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The Player Character's Journey: The Hero's Journey in Moldvay's Dungeons & Dragons

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The Player Character's Journey: The Hero's Journey in Moldvay's *Dungeons & Dragons*

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by

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ABSTRACT

The Player Character's Journey: The Hero's Journey in Moldvay's *Dungeons & Dragons*

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This study explores the archetypes, motifs, and stages of the Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey as they are found in the Moldvay revision of the rules to *Basic Dungeons & Dragons*, that emerge from playing the game using the seven adventure modules printed for these rules. Using narratological concepts, the definition of what makes narrative is expanded to include the narrative that emerges by playing story-based roleplaying games like *Dungeons & Dragons*. These narratives, based on the seven adventure modules, are the analyzed using Campbell's *monomyth* as an interpretive tool, showing that these types of narratives are up to similar academic scrutiny as other forms of narrative. Such scrutiny shows that the types of narrative that emerge from playing a tabletop roleplaying game like *Dungeons & Dragons* need an expansion of the models for narrative analysis. This expansion presents a myriad of opportunities for future study.

DEDICATION

For Lisa, Sophie, Frances, and all the women who showed me their strength.

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I wish to gratefully acknowledge the hard work of the many teachers throughout my life. The storytelling instructors in the School of Communication at East Tennessee State University have all gone above and beyond, but I especially wish to mention my great thanks to Professor Reed for all of her hard work in helping me cross this finish line. Thanks Delanna.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

As a young adult in East Tennessee, I found respite from the real-life horrors of middle and high school in the fantastic worlds of storytelling – both at storytelling festivals and live performances in my area, and around tables with my circle of friends. Storytelling, especially the interactive storytelling that roleplaying games foster, offered a sense of control of my surroundings denied by the changing physical and social worlds of middle and high school.

My friend group was small, socially awkward, brainy, unpopular, and predominantly male.[1] We felt left out by our peers, but found acceptance through the imagination-based storytelling game called *Dungeon & Dragons*. This world was precisely what we wanted it to be: just (good usually defeats evil), fair (honorable deeds are usually rewarded), and inclusive (usually everyone who wants to play can play). The themes of just and fair were already planted in our hearts and minds before we played the game, perhaps due to our exposure to wonder tales as children. In maturity, I can look back on playing *Dungeons & Dragons* with some objectivity to say that "good" and "just" as they existed were defined by the players and "inclusivity" was never put to the test by the captain of the football team showing up to one of our private weekend game sessions. Nevertheless, *Dungeons & Dragons* shaped my idea of the heroic every bit as much as the stories, novels, television, and movies of my adolescent peers. In this way, the game was formational for this group of misfits, but perhaps also educational in that the game shaped our idea of the hero and taught us the structure of story.

Dungeons & Dragons is a tabletop, pen-and-paper roleplaying game. First published in 1974, it is the progenitor of all tabletop, pen-and-paper roleplaying games (Appelcline, 2013, p. 14). Ostensibly, the setting is fantasy: loosely based on the Middle Ages, but with the addition of

1 The male-centered range of topics in this paper is discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters.

magic. A roleplaying game is a game in which players assume the “roles” of characters in an interactive story. In broad terms, each player assumes the role or roles of the shared story's protagonist(s). A player typically controls one character who is of a particular “race” like human, elf, dwarf or halfling (hobbit); and/or “class” like fighter, cleric, thief, or magic-user.

These “races” or “classes” may seem similar to the Jungian archetypes, picked up by Joseph Campbell's work, and especially emphasized by those following him, like Christopher Vogler (2007) in his *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*. Vogler distills Campbell's model and accompanying archetypes (hero, mentor, threshold guardian, herald, shapeshifter, shadow, ally and trickster) for use by authors in their work (p. 26). This differs from *Dungeons & Dragons* because the players' characters are all taking the collective role of “hero.” One player, however, called the game master, or more appropriately in *Dungeons & Dragons* called the “dungeon master,” assumes the role of the antagonist and his or her supporting characters, as well as any neutral characters or protagonists not played by other players, thus embodying the archetypal roles of mentor, threshold guardian, herald, shapeshifter, shadow, ally and trickster. This player is also referred to as a judge, as he or she adjudicates the game's rules.

This game master describes the setting of the story, but also depicts what the other players are experiencing through the virtual senses of their characters. The setting need not be fantastic, as there are roleplaying games set in modern day or in historical periods. The players' characters (or player characters) interact with the world the game master describes. Player characters are the protagonists of the story who come in conflict with the antagonist(s) as played by the game master. When this conflict needs to be resolved, many tabletop roleplaying games

use polyhedral dice and corresponding tables to calculate success or failure.

In live-action roleplaying games (LARPs), players move as their characters would, interacting with other players as if they were their characters, often dressing in costume. By contrast, a “table-top” roleplaying game is played in person with characters and scenes imagined, with players describing what their characters do rather than pantomiming the actions in costume. Typically, players in tabletop roleplaying games wear what they wore to the game session, not attempting to look like their character in any way.

Despite playing more often with pencil and paper, pen-and-paper roleplaying games are a subset of tabletop roleplaying games where the player's actions are limited or guided by a character's character sheet. The sheet might be simple with keywords, like “brave,” or, “daughter of the pharaoh,” that might direct the player on how to play his or her character. Some tabletop, pen-and-paper roleplaying games employ painted miniatures and miniature terrain set the stage for the story, while others rely on the theatre of the mind. As the name implies, pen-and-paper roleplaying games make use of the technology available at the time these games were first developed, the 1970s. Though computers may be used in pen-and-paper roleplaying games, these games are not video games.

The player's character sheet lists randomly rolled physical and mental attributes like strength, dexterity, intelligence, or charisma. These attributes affect how good or bad a character is at certain tasks. For example, a character with poor constitution has a greater chance of an adverse effect by poison. Player's characters often explore wilderness or subterranean settings, i.e. dungeons, in search of treasure or glory. The dungeon master derives plot devices to steer the player characters into exploratory situations, such as rescuing the hapless prince from the central

lair of a family of great old wurms, i.e. dragons.

Calling *Dungeons & Dragons* a "game" connotes images of board games or sports matches where there is a clear "winner." When I explain what *Dungeons & Dragons* is to people, this often proves a most vexing association. While *Dungeons & Dragons* is a game, the players who neither win nor lose develop an interactive story. The characters within the story might win or lose, but the crafters/hearers of the story are neither winners nor losers.

To "play" *Dungeons & Dragons*, typically a group of five or six players gathers around a table. The dungeon master describes a scene and answers the players' questions about what their characters experience. After setting a scene, often a dungeon master will ask the players, "What do you do?" Players answer this question by describing the actions their respective characters would take. During the play session – which can last for four hours or more – the players' characters travel, fight, bargain, or whatever it takes to advance their agenda(s). These sessions are often sections of a larger story.

The events from each session combine to form adventures, which themselves link to form a campaign, which can last for years of actual calendar time or centuries of game calendar time. Adventures usually last four or five sessions but can vary greatly. If a dungeon master does not want to create his or her own adventure for the players to play, he or she can purchase an adventure "module." Adventure modules provide a framework through which the players can explore, while the dungeon master adjudicates and describes the play. Modules can be published by the game's publisher, other companies, or (increasingly through the internet) by other dungeon masters. These modules are the focus of this thesis, as they are a printed way to teach newcomers how to play the game as the designers intend. This is particularly true of the

Moldvay (1981) edition[2] of the rules, as they are specifically instructional (p. B3). This is the edition of the game I first learned to play and the focus of this thesis.

I discovered *Dungeons & Dragons* through printed material akin to these modules. In sixth grade, I read our homeroom's dog-eared copies of several *Choose Your Own Adventure* books. Around this same time, my older brother was getting rid of items from his childhood deemed too juvenile to keep. I pilfered this pile for all it was worth. Among the cache, I found the *Endless Quest* series[3]. The *Endless Quest* books were an attempt by the publisher of *Dungeons & Dragons*, Tactical Studies Rules (TSR), to print books in the vein of *Choose Your Own Adventure* books, set in the world of *Dungeons & Dragons* or other games by TSR. Beginning with the first book in the series, *Dungeon of Dread* (Estes, 1982), I read all the *Endless Quest* books I could find.

At the same time, I made new friends at middle school who likewise appreciated the fantasy setting and tropes. We had all read J.R.R. Tolkien's masterwork trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings*. We had all cried when we thought Frodo had died at the hands of a Ringwraith's Morgul-blade on Mount Weathertop in *The Fellowship of the Ring*. In discussing the events of this novel, we agreed that we might have done things differently if we were Frodo, Gandalf, or Aragorn. There is an important distinction here middle schoolers seem to understand instinctively. We wondered how we would do things differently if we were Frodo, the character, not Tolkien, the author controlling the character's actions. This adolescent arguing over a character's actions, and not an author's, meant that we were prepared for the basic building block of the *Dungeons & Dragons* game, the adventure module. Adventure modules allow players to take the author's

2 See below for a more in-depth discussion of the Moldvay edition of *Dungeons & Dragons*.
3 Gamebooks as a genre, into which the *Choose Your Own Adventure* and *Endless Quest* series fall, are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2: Literature Review.

ideas in their own direction through their characters actions, with the results adjudicated by the dungeon master.

Printed adventure modules were the door through which we stepped into the game. Among my brother's adolescent detritus was a copy of the *World of Greyhawk Fantasy Game Setting* (Gygax, 1983) for *Dungeons & Dragons*, as well as a module set in the world of Greyhawk, *The Forgotten Temple of Tharizdun* (Gygax, 1982). We had our sandbox in which to play, Greyhawk, we had our first adventure to a forgotten temple, and our first "shadow" to defeat, Tharizdun.

Our first few attempts to play were less than stellar. When I took on the role of dungeon master, I was easily be distracted by things like tables of weather events. Rolling on such a distraction resulted in a hurricane thousands of miles inland on an otherwise clear day. The sandbox play (as hobbyists call it) described by a setting like Greyhawk was too much for our eleven-year-old brains. The unstructured nature of the game left the choices too open. We needed something more structured and instructive.

We also needed rules. *The Forgotten Temple of Tharizdun* and *The World of Greyhawk* are modules and settings for *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* (1st Edition). *The Forgotten Temple of Tharizdun* is also for characters of levels 5-10, which are more advanced and complicated than introductory characters. The need for rules and more instruction led us to the Moldvay edition of *Dungeons & Dragons* (1981). The Moldvay edition (more commonly "Moldvay") is an umbrella term for the rules system printed (when), encompassing two rulebooks, *Basic* (Moldvay, 1981) and *Expert* (Cook, 1981), and six modules with a seventh recalled module. We played, with a bump and stumble approach, eventually mastering the rules

and gaining a comfort level with improvisational and collaborative play styles. My years of playing the game, usually as dungeon master, culminated in college when I led a years-long campaign of my own design to free a race of enslaved lizard men from an extra-dimensional grey-race of psionic warriors.

As an adult, my experience with *Dungeons & Dragons* remained dormant, except for a few forays at conventions and one memorable campaign at seminary. Then the graduate program in storytelling at ETSU awakened me to all the ways in which my experience with the game shaped how I crafted a story and the journey of the hero. I discovered that my pump had been primed for Joseph Campbell's work on the "Hero's Journey," a monomythic formula or set of formulae of which many stories from around the world exhibit aspects (Campbell, 1973, p. 30). Campbell uses Hero's Journey and *monomyth* interchangeably. All those years fighting orcs, building keeps, negotiating trade disputes, and designing fantastic worlds exposed me to aspects of Campbell's "Hero's Journey" through the course of game play.

Joseph Campbell's "Hero's Journey" (also called the "Hero's Adventure" or *monomyth*) is an "interpretive model," outlining the pattern of Departure, Initiation, and Return that heroes typically follow in oral-traditional stories (Campbell, 1973, p. 35). Each of these stages of the Hero's Journey receives further delineation of its representative parts in Campbell's (1973) *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.

These stages (Departure, Initiation, and Return), or separation from the world, penetration from the source of power, and the life-enhancing return could well have been the framework on which I built my *Dungeons & Dragons* adventures. Something in each player character's life causes a departure from the normal world to a world of the fantastic. During their adventures,

players receive many sources of power, from the wizard's book of spells, to the fighter's magical armor. Finally, those who survive return to free their village or retire in safety. This thesis explores the extent to which the edition of *Dungeons & Dragons* I played as an adolescent exposed me to aspects of the "Hero's Journey." The focus is on *Dungeons & Dragons*, not Campbell's work. Campbell's work serves as an interpretive model to find story structures and proto-story structures as they occur within the game.

Statement of Purpose

This research project evolved out of my experience with storytelling games and my studies in storytelling. The audience for this paper is an academic one, but this study will also be of interest to laypersons curious about Campbell's *monomyth*, roleplaying games, or specifically the early-to-middle history of Tactical Studies Rules (TSR) and the roleplaying game hobby.

Storytelling is an interdisciplinary academic discipline. Whether drawing from folklore, communication, anthropology, religious studies, sociology, literary studies, psychology, theatre, education, or other areas, students of story learn to wear many hats for their research. Combined with the study of story, many students of story are also performers who do not just learn about story, but engage in telling stories (Joy, 2006, p. iv). Storytelling as an art form takes place in time, just like roleplaying games. While we study story texts, these are not the stories we tell. In like manner, if we study roleplaying rules and modules, we might get a picture of what the game might entail, the art comes in the temporal act of playing the game.

In addition to the aforementioned academic disciplines, stories originate in every language and culture on earth, contributing to the difficulty of pinning storytelling to a single university department. These threads weave together to create an academic discipline, which

allows for the study of established stories into story models, aided by tools like the Hero's Journey. The purpose of this research is to synthesize two courses of study that have long been of interest to me: storytelling and roleplaying games. This work seeks to add to the limited body of scholarship on roleplaying games. To uncover the components of story narrative in role-playing games, I ask the question: What stages, archetypes and motifs of Joseph Campbell's monomyth are built into the adventure modules for Moldvay's Basic *Dungeons & Dragons* that guide novice players to shape a collective story when playing the game?

The focus is on playing the game, using Campbell's frame as a structural apparatus upon which to hang game segments as they appear in the printed material of the modules. Although Campbell's insistence that the Hero's Journey transcends culture is flawed, the *monomyth* came out of years of extensive, tireless research of world folklore. Few stories exhibit every component in the *monomyth*, but it encompasses multiple possibilities, providing a comprehensive model with which to analyze these game materials. Of further interest is the question of how those who played this game have come to understand the concept of story and storyworlds as they take their lot and place in society. As research with other participants is outside the scope of this project, I draw upon my own experiences. To explore the educational value of playing D & D. In addition, I cite to Haven (2007) to support the benefits of using the monomyth to teach narrative principals.

Scientist, scholar and storyteller, Kendall Haven (2007), gathers significant research from a variety of studies to show how integral narrative is to not only the human experience, but also how crucial it is to human existence. Haven begins by claiming he has seen the "positive power, benefit, and effect that stories have on audiences" innumerable times (p. 3). Haven (2007)

thought he would only find anecdotal evidence such as his own experiences for benefits to storytelling, but in his research, he was, "overwhelmed by the mountain of available, pertinent, qualitative *and* quantitative, research-based studies . . . substantiated a dozen times over by research from a half-dozen fields" (p. 3). The points that stand out to me in Haven's extensive research are Reading comprehension is directly linked to understanding story structure (p. 6); and Mastering story structure is an essential precursor to successful mastery of logical understanding (p. 6). Thus story and story-forms, like those explored in roleplaying games, play an important educational role in educational development.

