise ring to protect themselves against the evil eye, yet neither act is considered "magic." (This is setting aside more pronounced examples, such as jinn exorcisms.) Mystics (Sufis and *ʿārif*s) are said to possess all sorts of supernatural powers.

Outside the Muslim tradition, some consider the Kabbalah or the doctrine of transubstantiation to be magic. One man's mystic is another man's magi-

cian, and, in his new book *Magic in Islam*, Michael Muhammad Knight offers an excellent literature review of academic scholarship addressing this question – particularly in light of the colonialist project – and concludes that the dividing line between "religion" and "magic" says a lot more about who is doing the dividing than any theological criteria.[22]

Perhaps Laycock simply did not need to define "magic." To the fundamentalist Christian opposition, "magic" referred to established movements such as Wicca, Satanism, or vampire cults, which are situated as heterodox within a Christian context. By virtue of being heterodox, they are still connected to Christianity with an umbilical cord. Hence, the underlying concern was really "opposition to the church" rather than "employing immanent spiritual power." After all, no one feared that impressionable gamers would hang up miniature Qur'ans or don turquoise rings. (At least not before 9/11.) However, "magic" in *Dungeons & Dragons* game mechanics is more akin to wizards in robes tossing fireballs at enemies, which not even the most hard-core Satanist claims to do. But as Arthur C. Clarke said, "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic."[23] Is it *less* religiously problematic to toss fireballs at human beings if the fireballs are technologically rather than supernaturally powered?

Second, I felt that the author could have expanded on his discussion was with respect to the social role of computerized fantasy role-playing games, which Laycock sees as "truly 'just escapism.'" To illustrate his point, he invents a (fictional) scenario, in which a "Technocracy," sensing the potential of fantasy role-playing games to encourage people to question hegemony, develops a "saccharine technological substitute" devoid of narrative, creativity, or human contact to keep them sitting at their computers, isolated and brain-dead.[24]

While I agree that computerizing role-playing games strips away their human aspects, including their similarities with religion, and makes them "just games" (which, ironically, can make them feel more "religiously acceptable"), Laycock underestimates how computer game worlds act as a mass shared reality. Some players explore computer game worlds beyond the game – for instance, in online debates, fan videos, and fanfiction, and these secondary products provide a communal platform to question society and religion through the medium of *what if*? Additionally, as the author notes, some people do use massive multi-player games to explore personal or psychological concerns such as gender or sexuality. Lastly, Laycock does note that that computerized role-playing games reach a far larger audience, and, in turn, introduce people to traditional role-playing games; I would add there that this

seems particularly relevant in the Muslim world, in that many Muslims seem to come to the genre through video games.

Long after I closed the book, the question lingered as to why there has been no corresponding moral panic about fantasy role-playing games among Muslims for, in theory, the same elements that made them objectionable to fundamentalist Christians should also have made them objectionable to Muslims. Muslims do privately discuss whether or not role-playing games are acceptable, although I came across a fatwa on it only once.[25] Perhaps Muslim parents are more concerned with material threats; for instance, most Muslim parents are more afraid that their children will take drugs rather than become Satanists. In fact, many parents buy games for their adolescents to keep them out of trouble, and some mosque youth groups hold gaming nights.

Or perhaps this is because Islam has a less developed demonology. While the Qur'an admits to evil beings (Satan and the *shayāṭīn*), it emphasizes that they do not have power over true believers. Moreover, evil as an entity is deemphasized in Islamic theology.[26] Still, many Muslims do fear evil, such as the evil eye or black magic. Ultimately, I concluded that the real reason why these games have not evoked a similar backlash among Muslims is that they are sufficiently distant from the Muslim tradition so as to appear genuinely fictional. Additionally, in many Muslim cultures, fantastic stories such as the *Arabian Nights* are part of the cultural heritage, and children grow up hearing them and turn out just fine.