Likewise, there are important emotional and social developmental goals found in games, especially story-based games. The Bodhana Group is a nonprofit, public-benefit corporation and organized 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization, "that advocates the use of tabletop gaming as a directed therapeutic and clinical practice that can benefit personal growth as well as enhance social and educational services to individuals and families" (Bodhana Group, 2019). To further this mission, they have written a brief guide for counsellors entitled *Wizards, Warriors, & Wellness: The Therapeutic Application of Role-Playing Games* (Berkenstock, 2019). According to White (2017), "The kids immerse themselves in their character, and interact with each other in character. The idea is that, within these fictional adventures, they can practice using the social skills they struggle with" (webpage). Kids are not just playing a game; they are learning social skills that are then building community. "At worst, playing D&D is just a fun release after school. At best, it could be really helping troubled kids" (White, 2017). Not just "troubled kids" need help through these formative years. All young people are learning how to get along with others and to develop their self-esteem.

This information supports that roleplaying as an activity has an impact on those responsible for the narratives we enjoy in film, video games and other media entertainment. The Bodhana Group's *Wizards, Warriors, & Wellness* (Berkenstock, 2019) states that "tabletop RPGs are enjoying their renaissance" (p. 1), citing numerous celebrities who play or played *Dungeons & Dragons* (p. 1). Dungeons and Dragons, among other role-playing games, is experiencing a resurgence among influential, successful former nerds. No longer is the game relegated to basement rooms in the homes of teenage nerds. Hollywood is taking notice, as *The Hollywood Reporter* answers the question, "What goes on behind Hollywood's closed doors?" (Abramovitch, 2016). Their answer, some "A-List" celebrities are playing *Dungeons & Dragons*. One such star sums the reason for this magazine and its readership's interest in the roleplaying habits of these actors. Actors like, "Vin Diesel, Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, Drew Barrymore, and Mike Myers all play [*Dungeons & Dragons*], as [does] . . . Stephen Colbert (Berkenstock, 2019, p. 1).

Not only do Hollywood stars who play *Dungeons & Dragons*, but also Hollywood executives and content-makers. Another Hollywood actor-turned-dungeon master, Joe Manganiello, describes his ode to *Dungeons & Dragons* co-creator, Gary Gygax, in the form of the basement of his house he shares with his wife, Sofia Vergara, in the video, "Joe Manganiello' s 'Gary Gygax Memorial Dungeon'" (D&D Beyond, 2018). Manganiello also casually mentions that he regularly played the game with, "a Warner Brothers executive" (D&D Beyond, 2018). Future, content creators like, "filmmakers Jon Favreau, Kevin Smith, and Joss Whedon," have experience playing *Dungeons & Dragons* (Berkenstock, 2019, p. 1).

To focus on the movie industry is to say nothing of the video game industry, which has

closed the gap on its Hollywood cousin. As difficult as it might be to believe in light cultural weight given to actors, *PC Magazine*, shares how, "video games are where the really big money flows. …Megahit movies don't make as much money as major video games" (Griffith, 2018). In their research, they reference *Grand Theft Auto V*, which, "generated $6 billion in profits," even being called, "the most profitable entertainment product ever" (Griffith, 2018).

Limitations

Anticipating the direction every iteration of playing a module could take would result in unwieldy research and be herculean in scope. For the purposes of this research project, the modules as printed, and the narrative they contain, are the primary source material. This material comes from the Moldvay revision of *Basic Dungeons & Dragons*. Moldvay is the author who revised *Basic Dungeon & Dragons* to be more suitable for a younger audience learning by reading the game materials (Appelcline, 2013, p. 34). Even though all of the modules printed for the Moldvay ruleset (or even the sequel to the ruleset, *Expert Dungeons & Dragons*) are not authored by Moldvay, the word, "Moldvay," or the abbreviation, "B/X," has come to mean those rulesets and modules under the umbrella of the Moldvay revision. The modules printed for this edition include:

Dungeon Module B1: In Search of the Unknown (Carr, 1981)

Dungeon Module B2: The Keep on the Borderlands (Gygax, 1981)

Dungeon Module B3: Palace of the Silver Princess [the recalled version with an orange cover] (Wells, 1981); *Dungeon Module B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [the published version with the green cover] (Moldvay & Wells, 1981)

Dungeon Module B4: The Lost City (Moldvay, 1982)

Dungeon Module X1: The Isle of Dread. (Cook & Moldvay, 1981)

Dungeon Module X2: Castle Amber or Château d' Amberville (Moldvay, 1981).

I approach these seven modules as a finite body of primary source literature.

As these seven modules represent a finite body of work, I attempt to refrain from discerning the intent of the designers, referees, or players (to the best of my ability), but rather focus on the narrative and the narrative's structure. This research examines the source literature, while observing aspects of the Hero's Journey that take place in the printed material and the narrative that emerges, including those elements that take place in the act of playing the game, insofar as the Moldvay revision of *Dungeons & Dragons* (1981) and its modules are explicitly instructional.

Using the tools of narratological analysis, I focus on aspects of Campbell's Hero's Journey that exist within the narrative of the modules themselves. Source material on the Hero's Journey for this paper is Joseph Campbell's (1973) book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. I focus on story structure, not character archetypes, except where their appearance influences narrative structure.

I avoid speculating that the authors' intended to base story structure in *Dungeons & Dragons* adventure modules on the *monomyth*. Sadly, Tom Moldvay is deceased, so I cannot pose this question to him. I managed to have a brief meeting with Frank Mentzer, the author of the revision of *Basic Dungeons & Dragons* immediately after Moldvay. In 2018, I travelled to Mentzer's home in Indiana, where I asked him the question: Did the staff at TSR know about Campbell's work? He told me they were reading everything about comparative religion and he remembered, “Campbell's book on the shelves.” This meeting was not long or in depth enough to

discern if the publishers, designers, and play testers of *Dungeons & Dragons*' had an awareness of archetypal heroes and narrative structure from exposure to fantasy stories. Nor could I determine if that is the reason for aspects of the Hero's Journey found in the modules or if these aspects are there because they were reading Campbell's work itself. I leave this for other researchers to pursue.

Likewise, I leave Campbell's fondness for the metaphysical for Chapter 5: Conclusion. A good editor might have merged Initiation's subsections: Meeting with the Goddess, Woman as Temptress, Atonement with the Father, and Apotheosis into one section as all of these subsections do not happen in every story. Structurally they seem to be part of the same narrative, but they serve Campbell's metaphysic. As I am attempting to leave out Campbell's metaphysical intentions for the conclusion, I do not spend a lot of time with each of these sections on its own. The same is true for the subsections of Master of Two Worlds and Freedom to Live found in Return. The metaphysical nature of his work is the target of much criticism he garners and receives only the briefest of mention in this work's conclusory remarks.

My position is one of insider. Though I have not played these games with any regularity in years, I have an understanding of game play and game terms based on years of "field research," that is playing the game with friends. In conjunction with my thesis advisor and other readers, I have taken steps not to use insider's language without providing necessary explanation for readers who might not be familiar with the game or the wider hobby. Similarly, my advisor has helped me to identify any biases I may have and suggested ways in which I might address these in this research.

Conclusion

This study explores connections with a specific edition of *Dungeons & Dragons*' modules and the three principle stages of the Hero's Journey: Departure, Initiation, and Return. Namely, how an edition of *Dungeons & Dragons* aimed at younger audiences builds into its structure stages, archetypes, and motifs of Joseph Campbell's *monomyth*, in order to guide novice players to shape a collective story that emerges as they play the game. I apply the hero's journey model by using narrative analysis.

Chapter 2 is a review of scholarly writings in the pertinent fields of study. First, I briefly review the influence of Campbell's Hero's Journey as an interpretive tool for stories. I have narrowed the scope of this study by focusing on selected literature, identified by the *Dungeons & Dragons*' creators as explicitly influential in the game's creation. Second, I briefly spotlight those articles using Campbell's Hero's Journey in analysis and design of hobbies similar to roleplaying games: video games, gamebooks, and live-action roleplaying games, and the place of Campbell's *monomyth* therein. Third, I review the limited body of work regarding the *monomyth* in roleplaying games. Finally, I highlight narratological studies that show how that field is uniquely suited for this research and the academic study of roleplaying games.

Chapter 3 describes the methodological approach of doing narrative analysis by applying the hero's journey model. Chapter 4 is said narratological analysis of Moldvay's *Dungeons & Dragons* in terms of the "Hero's Journey," applying Campbell's *monomyth* to the printed modules to see in what ways they follow the fabulae and exhibit aspects of the Hero's Journey. Chapter 5 draws conclusions based on this research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Scholars have written about the analytical device Joseph Campbell identified as the Hero's Journey since its publication. The framework of the *monomyth* allows for a critical investigation of story that can offer greater understanding of the story, as well as the phenomenological placement of story elements. By contrast, Roleplaying games in general, and *Dungeons & Dragons* in particular, have received relatively little attention from the academy. This trend has begun to change in recent years, but the fields are still ripe for studious harvest. An exploration of elements of the *monomyth* found in *Dungeons & Dragons* is one such field.

This review of the scholarly literature probes the depths of the work done so far. This literature review is organized in three parts: 1.) The Hero's Journey as Interpretive Tool, limited to texts identified by *Dungeons & Dragons*' creators as foundational to their work; 2.) The Hero's Journey in Related Fields, including gamebooks, live-action role-playing games, and video games; and 3.) Narratology in Game Studies, a review of how narratological studies have been applied to other games as a basis for application to roleplaying games.

Jahn (2005) describes narrative as, "Anything that tells or presents a story, be it by text, picture, performance, or a combination of these. Hence novels, plays, films, comic strips, etc., are narratives" (N2.1.2). I expand this definition of the media covered by his narratological definitions to include other narrative experiences like games, as he himself instructs us to put his definitions to the test. "If you come across a genre not accounted for by any prototype -- radio plays? Hypertext narratives? Comic strips? -- try fitting it in" (Jahn, 2005, N2.2.1).

The research method of narratological analysis allows for the differentiation of the WHAT (story) being narrated by playing Moldvay's edition of *Basic Dungeons & Dragons* and

the HOW (gameplay) it is being narrated. By approaching the narratological WHAT, namely the story that unfolds from playing the game (different or expanded as it might be from that found in the text), this research can show which aspects of Campbell's *monomyth* present in the printed adventure modules.

The Hero's Journey as Interpretive Tool

Hollywood screenwriter and Joseph Campbell devotée, Christopher Vogler (2007) begins his homage and practical guide, *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers* with the following observation: "In the long run, one of the most influential books of the 20th century [sic] may turn out to be Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*" (p. 3). While Vogler has made Campbell's work the basis for a cottage industry of teaching writing, there is something profound to his statement. Whether we are privy to the rationale for their decisions, writers using Campbell's work shaped much of popular culture. Famously, Bill Moyers' (1991) work with Campbell revealed the ways in which another filmmaker, George Lucas, used the Hero's Journey to construct a new myth for our time, *Star Wars* (p. xiii). Moreover, the *monomyth* may be so ingrained in the way we experience story, that it finds its way into the subconscious of the author. Prolific modern mythmaker, Neil Gaiman recounts: "I think I got about half way through *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* and found myself thinking if this is true — I don't want to know. I really would rather not know this stuff. I'd rather do it because it's true and because I accidentally wind up creating something that falls into this pattern than be told what the pattern is" (Ogline, 2012).

More than just a tool for creation of new myths, the strength of the Hero's Journey is in analysis: from oral traditional stories to postmodern fiction. It would be too laborious or even

futile to mention every instance of how the Hero's Journey shaped story. Even the most cursory overview of academic sources reveal Eastern, near-Eastern, African, and Western oral-traditional works, and also Eastern and Western ur-novels, like Wu Cheng‘en's Sixteenth Century *Journey to the West* (Zhang, 2008, p. iii) and Miguel de Cervantes' early Seventeenth Century *Don Quixote* (Campbell, 1973, p. 130), have been viewed through the academic lens of the *monomyth*. Although standards of the modern western literary canon, like *To Kill a Mockingbird*, seem to owe little to the fantastical “hero” or his “journey,” they, too, exhibit elements of the framework (2009, Santos, p. 207). To keep the scope of this literature review tighter than the entire canon of stories, I will limit my exploration of Campbell's *monomyth* and its application to the media two designers of *Dungeons & Dragons* label, “inspirational and educational reading” (Gygax, 1979, p. 224), and “inspirational source material” (Moldvay, 1981, p. B62).

The use of the phrase, “Inspirational and Educational Reading,” differs from what it might mean in other contexts, but when the co-creator of *Dungeons & Dragons* completed his epic, the first edition of the *Advanced Dungeon & Dragon's Dungeon Master's Guide*, he included “Appendix N: Inspirational and Educational Reading,” among the numerous other appendices (Gygax, 1979, p. 224). Two years later, Moldvay (1981) included another catalog in his *Dungeons & Dragons Basic Edition*, under the title “Inspirational Source Material” (p. B62). The Moldvay *Basic* edition of *Dungeons & Dragons* is the subject of this research, thus the list found in that version is the focus of this portion of the literature review.

While lesser known, or at least referenced much less frequently in roleplaying game circles, Moldvay's, “Inspirational Source Material,” contains many collections and authors and is still too broad for this course of study. As such, I primarily focus on three authors, H. P.

Lovecraft, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Michael Moorcock, as they seem to have the greatest influence on the game,[4] with scholarly works extant, including those that detail the *monomyth* in their works.

Relatively few of the authors listed by *Dungeons & Dragons* creators as "inspirational," exhibit aspects of the *monomyth* in scholarly discourse. This omission might be due to the absence of such a structure, especially with those authors whose work was serialized for publication in pulp magazines (like Poul Anderson, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Ramsey Campbell, Lin Carter, L. Sprague de Camp, Robert E. Howard, H. P. Lovecraft, Clark Ashton Smith,[5] etc.) or whose body of work represented serialized novel after novel. In examining Edgar Rice Burroughs' work, a past president of the Folklore Society, W. M. S. Russell (1983) flirts with the idea of the hero's journey found in Burroughs extensive body of work, using the phrase "hero's narrative" and "hero's adventure" in back-to-back sentences, but does not define these terms for a reader unfamiliar with folklore (p. 4).

One of these pulp and occasionally serialized writers, H.P. Lovecraft, offers something like approximately two-thirds of the hero's journey: Departure and Initiation, but a Return with an asterisk. The heroes in Lovecraft's work depart their milquetoast world to discover the actual world they inhabit – the one they often still inhabit with new insight – is something much darker than they had known before realized. This departure takes place through journals, research, travel, paintings, libraries, etc. When heroes purposefully step or woefully fall into an encounter with something outside and otherworldly, they are initiated into the greater reality of an uncaring cosmos and made aware of their insignificant place within it.[6] Those who survive the initiation,

4 Additionally, in subsequent years, each of their works have spawned roleplaying games of their own.

5 This list of male authors points to the male bias in the inspirational literature for the designers of *Dungeons & Dragons*. This trend will be unpacked in Chapter 5: Conclusion.

6 It is worth noting here, as in previous chapters, that the authors and protagonists are primarily male. Once again,

having their eyes opened to the world as it is, return to the normal world and are not believed, often put in asylums for their ranting. Certainly, this occurs in the *monomyth*, as the hero's boon may ignored as society rejects the returning hero. This splintered pattern of the hero's journey in Lovecraftian fiction should be ripe for scholarship, though I could find little of it.

The roleplaying game based upon Lovecraft's fiction, *Call of Cthulhu*, by Chaosium Games, offers players a chance choice to maintain this broken pattern as Lovecraft did, or have something build a more familiar more of akin to the hero who returns with knowledge or power with which we are more familiar as one who returns with knowledge or power. The Seventh Edition and newest as of this writing, of the *Investigator Handbook* describes such a cycle in this way:

> "Investigators who survive will gain power from arcane volumes of forgotten lore, knowledge of horrendous monsters, and advancement in their skills as they become more experienced. Thus the players' investigators will continue to progress, until their demise or retirement—whichever comes first." (Mason & Fricker, 2015, p. 13).

This change in character development in the roleplaying game is addressed in the game's rules to clarify the difference for those familiar with Lovecraft's fiction. Those familiar with Lovecraftian literary themes taken aback by this apparent difference in characters in Lovecraft's fiction in relation to characters in the roleplaying game based thereupon enough that it is addressed in the game's rules. Through the course of play in *Call of Cthulhu*, investigators (Player Characters or PCs) learn more about the dark mysteries of the cosmos and their insignificant place therein, which understandably drives some PCs to lose their sanity, as in Lovecraft's fiction. Players are encouraged to act out these neuroses and psychoses:

I leave more discussion on this important issue until Chapter 5: Conclusion.

> "Only if a player becomes too authentic in his or her performance does the game break down . . . In other words, a player who tries to fully express the effects of cosmic knowledge has the potential to disrupt the game." (Leavenworth, 2014, p. 342).

This change highlights ways in which Lovecraftian roleplaying games, while being less true to the source material, are perhaps more true to the model of the Hero's Journey, allowing heroic characters to return from campaign to campaign.

J. R. R. Tolkien is paramount to the creators of *Dungeons & Dragons*. Tolkien's works are arguably the best-known literature on the lists of inspirational reading, especially to those seeking out Moldvay's *Basic Dungeons & Dragons* in the early 1980s. First, Mendlesohn and James (2012) argue that the "most important" innovation Tolkien offered to the genre was that of structure (p. 48). They continue:

> "Previous quest fantasies tended to be episodic or, if they contained a goal, it rarely had great import. Tolkien married the adventure fantasy with epic: suddenly, the journey on which the participants embarked had world-shattering consequences. We not only care, we more or less have to care." (p. 48).

The words "epic" and "journey" jump out to students of Campbell.

Second, Tolkien also used symbols described by Jung, and therefore relating to Campbell. One such symbol is that of the cave.

> "In the world of myth, caves are catalysts through which the hero achieves his stature as Hero. Joseph Campbell outlines the importance of the cave, often symbolizing the unknown, the threshold that the hero must cross, the first test the hero must face" (Burke, 2007, p. 90).

Burke (2007) continues,

> "In his writing, Tolkien is keenly aware of all the symbolism behind the use of the cave image. Caves are at the beginning of both The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings—Hobbit holes are a kind of cave" (p. 90).

The cave is a pertinent example for this research, as the "dungeon" in *Dungeons & Dragons* is a specialized type of subterranean cave.

Third, in addition to his marriage of structure, genre, and epic:

> "Tolkien took the companion structure of traditional folk tales (in which a poor peasant acquires companions with power who do everything for him/her: see The Wonderful Wizard of Oz) and reinvigorated it by marrying it with what Joseph Campbell in 1949 argued was the archetypal hero's journey" (Mendlesohn & James, 2012, p. 48).

Further, Tolkien layered the heroic journeys of his characters on top of one another, weaving heroes' and heroines' paths into a tapestry beginning and ending at similar structural points, but diverging in their details. Mendleson & James (2012) continue, "Each [character] (Aragorn, Frodo, Sam, Faramir, Merry, Pippin, and Éowyn) follow the path Campbell outlined in very distinct ways" (p. 48). The influence of Tolkien not only on the fantasy genre, but also on the games it inspired is incalculable, but one major contribution is that most tabletop roleplaying games are played in groups with multiple player characters or heroes. The expansive scholarship on Tolkien's few works throws into stark contrast the seeming scholarly unimportance of authors such as Piers Anthony, Fritz Leiber, Larry Niven, Jack Vance, Roger Zelazny,[7] who – while invaluable to the games the fantasy genre inspired as admitted by their creators, their literature may not be of the same caliber as Tolkien.

7 Here is yet another list of male writers. Again, see Chapter 5: Conclusion, for more on this tendency.

Another author who warrants scholarly attention is Michael Moorcock. This attention is not altogether positive, as he has been called – even if only as a rhetorical device to show how he is no longer the same – a "hack writer" (Mendlesohn & James, 2012, p. 79). This understanding misses what Moorcock is doing structurally. His vast body of work has resulted in something of the opposite of Tolkien's approach to structure. Whereas Tolkien layered different characters and their expressions of the *monomyth* in simultaneously unfolding stories, Moorcock's work sees an eternal champion who is roughly the same character in each different world or time, thus creating a shared pantheon or cosmology, [8] not unlike the hero archetype in Jung and Campbell's work. Of Moorcock's subtlety, Mendlesohn & James (2012) write, "all his heroes become manifestations of the same figure, turning Campbell's notion of the hero with a thousand faces (from the book of the same name) into a fantastical mythos" (Mendlesohn & James, 2012, p. 79).

Moorcock's work is cyclical even if the same character does not begin a new cycle. The sword, Stormbringer, which seems to have a personality of its own, marks the hero as the one who possesses it. Although the question of who possesses whom might be apropos to this analysis, Stormbringer represents the hero's return with power. Vizzini (2012) writes:

> "Let's not forget all the useful magic items these heroes are also granted: rings of power or swords of destiny. Michael Moorcock's Elric of Melniboné is but a frail, albino prince – at least until the magic sword Stormbringer transforms him into a mighty warrior (albeit at a heavy cost)." (p. 213).

Thus, whomsoever possesses the sword, Stormbringer, or wears the mantle of the eternal champion, is the hero regardless of the story's setting or the character's disposition.

Despite the lack of writing about the Hero's Journey in this "inspirational" material, it is

8 Compare with H.P. Lovecraft's and others' Cthulhu Mythos stories for more on a shared literary cosmology.

clearly there. Perhaps pulp writers of the early-to-mid-twentieth century and fantasy and science fiction novelists from the mid-to-late-twentieth century have not yet caused their blip on the cultural studies radar or literary structural criticism road map. The overlap is undeniable for any who have spent time with both Joseph Campbell's work and the authors of this genre who guided the designers of *Dungeons & Dragons*.

The Hero's Journey in Related Fields

One of the things that is so exciting about this research is that there is work here to do. It is new, but a pitfall of this uncharted territory is the lack of scholarly source material. Cursory searches of the customary research databases reveal very little on the Hero's Journey or *monomyth* in relationship to tabletop roleplaying games. Nevertheless, searching for scholarly discourse with liberally interpreted overlap to roleplaying games in general and *Dungeons & Dragons* in particular, reveals some work for review and comparison. Overlapping subjects, like gamebooks, live-action roleplaying games, and video games, gamebooks, yielded the most articles. These related fields exhibit the *monomyth* at work in hobbies similar to roleplaying games.

Roleplaying games, and related storytelling-based entertainment like gamebooks, live-action roleplaying games, and video games, are grouped into the genre of interactive media. Simply put, interactive storytelling owes much to non-interactive storytelling. In her essay examining the ways in which the Massive Multiplayer Online (MMO) Game, *World of Warcraft*, is based on tropes and structures found in myth, Krzywinska (2008) writes, “The hero quest format has also become a staple of popular culture, partly through the widespread influence of Joseph Campbell’s *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1969) on Hollywood scriptwriters” (p.

126). She continues that MMO games like *World of Warcraft* allow the player to experience the hero's journey through heroic quests (Krzywinska, 2008, p. 127). Similarly, the tropes of movies, television, and stories of all kinds influence roleplaying games and their virtual denizens – be they tabletop or electronic. “The dungeons and dragons in Dungeons and Dragons owed as much to popular culture, including *Star Trek* and *The Twilight Zone*, pulp science fiction and comic books, as to myth, archetype and world literature” (Shivel, 2009, pp. 207-208). It would be a stretch to say that so-called “Geek Culture” owes its existence to the archetypical *monomyth*. Nevertheless, the power of myth to create community is evident to anyone who has waited in line for *Star Wars* movie tickets or braved Indianapolis' Gen Con.

The gamebook is similar to a “Choose Your Own Adventure” book, but with more mature and sophisticated gameplay. Originally published as books, they have technologically evolved and blurred into the genre of hypertext fiction. The gamebook and the solo roleplaying game genre emerged from roleplaying game roots. *Tunnels & Trolls*, with its clearly derivative title, emerged shortly after *Dungeons & Dragons*, in June of 1975 (St. Andre, 1975, p. 2). *Tunnels & Trolls* boasts the first solo adventure, or proto-gamebook, *Buffalo Castle*, by Rick Loomis (St. Andre, 2013, p. 3). In the 2013 reprint of the 1976 original, Ken St. Andre writes in the Forward:

> “Buffalo Castle was the first solitaire adventure ever written for a fantasy role- playing game . . . Rick Loomis . . . took Steve McAllister’s idea and ran with it and created the whole solo gaming field . . . All of this happened years before the 'Choose your own adventure' books popularized the idea with the general public.” (p. 3).

The series that would go on to popularize the word “gamebook,” Fighting Fantasy, did not

release their first offering, *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain*, until August of 1982 (Jackson, 1982). Another author, also named Steve Jackson (1976), reviewed the earlier *Buffalo Castle* for *The Space Gamer Magazine*, thusly: "If you're into role-playing, you'll enjoy *Buffalo Castle*, If you're into solo role-playing, buy it [sic]" (Jackson, 1976, p. 28). In his work on the second-person narrative structure of gamebooks, Paul Wake (2016) examines *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain*. He describes his work thusly:

> "The key concerns of this essay, in which the gamebook *you* [my emphasis] is figured in terms of identification, empathy, and antipathy in an attempt to account for the curiously-estranging structures of interactive second-person print narrative" (p. 192).

The practice of referring to the character by the second person singular pronoun is no doubt an offshoot of the gamebook's roots in roleplaying games, where the practice is common place, when game masters set the scene and then ask their players, "what do you do?," instead of "what do your characters do?"

Live-action roleplaying games (LARPs) likewise owe much to their tabletop cousins. LARPs often feature players dressed in the garb of the game's setting, carrying accoutrement such as swords, laser pistols, or vampire teeth. Conflict in some LARPs – called "boffer" LARPs – is resolved by fighting with foam weapons in large fields or arenas, while LARPs that still use dice, coins, paper/rock/scissor, or some other non-violent method, are called theatrical LARPs.

Among the most popular LARP is *Mind's Eye Theatre: Vampire: the Masquerade*, where players take on the role of vampires and other creatures of the night and settle disagreements using their characters' attributes and a game of rock-paper-scissors. In an interview with a LARPer (common term for someone who plays LARPs), the interviewee mentions Campbell and

his *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* by name, she espouses that roleplaying games are:

> "A way for people to act out their own hero journey. There's a part of the person in [her] character, and that's the hero's journey. . . . Science has taken away our dragons so we must create our own myth. It's a way to act out and tell your own story as part of a larger one" (2010 Milspaw, p. 212).

One such way science and technological advancements have allowed for the creation of myth and slaying metaphorical dragons is through video games. Video games owe their ancestry, at least in part, to tabletop roleplaying games. Golumbia (2009) writes that one popular style of video game is the "Role-Playing Game (RPG) [that] builds on some precomputer models of both gaming and storytelling, including paper-based games like Dungeons and Dragons and... text-based games like Zork and Adventure" (p. 183-184). MMO games, like *World of Warcraft*, are an expansion of the virtual worlds of Multiple User Dungeons (MUDs), which Downey (2014) is quick to points out that the word "dungeon" in this instance comes from, "a reference to a FORTRAN version of the game ZORK entitled 'DUNGEON' and not a reference to the popular tabletop game Dungeons & Dragons" (p. 63). Though I cannot help but wonder where the FORTRAN programmers who ported ZORK got their inspiration for the name.

As video games became more sophisticated and programming advanced, the link between tabletop roleplaying games and video games diverged in several ways. First, as graphic technology in video games evolved, less and less of the action takes place in the player's or players' mind as in primarily text-based games like ZORK. Second, a game like ZORK or other early MUDs might have been played by a community of people in the same space, less so as the focus of video games have shifted to the first person. Cross (2012) explores lack of communal

play as she explains the difference between a video game and table-top roleplaying games like *Dungeons & Dragons*, in that video games are often played in solitude. Even if there are multiple players, they do not sharing the same physical space (p. 77). Roleplaying games, by contrast, most often take place among multiple players sharing the same physical space (p. 77).

Third, further technological advancement has allowed video games to broaden the types of stories they are able to tell. This led to the creation of drama-based video games (DBG), where more aspects of the *monomyth* can be discerned. In his work on Jungian dream analysis and DBGs, psychologist Schafer (2012), outlines the impact the Hero's Journey could have on DBGs and their players: "The archetypal Journey of the Hero – as defined by Jung and Joseph Campbell – constitutes the dramatic reference point" that can be utilized in DBGs (p. 288).

Scholars have also identified the Hero's Journey at work in the characters of less refined video games. In Nintendo's Super Mario Brothers franchise, the player does not select much of a role beyond choosing the red plumber or green plumber. Nevertheless, the Hero's Journey is still employed. Sherman (1997) writes,

> Video games, as exemplified by Nintendo's Super Mario Brothers series (among others), often appeal to players because they identify as heroes in a fantasy quest . . . [linking] archetypes with [Joseph] Campbell's structural interpretation of the hero journey or 'monomyth.' (p. 244)

Complex game architectures mean complex game characters. One such character – who represents many complications – is Lara Croft of the Tomb Raider Series. Lara Croft is, in the words of Lancaster (2004), "a computer supermodel . . ., [who] earned her company more money than real-life supermodels – and in some cases, has garnered more attention" (p. 87). She has

more facets to her personality than either the red or the green plumber and she does not tacitly wait to be rescued as the princess in the early Mario Brothers franchise. She is, "buxom, dark-haired, gun-toting, intelligent, and suave" (Lancaster, 2004, p. 87). While her physique may have given some unrealistic expectations or others body-image issues, she has – as outlined in Lancaster's work – had a healing effect on some. Capitalizing on Campbell's work with the *monomyth* and implications for the power of story in our times, Lancaster (2004) shows the ways in which the character has been salvific for one subject in his study (p. 95), as Lara Croft's "is a hero's journey, fulfilling aspects of Campbell's monomyth" (p. 95).[9]

Lara Croft certainly represents more of a role to inhabit than either Mario or Luigi, but her heroic journey is still mostly linear. MMOs like Everquest or World of Warcraft portray heroic journeys more in line with Tolkien's model of overlapping heroes and heroines in the same story. In an attempt to control the potential chaos created by everyone being a hero at once, some higher educators, using MMOs, like World of Warcraft or City of Heroes, have tailored assignments through the *monomyth*. Cady (2011) and her team admit:

> Taking into consideration the uncontrolled and unpredictable nature of [World of Warcraft], we realized specific details and structure of assignments were particularly important. For this reason, we created a multipart activity based on two components: the stages of the archetypal hero's journey (described by Joseph Campbell as the Monomyth. . . a widely repeated pattern of experiences seen in numerous stories from *Gilgamesh* to *Star Wars*) and the basic elements of fiction" (Cady, 2011, p. 92).

Rowlands (2012), himself no great fan of Campbell or his work, has nevertheless continued the

9 While Lara Croft is a female character, her creators were male, and as such represents what those male creators might want in a female character.

comparative mythological searching popularized by Campbell in his search for myth in Everquest (p. 108). Rowlands (2012) "[wants] to explore how *EverQuest* and similar MMOs represent a new type of myth" (p. 108). This new type of myth might be recognized by having a familiarity with the mythic structure outlined by Campbell and lends itself to my study of Moldvay's *Dungeons & Dragons*.