Hence, it is rare to hear a fiery tirade from the pulpit on the evils of fantasy worlds – rare but not unheard of. Recently, at a religious gathering for women, I was floored to hear a female preacher of Pakistani origin condemn fiction. "We don't need fiction!" she emphasized. "We don't need imaginary characters! At home we have "Frozen," which has frozen our children's brains. We don't need fiction because we have truth."[27] The irony was that a speaker before her had presented religious "truths" that were historically questionable and could easily fall into the category of pious fiction. (That is, the stories she was telling are found neither in the Qur'an nor in the primary Hadith collections.) While I wish to emphasize that I am a practicing Muslim and not an apostate, it did lead me to question how much of our own religious culture is based on a "shared fantasy" of hagiographies of dubious authenticity that become true because they are believed to be true. Like the "moral panic," this shared fantasy then affects the real world. In some cases it may be harmless, but in others it can be pernicious (e.g., in hagiographies glorifying the invisibility of women). In cases of fringe groups such as ISIS, this shared fantasy can be devastating.

Lastly, I would like to conclude with a few words about why Muslims do not have much of a presence in the gaming world. Just as women are frequently pushed away from gaming circles due to misogyny, oversexualized representations of women, and a "boy's club" environment, the current climate of the gaming industry also pushes away Muslims.[28] I certainly do not want to cast all traditional gamers as Islamophobes, especially since fantasy worlds *can* (although not always *do*) open up a person's mind to considering new possibilities and questioning the status quo. However, a quick online search of "Islam and *Dungeons & Dragons*" brings up disheartening rhetoric about Islam and the Prophet, which is quite representative of said moral panic and a "shared fantasy" about the evils of Islam. Today, there is increasing awareness of anti-Muslim stereotyping in video games – both directly, such as in games simulating the Iraq war, and indirectly, in the conflation of Muslims with zombies.[29] Refreshingly, a panel at a 2016 game developers' conference in San Francisco addressed Muslim representation in games, but – as with representation of women and other minorities – there is still more work to be done.

All in all, *Dangerous Games* was an engaging and accessible read which, unexpectedly, led me to question my assumptions about religion, fantasy, and narrative. As a Muslim who adheres to a branch of Islam which heavily emphasizes ritual storytelling, I could connect the "sacred space" of a fantasy world to the sacred space of a devotional setting. It also led me to re-evaluate my own assumptions about the spiritual worth of fiction and games. Although I have always had a closet interest in fantasy gaming, I too held the Puritanical view that fantasy worlds were, at best, a waste of time or, at worst, religiously objectionable. I emerged from this book with a recognition that not only can religion and fantasy be harmonized, but in fact they can spring from the same source and make both experiences richer.

Endnotes

1. Joseph P. Laycock, *Dangerous Games: What the Moral Panic over Role-Playing Games Says about Play, Religion, and Imagined Worlds* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), xi.
2. For instance, Mark Barrowcliffe's *The Elfish Gene: Dungeons, Dragons, and Growing Up Strange* (Basingstoke and Oxford: Macmillan, 2007) treats fantasy role-playing games as an adolescent rite of passage. An advance review printed on Ethan Gilsdorf's *Fantasy Freaks and Gaming Geeks: An Epic Quest for Reality among Role Players, Online Gamers, and Other Dwellers of Imaginary Realms* (Gilford, CT: The Lyons Press, 2009) describes the book as a "lively exploration of the fantasy realms into which boys and grown men retreat" rele-

vant for "moms of teenage boys." In his sociological study of actual gamers, Gary Alan Fine disputes the notion that games are the purview of adolescents, but does note that adults often have to give up the hobby due to work and family responsibilities. Gary Alan Fine, *Shared Fantasy: Role-Playing Games as Social Worlds* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 39-72.