In this research, I also found abundant examples of the *monomyth* as a didactic tool in articles and books describing video game design. In short, the *monomyth* is encouraged in designing quest-based games, as evidenced in its prevalence in video game design manuals. Many of these instructional guides in video game design espouse similar structures regarding the creation of would-be worlds or quests. Whether these sources copy liberally from one another or from one master source (as many of them share one of two publishers); or they are all tuned into the frequencies of folklorists, there are plenty of examples of Joseph Campbell, and the Hero's Journey to be found in the world of video game design.

Narratology in Game Studies

Jonathan Tweet's (2003) importance as lead designer on *Dungeons & Dragons 3rd Edition*, is paramount as this edition was the first to be published under the Open Gaming License (OGL), which allowed for a panoply of third-party publishers and at present has been reinterpreted to allow for so-called "retro-clones" or functional reprints of earlier versions of the *Dungeons & Dragons* game, including Moldvay's edition.[10] The open source model moved from computer software development to tabletop role-playing games with the OGL. Material was originally created solely by the game's publisher. At first, new publishers popped up to add to the

10 Tweet himself dedicates an earlier game, *Ars Magica* 2nd edition, to, "C. G. Jung and Joseph Campbell who, remind us of the importance of myth" (Tweet, 1989, 2).

canon. Now role-playing game do-it-yourselfers create content without copyright infringement, resulting in a multitude of fan-created material.[11] Roleplaying games continue to be an art form for the people as more and more are appearing in libraries. Werner (2013) suggests game-based programs in libraries might be a way to bring younger patrons into their domains in her article, "Bringing Them In: Developing a Gaming Program for the Library" (p. 790).

In addition to the wide-open field of a do-it-yourself hobby like roleplaying games offer, perhaps another reason roleplaying games have been so difficult to describe academically is their interdisciplinary nature, much like the field of storytelling. Tosca (2009) mentions these fields as she categorizes table-top role-playing games as, "a hybrid entertainment form," that is "part [game] part storytelling, mixing popular culture interests such as fantasy literature and wargames" (p. 129). Likewise, they are actively participatory, unlike many other art forms owing more to performance art than literature.

The academic field of study began with Fine's (1983) book *Shared Fantasy: Role Playing Games as Social Worlds*. This book offered the academy a first glimpse of the games played in dorms and student centers just outside ivory towers at on campuses across the United States. The focus on roleplaying games quickly shifted, however, when these young participants fell prey to the dangers of life's pressures at that age, resulting in moral panic. In his book, *Dangerous Games: What the Moral Panic over Role-Playing Games Says about Play, Religion, and Imagined Worlds*, Laycock (2015) succinctly introduces the intersection of the spheres of moral panic and roleplaying games:

"Anyone who was aware of fantasy role-playing games in the 1980s and 1990s was

11 See the Dungeon Masters Guild [sic] for *Dungeons & Dragons*, the Storytellers Vault [sic] for *World of Darkness* games, including *Vampire: the Masquerade*, and the Miskatonic Repository for *Call of Cthulhu*.

> equally aware of claims that these games were socially, medically, and spiritually dangerous. A coalition of moral entrepreneurs that included evangelical ministers, psychologists, and law enforcement agents claimed that players ran a serious risk of mental illness as they gradually lost their ability to discern fantasy from reality. It was also claimed that role-playing games led players to commit violent crimes, including suicide and homicide, and to the practice of witchcraft and Satanism" (p. 5).

This moral panic was so widespread that even university administrations were not immune to the panic (Laycock, 2015, p. 5).

As public mores and academic curricula have changed, the study of roleplaying games has found expression in journal articles and other academic publications. Discourse on tabletop roleplaying games continues to be overshadowed by the peripheral hobbies spawned by them, namely video games. This trend is especially true where the influence of Joseph Campbell's work on game is concerned. Searching a wide range of online databases yields one scholarly work that mentions *Dungeons & Dragons* and Campbell's *monomyth* and even that is done as a footnote. Ryan (2002) tangentially connects her work on myth in digital media with Campbell's "archetypal plot" (p. 602), and therefore intimates a connection with *Dungeons & Dragons* as a progenitor of sorts of digital media. She writes, "Nondigital games, such as Dungeons & Dragons . . . inspired much of digital culture" (p. 602).

A recent reader emerged called *Role-Playing Game Studies: A Transmedia Approach*. This collection of essays is helpful in its truly interdisciplinary approach, but limited by some inconsistency, being written by admittedly "academic and fan scholars of RPGs" (Deterding, 2018, p. viii). Another limitation stems from the scope. "Transmedia" allows for what the editors

call, “a truly integrative book: it would cover tabletop *and* computer *and* live-action *and* multi-player online RPGs and recognize other forms as well . . . [representing] Australian tabletop and Nordic larp and Japanese computer RPGs and other cultural specifics” (Deterding, 2018, p. viii). While it clocks in at a whopping 484 pages, it still cannot cover all these topics and more with any depth. At the same time, I maintain that while tabletop roleplaying games and computer roleplaying games may share common ancestry – and the model Campbell describes may inform both – they are different enough to warrant separation, particularly in the embryonic academic stages of study. Shortcomings aside, there is more than a nod to Campbell's *monomyth* in the essay on roleplaying games and their impact on popular culture: “RPGs lend themselves well to fiction writing simply because of the formulaic manner in which campaigns, events and games are structured. Often tracking versions of Joseph Campbell's monomyth (1949), RPG campaigns can form the basis of stories or encourage derivative texts” (MacCallum-Stewart, 2018, p. 177). The cycle of story structure informing the shape of roleplaying games that then in turn inform the shape of literature is itself something of a heroic journey. From cultural studies to psychology, this book does cover a breadth of topics. Bowman and Lieberoth (2018) point directly to the connection between the *monomyth* and roleplaying games, through the lens of psychology.

> Jung's theories . . . influenced mythologists like Joseph Campbell whose book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1947) tried to unearth a similar universal narrative and spiritual structure across myths . . . Fantasy RPGs like *D&D* feature strongly archetypal characters inspired by mythic sources and, in their character progression systems, effectively model an extended hero's journey in which characters eventually ascend into godhood. (p. 258)

There is much overlap in the emerging work we are doing, and I certainly hope to be numbered

among the scholars who are blazing new trails in this field.

Such leading edge scholarship is taking place in the field of video games and virtual reality. Ludology, the study of games, is an emerging scholarly field. Aarseth (2012) argues the need for a "ludo-narrative" approach broad enough to encompass many different kinds of games (sec. 3). Throughout his work, Aarseth describes a continuum between ludic and narrative distinctions. He continues that said approach must, "*see the... design-space as four independent, ontic dimensions: WORLD, OBJECTS, AGENTS, and EVENTS*. (sec. 3). These elements, configured in different combinations, are contained within, "every game (and every story) (Aarseth, 2012, sec. 3). In addition to these elements, Aarseth (2012) offers the idea of "kernels: events that define that particular story" and "satellites: supplementary events that fill out the discourse" (sec. 3).

First, there is the game world. The game world goes beyond the mere setting in video games, to include the kind of story that can be told. Namely, "Game worlds can typically be *linear*, *multicursal*,[12] or *open*" (Aarseth, 2012, sec. 3). To these three, he rounds out his model with two more, the "one-room game... and separate hub... [ending] up with five clearly different topological structures which have clear implications for the ease with which a particular story can be conveyed" (Aarseth, 2012, sec. 5). If only such taxonomic efforts proved so easy. Unfortunately for narratological efforts, these, "five structures can be combined to form more complex patterns, such as a game with a linear beginning, opening up to an open quest world in the middle, and then closing in at the end to another linear corridor" (Aarseth, 2012, sec. 5). Thus, the game world's construction deeply affects the game's narrative.

Within video games, the game world differs from the setting in other narrative

12 Meaning more than one possible route.

expressions in that they are built – albeit in ones and zeros – into the architecture of the game. Aarseth (2012) asserts that they "have a measurable, concrete extension that can be explored directly by an independent agent." (sec. 5). Similarly, roleplaying game modules, particularly those dubbed "sandbox" or exploration modules, have "measurable" areas that can be explored in like manner by the agents, the players' characters.

Second, objects populate this game world. Game objects likewise exist on a continuum of game or narrative elements. Their placement on this continuum is tied to their function within the game. "Objects... can be *dynamic*, *user-created*, or *static*, and again we see a span between the ludic (dynamic, simulated) and the narrative (static)" (Aarseth, 2012, sec. 3). Aarseth organizes objects, "in terms of their malleability" (sec. 6). His list of object types includes: a) static, non-interactable objects; b) Static, usable objects; c) Destructible; d) Changeable; e) Creatable; and f) Inventible (Aarseth, 2012, sec. 6). Like the concept of game worlds, this complexity is further convoluted by the inclusion of multiple types of objects in the same game. Objects, "are important because they determine the degree of player agency in the game: a game which allows great player freedom in creating or modifying objects will at the same time not be able to afford strong narrative control" (Aarseth, 2012, sec. 6). This limitation of video games is a departure from the freedom allowed in tabletop roleplaying games: every object can be interacted with in any way allowed by the player's imagination, the game master's preparation, and the game's rules. Thus every object has the potential to be static, destructible, changeable, creatable, and inventible, often occupying several (or all) of these states simultaneously. Thus the characters' interactions with the game world, and the objects contained within, contributes to the narrative produced by playing the game.

Third, Agents are the characters that exist within the game. “Agents can be presented as *rich*, *deep* and *round characters* (the narrative pole), or shallow, hollow bots (the ludic pole)” (Aarseth, 2012, sec. 3). Like agents, characters “can be classified in terms of their depth/shallowness and their malleability/potential for player control” (Aarseth, 2012, sec. 7). Once again, Aarseth compiles a list for agents including: a) “Bots” (short for robots) with no individual identity, b) Shallow characters (names and individual appearance, but little personality) and c) Deep characters (Aarseth, 2012, sec. 7). Like objects, agents are much more expansive in roleplaying games, limited once again only by the player's imaginations, the game master's preparation, and the game's rules.

Finally, Events are those game elements that create and build narrative. Events are broken into two types, the aforementioned “kernels” (events that define that particular story) and “satellites” (supplementary events that fill out the discourse). Aarseth (2012) maps games on something like a Punnett square, allowing for variability of manipulation.

> “The sequence of events can be *open*, *selectable*, or *plotted*, and the narratological notion of nuclei (kernels; events that define that particular story) and satellites (supplementary events that fill out the discourse) can be used to describe four different game types:
>
> 1. *The linear game*: fixed kernels, flexible satellites.
> 2. *The hypertext-like game*: Choice between kernels, fixed satellites.
> 3. *The “creamy middle” quest game*: Choice between kernels, flexible satellites.
> 4. *The non-narrative game*: No Kernels, flexible discourse: just a game”
>
> (Aarseth, 2012, sec. 8).

Using this typology, roleplaying games most often occupy the so-called “creamy middle,”

offering the players a choice between kernels, and flexible satellites, with the added complication that those flexible satellites can themselves become kernels in the hands of a skilled game master. Aarseth (2012) further expounds on kernels and satellites, offering:

> "A kernel is what makes us recognize the story; take away the kernel and the story is no longer the same... D'Artagnan must befriend the three musketeers, or the story is not the one we find in Dumas' novel. Satellites can be replaced or removed while still keeping the story recognizable, but which defines the discourse; replace the satellites and the discourse is changed... Oidipus [sic] may eat dinner with his mom/wife, or he may not; either way we would not question the identity of the play. These two concepts, kernels and satellites, allow us to say something about the ways games can contain one or several potential stories" (Aarseth, 2012, sec. 4).

Kernels and satellites are central to narratological analysis of roleplaying games in which there are not only many potential stories that might be contained, but also the additional possibility of many potential outcomes. In tabletop roleplaying games that utilize the theater of the mind these possibilities are magnified, as the potential outcomes are limited only by the players' imaginations.

Aarseth is not the first to embark on the creation of a narrative theory that allows for games of different structures. While still in its infancy, Aylett and Louchart (2003), argued that virtual reality should be considered a particular narrative medium alongside Theatre, Literature or Cinema (sec. 1.2). As stories change across platform medium, the narrative necessarily changes. Aylett and Louchart (2003) cite:

> The recent cinematic adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* illustrates this point, differing

> as it did in a number of respects from the original text, reflecting for example the more external visual perspective of film as against the internal character-centred commentary of a novel. What is possible in a novel is not obviously realisable in a movie picture and vice versa. By their characteristics, narrative media generate different narrative forms that allow them to transmit the narrative in the most efficient way. (sec. 1.2)

Thus as a written adventure module for *Dungeons & Dragons* is played, the narrative becomes something new as the medium is changed from the written word (instructive as it may be) to a game with a narrative structure.

As narratives change across media, the narratological techniques applied to interpret or study these narratives is changing. Finally, Aarseth (2012) offers:

> "There is not one, but many different techniques which have been applied more or less successfully to make "games" "tell stories," and a ludo-narratological model of this design space must account for the ways in which "narrative games" differ from one another. There can be no *single* mode of narrativity in entertainment software, given the diversity of design solutions." (Aarseth, 2012, sec. 3).

Narratives as found in roleplaying games like *Dungeons & Dragons* differ from those of video games on more complex levels than video games differ from one another. As there is no "*single* mode of narrativity" in video games, there cannot be a single mode of narrativity in roleplaying games. Nevertheless, we have to start somewhere. While I am on new ground with roleplaying games, I am not creating new theories from whole cloth. I hope that this analysis will prove, "fruitful" as Aarseth (2012) asserts such new work can be (sec. 3).

The intersection of narratology and roleplaying games offers untapped potential for study.

I hope this research, which interjects Joseph Campbell's model of the Hero's Journey as an interpretive tool used within the framework of narratology as it relates to Moldvay's *Basic Dungeons & Dragons*, will be the beginning of a broadening of study. Despite the legitimization of the interdisciplinary academic work done on video games, there is room in the discourse for work on tabletop roleplaying games. The Moldvay edition of *Dungeons & Dragons* was the first edition explicitly aimed at younger players and influenced a generation of players who are now of age to write academic and lay treatments of role-playing games and game designers. After a thorough review of the literature, I believe I am exploring fresh scholarly ground.

Chapter 3: Methodology describes the process used for exegeting the Hero's Journey as found in Moldvay's *Dungeons & Dragons*, and parsing the stages of the *monomyth* as they appear in the printed adventure modules for this edition, and, using narratological theory, the narrative that results through playing the game.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The field of narrative study and the tools of narratology and narratological analysis get at the many layers of communication at work between author and reader, narrator and audience, and character and character, and are therefore necessary for this research. Jahn (2005) describes the process of narratological analysis, and begins in the most rudimentary of ways to build his arguments. First, he offers: "all narratives present a story… [and] a story is a sequence of events which involves *characters*" (Jahn, 2005, sec. N1.2). Thus, narrative can take place in any form of communication that involves characters interacting within a story. Jahn continues: "narrative is a form of communication which presents a sequence of events caused and experienced by characters. In *verbally* told stories, such as we are dealing with here, we also have a *story-teller*, a narrator" (Jahn, 2005, N1.2).

In the groundbreaking work on the narrative paradigm, Fisher (1985) finds narrative to be so central to who we are as human beings, he argues for *homo narrans* (storyteller), over the more accepted *homo sapiens* (wise) (p. 74). The need for human beings to tell stories is not merely an evolutionary advantage, Fisher (1985) posits a reality that sees human communication as impossible to separate from storytelling: "The narrative paradigm sees people as storytellers—authors and co-authors who creatively read and evaluate the texts of life and literature" (p. 86). Storyteller and story-hearer are in constant negotiation of what is said, what is heard, and the narrative that lies in between. Fisher (1985) differentiates storyteller and story-hearer as "author," and "co-author," writing that the narrative paradigm, "stresses that people are full participants in the making of messages, whether they are agents (authors) or audience members (co-authors)." (p. 86).