3. *Geeky Muslim* has a particularly stereotype-breaking article with screenshots of online Dungeons & Dragons by a female, hijab-wearing IT professional. May Fahmi, "In Defense of Fantasy," Geeky Muslim http://www.geekymuslim.com/in-defence-of-fantasy/. Accessed 13 June 20126.
4. Frederick Paul Kiesche III and Steve Sherman, "Interview: M. A. R. Barker," in *Space Gamer* 71 (1984) 20-25. (I would like to thank John Whitbourn for sending me a photocopy of the interview.)
5. For instance, see Nesrine Malik, "What happened to Arab science fiction?," in *The Guardian* [online], 30 July 2009, http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/jul/30/arab-world-science-fiction. Accessed 13 June 2016.
6. Laycock, *Dangerous Games*, 32.
7. Barrowcliffe, *The Elfish Gene*, 145.
8. Gilsdorf, *Fantasy Freaks and Gaming Geeks*, 94.
9. Laycock, *Dangerous Games*, 198.
10. Ibid., 23.
11. Ibid., 23. The interview is available on YouTube; see David Barr Kirtley, "Dungeons & Dragons and Religion," on YouTube, 15 January 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2J89qr3XCs. Accessed 30 June 2016.
12. Laycock, *Dangerous Games*, 69-70.
13. Ibid., 239.
14. Ibid., 180.
15. Ibid., 6.
16. Ibid., 282.
17. Ibid., 64. The appellation "forgotten Tolkien" comes from Konrad Lischa, "Tekumel-Schöpfer M.A.R. Barker: Der vergessene Tolkien," in *Der Spiegel* [online], 6 October 2009, http://www.spiegel.de/netzwelt/spielzeug/tekumel-schoepfer-m-a-r-barker-der-vergessene-tolkien-a-649336.html. Accessed 13 June 2016.
18. Laycock, *Dangerous Games*, 64.
19. The similarity to the *Riftwar* series was so pronounced that, according to privately shared personal letters, Barker's friends advised him to sue for copyright violation. The author of the Riftwar series, Raymond Feist, was sufficiently motivated to offer a public apology saying that a paid assistant had introduced Barker's ideas to his work and that he had been unaware of it. Shannon Appelcline, "Designers & Dragons: The Column," 13. [Online archive] https://www.rpg.net/columns/designers-and-dragons/designers-and-dragons13.phtml. Accessed 13 June 2016. While I am not aware of any works that treat similarities between Barker's works and *The Elder Scrolls*, nor do I have any indication that

he was aware of it, there are clear similarities in terms of game mechanics (e.g., types of numerical attributes for characters), non-playable races, names, game art, and the fictional pantheons (both feature "lords of stability" and "lords of change," which are an integral part of Barker's fictional word). However, *The Elder Scrolls* should be seen as a second- or third-generation product evolving naturally from Barker's work, rather than copying. After all, most other computerized role-playing games are based on *Dungeons & Dragons*.

20. Daniel Pargman, "Word and code, code as world," in *Digital Arts and Culture Online Proceedings* (Melbourne: 2003), http://hypertext.rmit.edu.au/dac/paper/Pargman.pdf. Accessed 13 June 2016.
21. Laycock, *Dangerous Games*, 167.
22. Michael Muhammad Knight, *Magic in Islam* (New York: TarcherPerigree, 2016), ch. 1.
23. Frequently cited from Arthur C. Clarke, "Hazards of Prophecy: The Failure of Imagination," in *Profiles of the Future* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).
24. Laycock, *Dangerous Games*, 209.
25. This fatwa was posted online – I think, from Egypt – but, regrettably, I cannot recall where.
26. Qur'an 15:42 and 17:65.
27. The gathering was in England during 2016.
28. Fine discusses this in *Shared Fantasy*, 62-71. See also Justine Cassell and Henry Jenkins, *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat: Gender and Computer Games* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000). Meg Jaynath, "52% of gamers are women – but the industry doesn't know it," in *The Guardian* [online], 18 September 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/sep/18/52-percent-people-playing-games-women-industry-doesnt-know.
29. See Seung Lee, "'Just Shoot the Arab': How Muslim Representation in Video Games Perpetuate the Terrorist Stereotypes," in *Newsweek* [online], 18 March 2016, http://europe.newsweek.com/how-muslim-stereotypes-video-games-perpetuate-terrorist-stereotype-438593. Accessed 13 June 2016. Also see Vit Sisler, "Digital Arabs: Representation in Video Games," in *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 11, no. 2 (2009): 203-20.