Defining the narratological framework is at the heart of the study of narratology. “Practically all theories of narrative distinguish between WHAT is narrated (the 'story') and HOW it is narrated (the 'discourse')” (Jahn, 2005, N2.1.2). Phelan (2006) links the WHAT and HOW of narrative to the concepts of “story (*récit*) and discourse (*discours*)” found in the earlier work of Propp on the structure of Russian folktales (p. 288). Narratological analysis as a research method allows for the differentiation of the WHAT (story) being narrated by playing Moldvay's edition of *Basic Dungeons & Dragons* and the HOW (gameplay) it is being narrated. By approaching the narratological WHAT, namely the story that unfolds from playing the game (different or expanded as it might be from that found in the text), this narrative analysis shows how aspects of Campbell's *monomyth* present in the printed adventure modules presents plots and characters that players can develop in their own way to progress the story.

My methodology is to apply the monomyth as a tool of narratological analysis of the text of the adventure modules of the Moldvay edition of *Dungeons & Dragons* to discern which aspects of the *monomyth* are present in the modules' potential narratives. Using the framework of the three main sections of the Hero's Journey – Departure, Initiation, and Return – and their corresponding subsections, I show which of the seventeen subsection of the Hero's Journey are represented. Further, by analyzing the narrative of these adventure modules, I show what elements of the *monomyth* are being born through the collective narrative created by playing the game, and thus exposing the players to ways of shaping a story. In this way, I focus on structure, as it can be found in the written material, more than characters or players playing the game shape archetypes as their actions. The elements of narratology including, narrative framework, narrator and narration, action, plot, and narrative modes. Campbell's Hero's Journey is one way to

illuminate these elements of narratology in playing Moldvay's *Basic Dungeons & Dragons* using the printed adventure modules.

A *Dungeons & Dragons* adventure module (often simply, “module”) is a printed story adventure that player characters work their way through. Unlike typical stories, the contents of a module need not be linear, nor are the characters' actions predetermined, as a player controls the action of each character. These aspects combine to allow for the narrative or “story” of an adventure module to be different with each group that plays it. I posit there is enough of a story frame upon which can rest a narrative for analysis. Narratology is an open enough field of study to allow for this, for as Jahn (2005) writes, “If you come across a genre not accounted for by any prototype -- radio plays? hypertext narratives? comic strips? -- try fitting it in” (N2.2.1).

Using the structural analysis found in Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1973) as a lens, I review the basic typology of the stages of the *monomyth* under the main sections of “Departure,” “Initiation,” and “Return.” Within the framework of narratology, I apply Campbell's model to analyze Moldvay's *Basic Dungeons & Dragons* for narrative elements using Campbell as a means to do so. Within the research paradigm of narratological studies, I interact with *Dungeons & Dragons*' printed adventure modules and rules texts, even though they may differ from actually playing the game. Campbell's “Hero's Journey” model, which describes patterns in oral traditional stories from around the world, is applied to this written material that propels the game of *Dungeons & Dragons*. In order to understand the methodology of this research, some background information follows.

The “Hero's Journey” (also called the “Hero's Adventure” or the *monomyth*) is primarily an “interpretive model,” an epistemological way to understand the form or structure of a great

many oral-traditional stories. Campbell writes, “Whether presented in the vast, almost oceanic images of the Orient, in the vigorous narratives of the Greeks, or in the majestic legends of the Bible, the adventure of the hero normally follows the pattern of the nuclear unit... separation from the world, a penetration to some source of power, and a life-enhancing return” (Campbell, 1973, p. 35). This separation, penetration, and return, or “Departure,” “Initiation,” and “Return” as it is more often categorized, creates a three-part frame on which hang many potential scenes of a story, creating a rudimentary story form. This story-form is, “the one, shape-shifting yet marvelously constant story . . . together with a challengingly persistent suggestion of more remaining to be experienced than will ever be known or told” (Campbell, 1973 p. 3).

Within each of the headings, “Departure,” “Initiation,” and “Return,” Campbell has identified subsections common to many story-forms.

Departure

A. Call to Adventure (p. 49)

B. Refusal of the Call (p. 59)

C. Supernatural Aid or Meeting the Mentor (p. 69)

D. Crossing of the First Threshold (p. 77)

E. Belly of the Whale (p. 91)

Initiation

A. Road of Trials (p. 97)

B. Meeting with the Goddess (p. 109)

C. Woman as the Temptress (p. 120)

D. Atonement with the Father (p. 126)

E. Apotheosis (p. 149)

F. Ultimate Boon (p. 172)

Return

A. Refusal of Return (p. 193)

B. Magic Flight (p. 197)

C. Rescue from Without (p. 207)

D. Crossing of the Return Threshold (p. 217)

E. Master of Two Worlds (p. 229)

F. Freedom to Live (p. 238)

By Campbell's admission, not all stories necessarily exhibit all the parts of the Hero's Journey. Whether due to age, intention, or omission, "the outlines of myths and tales are subject to damage and obstruction. Archaic traits are generally eliminated or subdued. Imported materials are revised to fit local landscape, custom, or belief . . . Furthermore, in the innumerable retellings of a traditional story, accidental or intentional dislocations are inevitable" (Campbell, 1973, p. 246). Despite these "dislocations," the pattern remains for exegesis.

Departure

Campbell (1973) alternatively calls the first "nuclear unit of the monomyth" (p. 30) "Departure," (p. 30) or, "Separation," (p. 36). This first unit of the *monomyth* includes the sections: A.) Call to Adventure; B.) Refusal of Call; C.) Supernatural Aid; D.) Crossing the First Threshold; and E.) The Belly of the Whale. In the Departure, the hero leaves behind his[13] home, family for the unknown.

13 For Campbell, the hero is male. This has – rightfully so – garnered much criticism from the academy and beyond and will be addressed more thoroughly in Chapter 5: Conclusion.

A. Call to Adventure. The first step of the Hero's Journey is, “Call to Adventure” or “the signs of the vocation of the hero” (Campbell, 1973, p. 36). During this step, the hero can seek adventure or adventure can seek him. The story can even begin with a mistake: “a blunder – apparently the merest change – reveals an unexpected world, and the individual is drawn into relationship with forces that are not rightly understood” (Campbell, 1973, p. 51). Regardless of the impetus, the hero is rousted from his routine. Sometimes the mantle of hero is thrust upon the adventurer and the hero resists the call (Campbell, 1973, p. 53) However, should the hero undertake this call, the hero's, “way would be opened through the walls of day into the dark where the jewels glow” (Campbell, 1973, p. 53).[14] This “herald” denotes a new stage in the hero's hagiography (p. 55).

B. Refusal of the Call. The hero's first response to this call is often refusal, until cajoled into the herald's prescription. The refusal of the call is tied to the mundane or every day elements of the hero's life: “walled in boredom, hard work, or 'culture,'” (Campbell, 1973, p. 59). This section is also called, “the folly of the flight from the gods” (Campbell, 1973, p. 36). The folly of this refusal is exactly that which places the majority of humanity outside of the role of the hero (or heroine).[15] In Campbell's (1973) words: “refusal is essentially a refusal to give up what one takes to be one's own interests” (Campbell, 1973, p. 60). The way of the hero is difficult because it calls the hero to live differently, in explicit or implicit critique of the ordinary.

C. Supernatural Aid or Meeting the Mentor. Of course, if all would-be heroes refused the call (and refused it permanently), there would be no heroes. Those who do not are often not alone in their journey. As Campbell (1973) points out, “the first encounter of the hero-journey is

14 Campbell often uses metaphorical language such as this.

15 The use of “heroine” as a term here is mine, as I did not wish the reader to think that any folly was tied to gender or sex.

with a protective figure (often a little old crone or old man) who provides the adventurer with amulets against the dragon forces he is about to pass" (Campbell, 1973, p. 69). This supernatural aid can take many forms, manifesting as "the unsuspected assistance that comes to one who has undertaken his proper adventure" (Campbell, 1973, p. 36). The aid is two-fold: metaphorical (or literal) amulets and the wisdom of the amulet-giver.

D. Crossing of the First Threshold. Now appropriately armed, the hero leaves behind the world he has known. With the amulets, or, "personifications of his destiny to guide and aid him, the hero goes forward in his adventure until he comes to the 'threshold guardian' at the entrance to the zone of magnified power" (Campbell, 1973, p. 77). This threshold is the division between the safety of the known and knowable parameters of the hero's existence for the unknown, and perhaps unknowable, realm beyond. Crossing the first threshold begins the hero's journey into self-discovery and self-worth. Campbell (1973) finds this section so important that he writes, "The adventure is always and everywhere a passage beyond the veil of the known into the unknown; the powers that watch at the boundary are dangerous; to deal with them is risky; yet for anyone with competence and courage the danger fades" (Campbell, 1973, p. 82).

E. Belly of the Whale. Now that the hero has crossed the threshold, he finds himself in an unfamiliar region: "desert, jungle, deep sea, alien land, etc." (Campbell, 1973, p. 79). The Belly of the Whale, or "the passage into the realm of night" (p. 36), results when the hero fails to, "[conquer] or [conciliate] the power of the threshold, [and] is swallowed into the unknown, and would appear to have died (p. 90). In this way, the crossing the threshold can be seen as "self-annihilation" (p. 91). Whereas to the observer, the hero has left the known world and may appear (or indeed be) dead, the hero is actually at work in the world beyond. The Belly of the

Beast does not act as coffin, but rather cauldron, continuing to form the hero.

Initiation

Initiation is the second major section of the Hero's Journey. In this section, the hero is met with a world and its inhabitants unlike his own. The relevant sub-sections are: A.) The Road of Trials; B.) Meeting with the Goddess; C.) Woman as Temptress; D.) Atonement with the Father; E.) Apotheosis; and F.) The Ultimate Boon. The hero's sojourn through the initiatory period prepares the hero for his return and reintegration with society, now armed with the gift(s) he has received from his time apart.

A. Road of Trials. The Road of Trials, or "the dangerous aspect of the gods" (Campbell, 1973, p. 36), is the sub-section in which the hero faces external perils of his environs and internal perils of his own self-doubt. The Road of Trials, "is a deepening of the problem of the first threshold and the question is still in balance: Can the ego put itself to death? For many-headed is the surrounding Hydra; one head cut off two more appear-unless the right caustic is applied to the mutilated stump." (p. 109). The hero, however, does not face the perils alone. "The hero is covertly aided by the advice, amulets, and secret agents of the supernatural helper whom he met before his entrance into this region" (p. 97).

B. Meeting with the Goddess. Armed with this wisdom, when the hero successfully faces trials, he encounters the divine feminine. Meeting with the Goddess (*Magna Mater)* (p. 36), affords the hero "the bliss of infancy regained" (p. 36). This reunion with the mother-figure is, as Campbell (1973) calls it, the, "ultimate adventure," (p. 109), and occurs, "when all the barriers and ogres have been overcome, is commonly represented as a mystical marriage (ἱερὸς γάμος) the triumphant hero-soul with the Queen Goddess of the World" (p. 109). This universal

feminine encompasses many aspects of relationships the hero might have with a woman. “She is the paragon of all paragons of beauty, the reply to all desire, the bliss-bestowing goal of every hero’s earthly and unearthly quest. She is mother, sister, mistress, bride.” (pp. 110-11). As such, the divine feminine represents the various aspects of love: *eros*, *philia*, *agape*, and *caritas*. “The meeting with the goddess (who is Incarnate in every woman) is the final test of the talent of the hero to win the boon of love (charity: *amor fati*), which is life itself enjoyed is the encasement of eternity” (p. 118).

C. Woman as the Temptress. The temptations of love in its many forms are great, and the hero might be tempted to stay where he is, but he cannot. In this way, the woman acts as temptress, or “the realization and agony of Oedipus” (p. 36). Campbell continues to explain this “agony of Oedipus:”

> “The mystical marriage with the queen goddess of the world represents the hero's total mastery of life; for the woman is life, the hero its knower and master. And the testing of the hero, which were preliminary to his ultimate experience and deed, were symbolical of those crises of realization by means of which his consciousness came to be amplified and made capable of enduring the full possession of the mother-destroyer, his inevitable bride. With that he knows that he and the father are one: he is in the father's place” (pp. 120-121).

In this way, the hero and his father are not atoned as in reconciled, but rather atonement is “at-one-ment,” (p. 130) they are, in a sense, made one.

D. Atonement with the Father. The concept of Mother Goddess begs the complementary Father God. In this sub-section, the hero is united with the Father in himself.

"Atonement (at-one-ment) consists in no more than the abandonment of that self-generated double monster – the dragon thought to be God (superego) and the dragon thought to be Sin (repressed id)" (p. 130). Through such self-mastery, the hero has no need to be frightened of the Father. "It is in this ordeal that the hero may derive hope and assurance from the helpful female figure, by whose magic (pollen charms or power of intercession) he is protected through all the frightening experiences of the father's ego shattering initiation" (pp. 130-131). Such initiation in this sub-section welcomes the hero into the new reality of the hero's godhood.

E. Apotheosis. Apotheosis represents this godhood of the hero, especially in the reconciliation of the divine masculine and feminine. The hero has torn through the dualistic notions that divide the world. "Broken free of the prejudices of… provincially limited ecclesiastical, tribal, or national rendition of the world archetypes, it becomes possible to understand that the supreme initiation is not that of the local motherly fathers, who then project aggression onto the neighbors for their own defense" (pp. 157-158). Rather, this universal God embodies all, bears all. Campbell's closing argument is this:

> "If the God is a tribal, racial, national, or sectarian archetype, we are the warriors of his cause, but if he is a lord of the universe itself, we then go forth as knowers to whom *all* [Campbell's emphasis] men are brothers. And… the childhood parent images of 'good' and 'evil' have been surpassed. We no longer desire and fear; we are what was desired and feared" (p. 162).

The hero becomes a unitive force, a herald himself of this good news.

F. The Ultimate Boon. The hero begins to prepare for his return to share this good news. This phase stands in contrast to the Road of Trials. This portion of the journey is easy for the

hero and his new-found understanding. “The ease with which the adventure here is accomplished signifies that the hero is a superior man, a born king” (p. 173). His interaction with the divine has given him the *elixir vitae*, which is not the divine itself, but rather that understanding that made them divine. “The gods and goddesses then are to be understood as embodiments and custodians of the elixir… What the hero seeks though his intercourse with them is not finally themselves, but their grace, i.e., power of their sustaining substance” (p. 181). Armed with that which he sought, albeit in a different form than perhaps anticipated, the hero returns with this ultimate boon as savior, liberator, or king.

Return

The Hero's Journey makes sense in light of the hero's return. Campbell (1973) writes, “*The return and reintegration with society* [Campbell's emphasis]... is the justification of the long retreat” (p. 36). The relevant sub-sections of the Return are: A.) Refusal of Return; B.) The Magic Flight; C.) Rescue from Without; D.) The Crossing of the Return Threshold; E.) Master of Two Worlds; and F.) Freedom to Live. Several of the stages found in this section echo stages found in the previous sections, Departure and Initiation.

A. Refusal of Return. The Refusal of return is also called, “the world denied” (p. 37). Even though he is armed with their wisdom, the hero knows he is saying goodbye to the world of the gods. “The norm of the monomyth, requires that the hero shall now begin the labor of bringing back the runes of wisdom… back into the kingdom of humanity, where the boon may redound to the renewing of the community, the nation, the planet, or the ten thousand worlds. But the responsibility has been frequently refused” (p. 193). Similar to Refusal of the Call in Departure, there are heroes who do not fully live into their destiny by refusing to return to the

world as heroes. “Numerous indeed are the heroes fabled to have taken up residence forever in the blessed isle” (p. 193).

B. Magic Flight. The Magic Flight, or “escape from Prometheus” (p. 37), often accompanies the hero's return to the world of humankind. Assuming the hero does not refuse to return, the hero might return with the elixir, anointed by the gods as their champion (p. 196), or “on the other hand, if the trophy has been attained against the opposition of its guardian, or if the hero's wish to return to the world has been resented by the gods or demons, then the last stage of the mythological round becomes a lively, often comical, pursuit” (p. 197). Hence, the Magic Flight. This evasion is given the moniker, “magic,” as it, “may be complicated by marvels of magical obstruction and evasion” (p. 197).

C. Rescue from Without. As mentioned previously, not all stories exhibit all aspects of the *monomyth*. For example, some tragic stories end in failure by the hero (p. 207). In cases where the hero is not able to conquer the magic flight, he, “may have to be brought back from his supernatural adventure by assistance from without. That is to say, the world may have to come and get him” (p. 207). In other cases, the hero is offered similar supernatural aid to that which he received in the first section, Departure (p. 216).

D. Crossing of the Return Threshold. Regardless of the means by which he leaves the mystical realm, the hero Crosses the Return Threshold, or “[returns] to the world of common day” (p. 37). Campbell (1973) writes, “This brings us to the final crisis of the round… Whether rescued from without, driven from within, gently carried along by the guiding divinities, he has yet to re-enter with this boon the long-forgotten atmosphere where men who are fractions imagine themselves to be complete” (p. 216). Sometimes the hero is not exactly welcomed and

thanked for his efforts. Campbell (1973) offers that there remains, “a certain baffling inconsistency between the wisdom brought forth from the deep, and the prudence usually found to be effective in the light world” (p. 217).

E. Master of Two Worlds. The world we fear and the world we know being one and the same, are both under the purview of the hero. Once this knowledge is internalized, the hero can, “pass back and forth across the world division… not contaminating the principles of the one with those of the other…[that] is the talent of the master” (p. 229). Part of this mastery might look passive, or docile, but rather is the hero's ability to live fully present. “His personal ambitions being totally dissolved, he no longer tries to live but willingly relaxes to whatever may come to pass in him” (p. 237).

F. Freedom to Live. In this heroic way of living, and with it the freedom that is, the hero fulfills “the nature and function of the ultimate boon” (p. 37). This freedom is the freedom to be dominated by the devices and desires of our own hearts, the machinations of history, and the dealings of duplicitous men. The same rules, chains, or fetters of his contemporaries do not bind the hero. “The hero has died as a modern man; but as an eternal man – perfect, unspecific, universal man – he has been reborn” (p. 20). The hero has knowledge, wisdom, and example of life to share this with his contemporaries, even if these go unheeded. Here Campbell is at his most metaphysical: “The hero is the champion of things becoming, not of things become, because he *is* [Campbell's emphasis]” (p. 243).

In short, the Hero's Journey encapsulates themes repeated across cultures to formulate a common structure, which can be applied to hero stories from around the world. Campbell's words sum the *monomyth* well:

> "A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man" (p. 30).

Campbell's work relies on earlier work on archetypes done by psychologist C. G. Jung (17-18). These Jungian archetypes are embodied in the roles played by characters in the hero's journey. Vogler (2007) distills these archetypal characters into hero, mentor, threshold guardian, herald, shapeshifter, shadow, ally and trickster (p. 26). With the exception of the hero, the dungeon master, who assumes the remaining non-hero roles, plays these archetypes. This research is primarily concerned with the structural framework that Campbell's model provides, and only refers to character archetypes insofar as they impact the story's structure.

In addition to the work Campbell himself did with myths gathered from around the world,[16] his model has also been applied to analyze stories found in literature, like those listed in Chapter 2.[17] The model has also been applied to film. As previously mentioned, George Lucas, used the Hero's Journey in the construction of the film *Star Wars* (Moyers, 1991, p. xiii).

As those in the storytelling world know, however, literary analysis provides but one avenue to access the riches found in told stories. While story and the written word have been linked in the West, there is more to story than the written word. As outlined in the statement of purpose, storytelling can be pan-disciplinary, and carries with it a performative aspect (Joy, 2006, p. iv). Similarly, it is temporal – an art form existing in time. As such traditional, literary models used for research and analysis might fall short when faced with all the academic fields

16 See Chapter 5: Conclusion for a criticism of Campbell's selection, methods, and inclusion.

17 *Journey to the West* (西游记) (2008 Zhang, p. iii), *Don Quixote* (1973, Campbell, p. 130), and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, (2009, Santos, p. 207)

and subfields stories encompass.

This investigation provides new insight into the relationship of the fields of storytelling and the study of roleplaying games. As my findings will show, many elements of the Hero's Journey can be found in these seven *Dungeons & Dragons* modules. Just as no one story contains the whole of the *monomyth*, neither does any one adventure module contain the entire *monomyth*. This methodology finds pertinent section the published modules that "fit" into the sections and subsections of Campbell's Hero's Journey.

Chapter 4: The Hero's Journey in Moldvay's *Dungeons & Dragons*, parses the stages of the *monomyth* as they appear in the printed adventure modules for Moldvay's *Basic Dungeons & Dragons*, and, using narratological theory, the narrative that results through playing the game. Each section of the Hero's Journey is outlined and specific examples from the seven adventure modules with enough background of the module's story to set these examples in a clear context for the reader (who may not have access to the printed material).

Chapter 4: The Hero's Journey in Modlvay's *Dungeons & Dragons*

This chapter provides evidence of aspects of the Hero's Journey in Moldvay's *Dungeons & Dragons*. Through the lens of narratological theory, I analyze the seven adventure modules for Moldvay's edition of *Basic Dungeons & Dragons* for the narrative contained therein. Using these derived narratives, I apply Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey as a model for analysis. First, I briefly outline the narratological framework of the Hero's Journey. Next, I briefly introduce the seven adventure modules in terms of story and basic themes. After this overview, I conduct my analysis by parsing the stages of the *monomyth* from the potential narrative that emerges through game play. Each section, Departure, Initiation, and Return, along with the subsequent subsections are outlined, along with specific examples from the adventure modules. I do this in such a way that does not necessitate having the adventure modules to reference. Within this process, this chapter shows evidence of aspects of the Hero's Journey as they appear in the game materials developed by Moldvay and his cadre who created material for this revision of the *Basic Dungeons & Dragons* rules.

The modules printed for the Moldvay edition of *Basic Dungeons & Dragons* are:

Dungeon Module B1: In Search of the Unknown (Carr, 1981)

Dungeon Module B2: The Keep on the Borderlands (Gygax, 1981)

Dungeon Module B3: Palace of the Silver Princess [the recalled version with an orange cover] (Wells, 1981)

Dungeon Module B3: Palace of the Silver Princess [the published version with the green cover] (Moldvay & Wells, 1981)

Dungeon Module B4: The Lost City (Moldvay, 1982); *Dungeon Module X1: The Isle of*

Dread. (Cook & Moldvay, 1981)

Dungeon Module X2: Castle Amber or *Château d' Amberville* (Moldvay, 1981).

Together these modules, along with the *Basic* (Moldvay, 1981) and *Expert* (Cook, 1981) rules, comprise a limited, definable body of work, even if the games played using these rules and modules continue to this day and are not quantifiable. As the narrative found within these modules is of utmost importance, I summarize them before beginning the analysis.

In *B1: In Search of the Unknown* (Carr, 1981), the player characters venture forth into the mysterious "Caverns of Quasqueton" (Carr, 1981, p. 8). The primary motivation for the characters to embark upon this journey is the treasure that accompanies every encounter in the module as rolled on the "Treasure List" table (Carr, 1981, p. 25). Thus, this module uses aleatoric methods whereby the dungeon master generates monsters and treasure for each encounter area. The purpose of this is to teach the novice dungeon master how to create dungeon encounters (Carr, 1981, p. 2). The randomly generates the monsters and treasure, making the narrative flow of this module not as clear as others do. This randomization also allows the module to, "be utilized for one or more playings" (Carr, 1981, p. 2).

B2: The Keep on the Borderlands (Gygax, 1981) is similar in tenor, again offering an experience that is less linear that typical narrative, but with more structure than *In Search of the Unknown*. The player characters find themselves at a keep at the edge of a wilderness called the borderlands (Gygax, 1981, p. 6). The narrative occurs in the player characters' travels between the keep and, "the Caves of Chaos where fell creatures lie in wait" (Gygax, 1981, p. 6). *Keep on the Borderlands* further differentiates itself from *In Search of the Unknown* in that encounters within the module are already populated, not randomly rolled. Nevertheless, the module retains

the “sandbox” style of play, in that the players are free to choose where their characters travel and in what order encounters might take place.

The module *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* was printed twice. I dissect both versions, as the revised module presents a much different story. The first printing (Wells, 1981) had an orange cover and featured something of a love story at its heart. Wells, a female author, tackled sexuality in a way it had not been in a *Dungeons & Dragons* module before. For reasons much speculated upon, but officially not revealed, the publishers recalled this module. When the module was revised and rereleased months later (Moldvay & Wells, 1981) it had a green cover and much of Well's original story had been rewritten by Moldvay, including the love story being replaced by the story of a cursed civilization.

The orange-covered *Palace of the Silver Princess* (Wells, 1981) takes place years after dwarven miners find, “a ruby the size of an apple” (Wells, 1981, p. 2). The writers gave this gem the monicker, “My Lady's Heart” (Wells, 1981, p. 2). “A beautiful young princess called Argenta” throws a masquerade ball and one guest arrives to steal the gem (Wells, 1981, p. 2). Unsuccessful and, challenged by some of her subjects, the guest departs only to return riding a red dragon (Wells, 1981, p. 2). It is unclear what happened to the princess, her gem, and the dragon rider, that mystery is up to the player characters to solve as her once-prosperous kingdom now lies in ruins (Wells, 1981, p. 2).

The green-covered *Palace of the Silver Princess* (Moldvay & Wells, 1981) features some of the same elements: the princess, the ruby called “My Lady's Heart,” and the ruined kingdom (Moldvay & Wells, 1981, p. 4). However, it introduces Arik, “an ancient evil being of great power” (Moldvay & Wells, 1981, p. 4). Arik schemes to take over the kingdom, given the name

of Haven in this revision (Moldvay & Wells, 1981, p. 4). From a “prison dimension,” Arik sends one of his eyes to Haven (Moldvay & Wells, 1981, p. 4). This eye is the ruby found by the dwarven miners (Moldvay & Wells, 1981, p. 4). The ruby has turned Haven into a cursed land, turning, “palace inhabitants to stone and [trapping] the princess... inside the ruby” (Moldvay & Wells, 1981, p. 4). The green-covered revision is perhaps the most scripted of the adventure modules, beginning with a “Programmed adventure” wherein the player characters make choices not unlike those found in a gamebook (Moldvay & Wells, 1981, p. 6).

The background of *B4: The Lost City* (Moldvay, 1982) details an ancient history of the city, “Cynidicea” (Moldvay, 1982, p. 3). The city's expansion under King Alexander and Queen Zenobia saw a ziggurat, with catacombs being dug below (Moldvay, 1982, p. 3). “Workers, digging under the pyramid, chanced upon the lair of a strange monster called Zargon” (Moldvay, 1982, p. 3). Zargon went on a rampage of death, eventually causing city officials to institute a system of sacrifices, which gave rise to a cult dedicated to Zargon (Moldvay, 1982, p. 3). This caused the land to turn into a desert and marauding barbarians eventually destroyed the city. Zargon and his followers were forced underground (Moldvay, 1982, p. 3). Now several factions vie for control of the ruined ziggurat: the remaining Cynidiceans, the Brotherhood of Gorm (the god of war, storms, and justice), the Magi of Usamigaras (god of healing, messengers, and thieves), the Warrior Maidens of Madarua (goddess of birth, death, and the changing seasons), and, of course, the Priests of Zargon (Moldvay, 1982, p. 3).

As mentioned, *X1: The Isle of Dread* (Cook and Moldvay, 1981), another module that allows for open play, offers a non-linear world for the player characters to explore. As with the other two sandbox modules, this module gives minimal exposition, though it does offer more

exposition than *B1: In Search of the Unknown* (Carr, 1981) and *B2: Keep on the Borderlands* (Gygax, 1981). The player characters discover a lost scroll written by the explorer, Rory Barbarossa, who has begun mapping the eponymous "Isle of Dread" (Cook and Moldvay, 1981, p. 4). The letter entices the characters to seek out the Isle of Dread, by promising, "treasure beyond imagining" (Cook and Moldvay, 1981, p. 4). The adventure becomes what the players make of it, as the dungeon master has the completed map filled with many encounters to experience and places to explore. Once again, since the player characters can choose these encounters in any order, I found it difficult to parse a cohesive, linear storyline.

Finally, *X2: Castle Amber* or *Château d' Amberville* (Moldvay, 1981) returns to a more linear story-based adventure. The works of pulp fantasy author, and H. P. Lovecraft contemporary, Clark Ashton Smith module inspired this module (Moldvay, 1981, p. 2). "The Amber family held estates in the province of Averoigne . . . an alternate earth (Moldvay, 1981, p. 3). In this alternate earth, "magic is real, but illegal," and, "this world has not yet progressed beyond medieval technology" (Moldvay, 1981, p. 3). In search of "power," the house of Amber, "began to study black magic" (Moldvay, 1981, p. 3). When this was discovered, "they fled through a temporary gateway between dimensions. In this dimension, they obtained the great power they desired, until one day, "the entire Amber family and their mansion, Castle Amber, disappeared" (Moldvay, 1981, p. 3). The player characters encounter Castle Amber and this quixotic family and must uncover how the family disappeared in order to return to the realm they have known (Moldvay, 1981, p. 3).

Departure

In the first section of Campbell's Hero's Journey, called Departure, the hero leaves behind

his[18] home, family for the unknown. The unknown features prominently in *Dungeons & Dragons* adventure modules. Each of the Moldvay modules begins with a paragraph warning players not to read the module, or the fun that comes with discovery will be diminished.[19] The title of the first module printed for the system, *B1: In Search of the Unknown* (Carr, 1981) features the "unknown" in the title.

A. Call to Adventure. The first subsection of Departure is the Call to Adventure. In the Call to Adventure, a commonplace individual receives some message that sends them on an unidentified quest. In *Dungeons & Dragons*, the task of calling the player characters to adventure falls to the dungeon master. The dungeon master, "finishes 'setting the stage' by bringing the player characters from the background . . . to the place where the game adventure will begin" (Carr, 1981, p. 4). This can be as simply done, as it is in *B1: In Search of the Unknown*, by "providing a brief narrative (such as, 'Your group, after purchasing supplies and getting organized, left their town and went cross country till a deserted pathway was found which led into the hills, and finally to a craggy outcropping of rock')" (Carr, 1981). This exposition features little in the way of background and is typical of early adventure modules where the focus was on exploration, including monster-bashing and treasure-hunting. Indeed the purpose of these early adventures, as stated in *B2: The Keep on the Borderlands* (Gygax, 1981) is to seek, "fame and fortune" (p. 6).

Player characters can discover legends or rumors that offer a more sophisticated way of engaging characters in the story. Knowledge the player characters have is randomly assigned to them using dice rolls and consulting provided tables, as in *B1: In Search of the Unknown* (Carr,

18 For Campbell, the hero is male. This has – rightfully so – garnered much criticism from the academy and beyond and will be addressed more thoroughly in Chapter 5: Conclusion.

19 B1, p. 2; B2, p. 2; B3 (Orange), p. 2; B3 (Green), p. 2; B4, p. 2; X1, p. 2; and X2, p. 2.

1981, p. 6); *B2: The Keep on the Borderlands* (Gygax, 1981, p. 7); and *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [orange cover] (Wells, 1981, p. 7). Using the rumor tables gives the player characters some knowledge of that which warrants adventuring, but ultimately leaves the choice of if, where, and how to begin to the players themselves.

These rumor tables eventually gave way to the "Player's Background" as it appears in what would come to be known as "boxed text," that is text that is meant to be read aloud or paraphrased to the players. In *B4: The Lost City* (Moldvay, 1982), the player characters are drawn into the adventure with the dungeon master's more heavy hand: "days ago, your group of adventurers joined a desert caravan . . . a terrible sandstorm struck . . . Your mounts died and you soon drank the rest of your water" (p. 4). There seems to be little choice here, as the player characters are thrust into adventure through this expository, and narrative, text.

As already mentioned, *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [green cover] (Moldvay & Wells, 1981) begins with even less player choice, as the first section of the adventure proper is the "Programmed Adventure" (p. 6). In this section, boxed text entries that lead to boxed text entries, further limits the players' choices in much the same manner as a gamebook. For example, a roll is made when the characters attempt to listen at a door. "If the attempt is successful, read (43). If the attempt is not successful, read (44)" (Moldvay & Wells, 1981, 6). This limitation of player choice is intentional, as this is, "a short adventure designed to introduce new Dungeon Masters and players to the game" (Moldvay & Wells, 1981, 6).

Higher-level play offers more player choice and the two modules for the *Expert* ruleset (under the Moldvay revision umbrella), *X1: The Isle of Dread* (Cook & Moldvay, 1981) and *X2: Castle Amber* or *Château d' Amberville* (Moldvay, 1981), offer such choices in calling the

characters to adventure. In *X1: The Isle of Dread*. (Cook & Moldvay, 1981), the characters receive the note from Rory Barbarossa telling of the titular isle with its vast fortunes (p. 4). While some examples are given, the way the players get to the isle is up to them (as is what the players do when they get there). *X2: Castle Amber* or *Château d' Amberville* (Moldvay, 1981), however, hearkens back to the earlier adventures, where the choice to answer the call to adventure is presupposed and the characters are dropped into action, literally waking up in a strange new land (p. 3).

B. Refusal of Call. The second subsection of Departure is the Refusal of Call. In the Refusal of Call, the hero may decide to decline the call to adventure. This section is less prevalent in playing the game, *Dungeons & Dragons*, as the players and dungeon master enter into a social contract by playing the game. The dungeon master has done quite a bit of work preparing the game for the players, if their characters refuse the call, the game and adventure does not move forward, much like the narrative would stop if any hero fully refused his calling. The game calls upon the dungeon master to present to the players a believable world and calls upon the players to suspend their disbelief. Nevertheless, there are opportunities for the characters to refuse their call as adventurers. As previously cited, the rumor tables offer different ways to entice the players to adventure (or not). Very little or no choice for this refusal is given in *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [green cover] (Moldvay & Wells, 1981), *B4: The Lost City* (Moldvay, 1982), *X2: Castle Amber* or *Château d' Amberville* (Moldvay, 1981), as the player characters find themselves, through no action of their own, at the point of adventure.

C. Supernatural Aid or Meeting the Mentor. The third subsection of Departure is the Supernatural Aid and/or Meeting the Mentor. In this subsection, once the hero commits to the

quest, a mentor or guide materializes. This mentor can bestow helpful gifts on the hero to aid in the quest. In some ways, the premise of adventuring to find artifacts represents the quest for this supernatural aid. In this regard, the dungeon master fulfills the role as mentor. In addition to playing all the characters the players' characters interact with, including any possible mentors, he or she awards the much sought after magic items and experience points that lead to higher experience levels. *B1: In Search of the Unknown* (Carr, 1981) offers that, "the carrying of one or two useful magic items will likewise be of great help (p. 7). The module leaves the role of selecting and assigning these magic items to the dungeon master. *X1: The Isle of Dread* (Cook & Moldvay, 1981) leaves even more to the dungeon master's discretion. On the voyage to the isle, the dungeon master is directed to "use the wilderness rules from the D&D Expert set . . . in spite of these hazards, the DM should remember that the party should still **reach** the Isle of Dread, and should handle weather, rolls for becoming lost, and encounters with this in mind" (p. 5).

Sometimes the role of mentor or supernatural aid can be found in a town before the adventure proper. As mentioned, *B1: In Search of the Unknown* (Carr, 1981) has no town beyond the vague mention of a town in the introduction. In *B2: The Keep on the Borderlands* (Gygax, 1981), the keep in the title fulfills the role of the town, allowing the player characters access to arms and equipment, potential mentors, and a base of operations (p. 8). While *B4: The Lost City* (Moldvay, 1982) offers no such town or opportunities, the players have "joined a desert caravan" (p. 4) before the start of the adventure. The dungeon master decides whether to give aid or mentoring services to members of the caravan.

On the way to the palace in the title of *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [orange cover] (Wells, 1981), the heroes meet the tinker, Lamdomon, and his daughter, Zappora (p. 6), who

function as mentors and offer aid. The module's text offers, “they can be used as a method of helping players solve problems and provide information” (Wells, 1981, p.6). In *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [green cover] (Moldvay & Wells, 1981), a “Protector” appears to a character in a dream, offering the characters a way to cross the first threshold, a portcullis (p. 7). In *X2: Castle Amber* or *Château d' Amberville* (Moldvay, 1981), the player characters are on their way to meet Prince Glantri, who will serve as a potential patron, when they are teleported instead to a different land where the adventure takes place (p. 3).

D. Crossing the First Threshold. The fourth subsection of Departure is Crossing the First Threshold. In Crossing the First Threshold, the hero leaves the known world behind, for an unknown dimension. *Dungeons & Dragons* adventures are similar to Jack tales from the oral tradition in that players tend to play the game more than once, and adventures follow adventures follow adventures. There could be several thresholds crossed in each adventure module, but it is important to note that the players and their characters leave the mundane world behind at the first threshold.

Crossing the Threshold can feel like an ordinary departure, as it does in *B1: In Search of the Unknown* (Carr, 1981). The player characters arrive at the “Caverns of Quasqueton,” and happen upon a wooden door built into the rock of the mountain (p. 8). It can feel supernatural as it does in *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [green cover] (Moldvay & Wells, 1981), where the palace's portcullis entrance is surrounded by an ominous red glow (p. 8), or in *X2: Castle Amber* or *Château d' Amberville* (Moldvay, 1981), when the characters are carried off in their sleep to awaken in an unknown land (p. 3), where the player characters cross the threshold as the threshold crosses them. The boundary crossing can be more innocuous, like the

standard portcullis in *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [orange cover] (Wells, 1981, p. 8), or well guarded, like the multiple entryways to the "Caves of Chaos" in *B2: The Keep on the Borderlands* (Gygax, 1981, p. 14). In the case of *X1: The Isle of Dread* (Cook & Moldvay, 1981), the threshold to be crossed is the sea itself, which may yield encounters of its own (p. 5). A secret door revealed as characters search for water, marks the boundary to the world beyond in *B4: The Lost City* (Moldvay, 1982, p. 4).

E. Belly of the Whale. The fifth and final subsection of Departure is the Belly of the Whale. The Belly of the Whale is the final departure from the familiar universe. The *Basic Dungeons & Dragons* rules outline dungeon exploration (Moldvay, 1981, p. B3). As such, the *Basic* modules interpret the Belly of the Whale as a descent into the earth, in the form of natural caves, crafted dungeons, or a combination of the two. (Carr, 1981; Gygax, 1981; Moldvay, 1982; Moldvay & Wells, 1981; Wells, 1981). *Expert Dungeons & Dragons* rules add rules for wilderness exploration, so the two expert level adventures, *X1: The Isle of Dread* (Cook & Moldvay, 1981) and *X2: Castle Amber* or *Château d' Amberville* (Moldvay, 1981), see wilderness areas in part fulfilling the Belly of the Beast's role (Moldvay, 1981, p. B3).

The entrance to the Belly of the Beast is often associated with a mouth or moisture. In *B1: In Search of the Unknown* (Carr, 1981), the player characters are confronted by three magic mouths that appear on the cavern walls warning the players of the "certain death" that awaits them (p. 8). In *X2: Castle Amber* or *Château d' Amberville* (Moldvay, 1981), the symbol that the player characters are trapped in a new foreign world is a humid mist that defines the borders of where they can and cannot go (p. 2). In *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [green cover] (Moldvay & Wells, 1981), when the player characters finally arrive at the cavernous portion of the

adventure, the “dark damp cave [carries] with it a musky smell” (p. 14). In *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [orange cover] (Wells, 1981), the player characters must pass over, or through, a large pool of water (p. 9). Indeed, the whole wilderness area of *X1: The Isle of Dread* (Cook & Moldvay, 1981) is a wet archipelago. The Caves of Chaos in *B2: The Keep on the Borderlands* (Gygax, 1981), themselves seem to be alive in that the “monsters” therein, “[learn] from experience” (p. 14).

The Belly of the Beast also marks a severance from what the hero has known before. In several modules, the heroes face the prospect that they cannot go back. In *X1: The Isle of Dread* (Cook & Moldvay, 1981), the boat that brought them to the isle, might be destroyed (p. 5). In *B4: The Lost City* (Moldvay, 1982), the player characters search the city for water, having come from the desert where they know that there is none (p. 5). Indeed, in *X2: Castle Amber* or *Château d' Amberville* (Moldvay, 1981), the mist that bounds the pocket dimension that holds Castle Amber prevents the player characters' return (p. 3).

Initiation

The second section of the Hero's Journey is Initiation. Once the heroes have entered the new world of the adventure module, they are presented with strange sights, tests of meddle, and alien personalities. These encounters, like the encounters in *Dungeons & Dragons* can be in the form of traps, puzzles, test of morale, conversational, or, of course, combat (Cook, 1981, p. x23). The subsections found in Initiation make up most of the *Dungeons & Dragons* roleplaying experience as found in the corpus of adventure modules under the Moldvay umbrella of material.

A. Road of Trials. The first subsection of Initiation is the Road of Trials. This subsection contains the tasks that the hero must perform to go through personal growth. Every encounter

within the dungeon or wilderness environment is something of a trial. As within the Hero's Journey, there is always a chance to fail these tests in *Dungeons & Dragons*. In the game, failure or success depends upon the players' actions and their characters' abilities as they interact with die rolls and the interpretation within the rules. Thus, the game aspect of *Dungeons & Dragons*, allows more opportunities to fail than other narratives that utilize the Hero's Journey.

Perhaps the easiest trials to identify along the heroes' path are monsters. Monsters are everywhere in early editions of *Dungeons & Dragons*. In *B1: In Search of the Unknown* (Carr, 1981), there are fifty-six encounter areas that each require a roll on a random monster table (p. 21). These so-called "wandering monsters" and the accompanying tables that govern their placement also appear in *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [orange cover] (Wells, 1981, pp. 7-8); *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [green cover] (Moldvay & Wells, 1981, pp. 13 and 23); *B4: The Lost City* (Moldvay, 1982, pp. 8, 16, and 21); and *X2: Castle Amber* or *Château d' Amberville* (Moldvay, 1981, pp. 4, 8, and 19). Beyond these random monsters found in the adventure modules, other challenges await the party of adventurers.

In *B1: In Search of the Unknown* (Carr, 1981), the player characters are faced with the challenge of laughing gas from an uncorked bottle (p. 11). A twin pair of empty teleportation rooms that thwart the players mapping efforts (p. 14) confound Player characters. A room of pools (pp. 17-19) and stone chips found on a cavern wall (pp. 21-22) both offer the promise of great benefit, like a permanent rise in an attribute's score (p. 22), with potentially disastrous risk, like a pool that renders an imbibing character mute (pp. 18-19). The result is a myriad of ways player characters can get themselves into, or perhaps out of, trouble.

In *B2: The Keep on the Borderlands* (Gygax, 1981), the player characters encounter a

paranoid tree-dwelling hermit and his “'pet' mountain lion” (p. 13). Each entrance to the Caves of Chaos feature a different type of fantastic creature's lair: kobolds (p. 14), orcs (p. 15), goblins (p. 16), an ogre (p. 17), and hobgoblins (p. 17). In a nod to the Greek myths that in part influenced the creators of the game, the Caves of Chaos also house a Minotaur, replete with his own labyrinth (p. 20).

In *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [orange cover] (Wells, 1981), player characters must successfully navigate an underground lagoon with, “a rather large diamond embedded in the center of the pool. The gem is actually the eye of the diger . . . an amoebic monster that sees rock or stone areas in which to camouflage itself as a pool” (p. 11). The overgrown garden of the palace pits the player characters against deadly plants: “a Jupiter blood sucker [and] . . . archer bushes” (pp. 20 and 25).

In *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [green cover] (Moldvay & Wells, 1981), player characters face a green slime that cannot be killed with conventional weapons, that “can be only harmed by fire or cold; it cannot be hurt by other attacks (p. 17). Worse, “it dissolves metal and wood” (p. 17). Worse still, “once in contact with flesh, green slime will stick and turn the flesh into green slime. It cannot be scraped off, but must be burnt off” (p. 17). The players have the opportunity to decipher a cryptic poem inscribed in a palace room that details the adventure module's plot (p. 22). In a dining area, the player characters encounter a new creature, the decapus (p. 26). The decapus is similar to a land-dwelling octopus that “looks like a bloated, hairy globe with ten tentacles. Its hair is brown, and its body is green. At the center of the decapus' 4' wide body is a huge, toothy mouth” (p. 26).

In *B4: The Lost City* (Moldvay, 1982), some encounters are dependent on the outcome of

previous encounters (p. 9). For example, in the lost city's central ziggurat, four factions vie for control: the Brotherhood of Gorm (p. 7), the Magi of Usamigaras (p. 9), the Warrior Maidens of Madarua (p. 11), and the Priests of Zargon (p. 3). Factions react to how the player characters previously interacted with, and perhaps joined, the other factions. Beyond the negotiations involved in these encounters, player characters also encounter the polymar, "a semi-intelligent, many-celled creature that can reshape its body to look like any creature . . . or object," in this case a tapestry (p. 17). Players with characters who played and survived *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [green cover] (Moldvay & Wells, 1981) might be extra careful of the trap in *B4: The Lost City* (Moldvay, 1982) that features blades at the end of three pendulums, as the blades are "covered in a sticky green goo that looks like green slime" (Moldvay, 1982, p. 12). In *B4: The Lost City* (Moldvay, 1982), however, the green, "goo is harmless," though the swinging blades are decidedly not (p. 12).

Some of the Encounters in *X1: The Isle of Dread* (Cook & Moldvay, 1981) are outlandish. The island is a nod to *The Land that Time Forgot* (Burroughs, 1999), featuring various prehistoric inhabitants including dinosaurs – allosaurus (p. 28), ankylosaurus (p. 28), brontosaurus (p. 28), dimetrodon (p. 29), plesiosaurus (p. 30), trachodon (p. 30), and – and a subplot to "hunt" each species (pp. 26-27). Another encounter of note is a spy chamber located within a statue, complete with a megaphone to speak as the statue and eyeholes that allow seeing what the statue "sees" (p. 24). The player characters might also run across the village of the phanton, a species of sentient tree-dwellers who, "look like a cross between a monkey and a raccoon and glide from tree branch to tree branch like flying squirrels" (p. 9).

In *X2: Castle Amber* or *Château d' Amberville* (Moldvay, 1981), the players' characters

are temporarily blinded by a "brilliant flash of light" (p. 6). This tests "… the players' inventiveness when their characters are confronted with the sudden loss of sight" (p. 6). Even though wandering monsters are still generated, the module does advise, "the DM should use discretion when confronting a blinded party with monsters" (p. 6). Memorably, an ogre who is enchanted to believe itself to be the member of the Amber family it actually killed, will awaken to serve as hosts to the player characters (p. 7). "Unfortunately, its command of languages and of the social graces is slight and it will become more and more frustrated as it continues to make mistakes, until the ogre finally goes berserk and attacks" (p. 7). As menacing as this might seem, a berserk ogre hostess is relatively tame compared to other challenges like the "flowers of evil" that are able to put player characters to sleep with their pollen and then hurl the slumbering heroes off the path into the waiting, "grab grass" (p. 10). Most alien, however, is the brain collector, "a large, horrible, unearthly creature on six crab-like legs" (p. 16).[20] Brain collectors "remove the brain and swallow it. The brain moves into one of several pockets within the brain collector's own head where the brain may be utilized" (p. 24). When the player characters encounter this creature, it is in the midst of consuming its next brain (p. 16).

These encounters are some of the most memorable. Even before rereading the adventure modules for this work, I remembered facing several of these challenges in my youth. They range in tone from silly to chilling. They exhibit a panoply of types of challenge. Moreover, they show something of the range of storytelling options allowed for by a game like *Dungeons & Dragons*.

B. Meeting with the Goddess. The second subsection of Initiation is Meeting with the Goddess. In Meeting with the Goddess, the hero further obtains gifts that will assist in the quest, often from feminine sources. Campbell is at his most metaphysical in the triptych of Meeting

20 Students of H. P. Lovecraft's literature will no doubt recognize this brain collector's resemblance to the Mi-Go.

with the Goddess, Woman as Temptress, and Atonement with the Father. As previously discussed, not every narrative shows all the signs of the Hero's Journey, and these three sections require liberal interpretation to see this stage at work in *Dungeons & Dragons* adventures.

The Goddess is often a feminine purveyor of helpful items. Each adventure module features helpful items to aid the player characters in their quest. There are treasures to find, as in *B1: In Search of the Unknown* (Carr, 1981, pp. 8-9), and armories to raid, as in *B2: The Keep on the Borderlands* (Gygax, 1981, p. 18), but rarely are these riches heaped upon the player characters by a living feminine force.

As the player characters often explore abandoned sites overwhelmed with monsters, the living "Goddess" is rare indeed. However, aspects of feminine aid pass through the generations in several instances. In *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [orange cover] (Wells, 1981), the long-dead Lady Argenta leaves behind a diary with directions within the palace to the resting place of the ruby named, "My Lady's Heart" (p. 13). In *B4: The Lost City* (Moldvay, 1982), the likewise long-dead Queen Zenobia warns the player characters to "turn back; only death awaits you" (p. 12) though her burial chamber offers a "jeweled crown [and] . . . a wand of paralyzation" (p. 14). The adventuring party must first fight the Queen, now a Wight, to receive these prizes.

Though she is not exactly alive in the traditional sense when they encounter her, the player characters can interact with the legendary female bard of Haven in *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [green cover] (Moldvay & Wells, 1981, p. 19). "If the party plays two notes on [Rowena's] Ice Harp, Rowena will appear, [however] . . . Rowena cannot remain outside of Faerie [the enchanted realm where she lives] for too long or her real age will catch up with her and she will wither away to dust" (p. 19). While the player characters are able to interact with

her, Rowena “knows about the [ruby] and will be able to tell the characters what happened to cause the disaster to Haven” (p. 19). Similarly, in *X2: Castle Amber* or *Château d' Amberville* (Moldvay, 1981), the player characters can interact with the projected image of Madam Camilla Amber, who allows the characters to draw cards from an enchanted tarot deck, thus offering the possibility of great reward, like “a magical cup that will glow warm when someone tells a lie to its holder” or great detriment, like “all the coins the character is carrying suddenly disappear” (p. 14).

Occasionally the player characters do encounter a living benevolent female force that bestows upon them something of benefit. In *B2: The Keep on the Borderlands* (Gygax, 1981), the player characters are able to rescue the wife of the keep's resident merchant (p. 18). Should they do so, “she will personally reward her rescuers by giving them a dagger +1,” a magical weapon of increased likelihood to hit and increased damage when it does, “she has in her room back at the keep” (p. 18).

More than being merely a female Monty Hall, who doles out encouragement or gifts, a Meeting with the Goddess has the more significant role of helping the male hero become more than himself. Encounters with these characterizations of the feminine (and the masculine as detailed in the section on Atonement with the Father), help provide the player characters means for growth.

C. Woman as Temptress. The third subsection of Initiation is Woman as Temptress. As in Meeting the Goddess, this encounter with the feminine provides the player characters with opportunity for change, through growth or regression. In Woman as Temptress, the hero is enticed by provocations of a physical or pleasurable type. Like Meeting with the Goddess, the

feminine encountered by player characters in the Woman as Temptress subsection is rarely straightforward in *Dungeons & Dragons*.

At its most abstracted, the player characters often meet spiders, an example from the animal kingdom of a dominant female relationship. Spiders appear as crab spiders (Moldvay & Wells, 1981, p. 18), Aranea[21] (Cook & Moldvay, 1981, p. 10; Moldvay, 1981, p. 7) and, with the strongest symbol of Woman as Temptress, as black widows (Carr, 1981, p. 25; Gygax, 1981, p. 13).

Evidence of more visceral temptation can be found throughout the palaces, homes, and dungeons explored as bed chambers (Wells, 1981, p. 18), statues of embracing lovers (Wells, 1981, p. 16), and even a dress-maker's dummy (Wells, 1981, p. 14) hint at the earthly pull of romantic love.

When the player characters encounter a female non-player character, the woman in question is rarely what she seems, thus lending weight to the temptation side of the scale. The "maiden" in *X2: Castle Amber* or *Château d' Amberville* (Moldvay, 1981), is actually a gold dragon in the form of a lady (pp. 8-9). The young woman wearing a fox mask in *B4: The Lost City* (Moldvay, 1982, p. 19) is actually a werefox. While her presence may not necessarily provide temptation to player characters, her racy picture (p. 27) could be provocative to young male players.

The best example of Woman as Temptress are the two female thieves, Candella and Duchess, encountered by the players in *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [orange cover] (Wells, 1981, p. 10), and *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [green cover] (Moldvay & Wells, 1981, p. 24). In the adventure module *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [orange cover] (Wells, 1981), the

21 An intelligent species of giant spider creatures (Cook and Moldvay, 1981, p. 28).

option is left open to have these female thieves join the party and act as allies (p. 10). In *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [green cover] (Moldvay & Wells, 1981), the thieves likewise might join the adventuring party, but "will wait for a good chance to steal whatever they can (either by trying to pick pockets or grabbing any loot in sight), and then run away" (p. 24). In both modules, their attractiveness may influence the player characters (Wells, 1981, p. 10; Moldvay & Wells, 1981, p. 24).

Encountering the temptress can mean different things for player characters in *Dungeons & Dragons*. It can mean death, if the temptation belies a nefarious intent as it does in the modules with intelligent spiders. It can mean betrayal, as it does in In *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [green cover] (Moldvay & Wells, 1981), where the female thieves intend to rob the player characters. It can mean the possibility of accepting the greater reality that the feminine is part of the hero's self, as represented by the female thieves who intend to join the adventurers in *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [orange cover] (Wells, 1981, p. 10).

D. Atonement with the Father. The fourth subsection of Initiation is Atonement with the Father. In Atonement with the Father, which serves as the center-point of the adventure, the hero encounters that which embodies power over life and death, as manifest in the hero's fears. This stage represents the hero encountering his or her mortality, which can lead to power over death.

By passing a series of tests provided by the father figure, the heroes prove their worthiness to be called sons and daughters. In the game, this could take many forms. A common trope, though not found in the adventure modules surveyed, is the wizard who "hires" the player characters to conquer his or her stronghold, only to reward the characters with mentorship when

they are successful.

Atoning with the power over life and death requires the player characters to face death in its many forms. First, the player characters are confronted with images and reminders of their own mortality in the printed adventure modules, as they encounter a band of dead adventurers like the heroes themselves (Carr, 1981, pp. 8-9), and "mounds of rotten, decayed bodies of unlucky adventurers" (Wells, 1981, p. 15).

In other instances, player characters confront illusory death. In another location in *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [orange cover] (Wells, 1981), they battle with a specter of the knight who arrived at the palace to steal the ruby, "My Lady's Heart" (p. 12). This spectral knight will do "damage" to the player characters, but disappears after several moments (p. 12). Once he does, the player characters realize their wounds were illusory too, and even those who died will find that death was an illusion (p. 12). A similar encounter takes place in the revised *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [green cover] (Moldvay & Wells, 1981, p. 29). In *X2: Castle Amber* or *Château d' Amberville* (Moldvay, 1981), the player characters attend a dinner party with guests and servants who are apparitions (p. 6).

The game of *Dungeons & Dragons* may not assign the spiritual weight to this subsection that Campbell does, but the goal of transforming the hero spiritually is accomplished in that player characters of higher levels tend to exhibit more maturity than simply hacking and slashing their way through a treasure-laden crypt, and begin to accept their responsibility towards others in the adventuring party and beyond.

E. Apotheosis. The fifth subsection of Initiation is Apotheosis. In this subsection, the hero develops the awareness of greater insight. Apotheosis is the culmination of the road of trials

and represents the coming together of male and female. Again, this spiritual aspect of the Hero's Journey is not as prevalent in Moldvay's *Basic Dungeons & Dragons*, an edition that served as an introduction to the game. The hero slays the metaphorical dragon in this stage (Campbell, 1973, p. 189). In fact, there is no shortage of dragons to slay in *Dungeons & Dragons*. Any climatic encounters found in the adventure modules that feature battle with a powerful foe fit the model of Apotheosis, but without the metaphysical commentary Campbell provides.

In *B4: The Lost City* (Moldvay, 1982), the player characters set out in search of water. By the end of the adventure, they are embroiled in the political machinations of four factions vying for Machiavellian control of the titular city (p. 3). When they begin this module, the player characters do not know Zargon, the powerful creature who led to the city's downfall. Likewise, it the dungeon master decides if the player characters venture deep enough beneath the city to hear of Zargon (p. 20). When the player characters reach the end of the upper pyramid, they confront the evil cleric of Zargon, Darius (p. 20). In defeating Darius, they have confronted the metaphorical dragon found in this stage of the *monomyth* (Campbell, 1973, p. 189).

F. Ultimate Boon. The sixth and final subsection of Initiation is Ultimate Boon. In Ultimate Boon, the hero has completed the goal of the adventure. The goals of these early *Dungeons & Dragons* modules might not seem terribly sophisticated nearly forty years later. The game is, after all, a game, and an introductory game at that. When players sit down to play this game, the goals for their characters start out simple enough: conquer challenges to gain experience points in order to increase in power and abilities, and collect treasure and magic items to aid in this goal. In the Moldvay body of work, the goals of the printed adventure modules are largely in line with this understanding of the game. "Exploration" is both the journey and the

goal in *B1: In Search of the Unknown* (Carr, 1981. p. 6). “Fame and Fortune” are paramount in *B2: The Keep on the Borderlands* (Gygax, 1981, p. 6). Similarly, the impetus for venturing to an isle is to obtain riches in *The Isle of Dread* (Cook & Moldvay, 1981, p. 4). Players achieve these goals repeatedly throughout play and therefore may not be a suitable place to find either Atonement with the Father or Apotheosis, though they may be enough for the Ultimate Boon.

In *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [orange cover] (Wells, 1981), the abstracted riches are given a personification in the ruby, “My Lady's Heart,” that the player characters may have heard of through legends (p. 7). As the adventure progresses, the player characters unravel the mystery of what happened in the palace with the princess and the dragon-rider, such that when the adventure climaxes and the adventurers find the gem, they are not surprised to fight the ghosts of lady Argenta and her lover, the dragon-rider for the gem (p. 21). This battle exemplifies Apotheosis, and the ruby, the Ultimate Boon.

In similar fashion, in *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [green cover] (Moldvay & Wells, 1981), the goal is to lift the curse on the realm of Haven that contains the palace (p. 4). The ruby in this module is not the heart of a young princess, but instead the eye of the creature Arik (p. 4). Apotheosis is destruction of Arik's eye (p. 29), and the Ultimate Boon freeing Haven from its curse.

Finally, *X2: Castle Amber* or *Château d' Amberville* (Moldvay, 1981), sees the heroes trapped in an unknown realm in constant interaction and conflict with the bizarre and eccentric family, the Ambers (p. 3). Eventually, the player characters discover things started to go bad for the Amber family when Prince Stephen Amber “died” (p. 22). Once Stephen is freed from his imprisonment in a tapestry, the supernatural powers gained as the Ultimate Boon are the ring of

four wishes that Stephen wears that enable him to, “bring back to life up to four characters,” as well as randomly-rolled magic items and expensive jewelry (p. 24).

Return

The third and final section of the Hero's Journey is Return. Heroes in *Dungeons & Dragons* return to prepare for and begin the next adventure. As in Campbell (1973), the benefits of the hero's boon are short lived. Thus providing the need for another hero to begin the cycle anew (p. 109). The gameplay means that each time players gather their characters are party to an adventure. The realm does not stay safe. Foes do not stay vanquished. Other horizons call the heroes.

A. Refusal of Return. The first subsection of Return is Refusal of Return. In Refusal of Return, the hero is tempted to stay in the mystical or idyllic dimension, where he found happiness and knowledge. If the player characters were to stay in the realm of the story, the game would end. This is often a fitting end to very long campaigns: the players “retire” high-level characters to the world beyond where they reign as monarchs or arc mages. the low-level adventure modules that comprise Moldvay's revision of *Dungeons & Dragons* offer few such options. In two instances, characters get a glimpse of what staying in the world fantastic would look like in the form of doppelgangers. In *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [green cover] (Moldvay & Wells, 1981, p. 24), and *B4: The Lost City* (Moldvay, 1982, p. 16), the characters encounter versions of themselves within the respective palace and city. The results are not good, as in each case these doppelgangers attempt to “replace” party members with themselves.

Beyond these glimpses, there is an opportunity for the player characters to become a part of the other world in *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [orange cover] (Wells, 1981). In the guard

tower of the palace, there lives a species of sentient beings called, “the Protectors” (p. 25). Unseen, the Protectors police the guard tower of the palace, making it a refuge for characters who act lawfully (p. 25). Player characters might well decide to stay in this haven under the secret defense of the Protectors (p. 25).

In *X2: Castle Amber* or *Château d' Amberville* (Moldvay, 1981), the player characters have no choice but to refuse to return to their world, until Stephen Amber's curse is broken, as they are trapped by the mist (p. 3). Once Stephen is freed, “the party is back outside Castle Amber. The gray mist has disappeared and the party can see the river they had been following at the start” (pp. 23-24). At this point, the player characters have no choice but to return to their world, as, “Now that the curse is broken, the lost ages catch up with the castle in minutes. The walls grow pitted and crumble into ruins” (p. 24). The only other way out of the mist-shrouded domain is to be made an honorary lord. After putting the characters to sleep by the release of “black dust” in the castle's “Alchemical Laboratory (p. 17), the dungeon master can select a dream from a provided list that allows for the conference of noble title (p. 17). The longer they stay in the realm, the more player characters then run the risk of becoming as unbalanced as the Amber family.

B. Magic Flight. The second subsection of the Return is Magic Flight. In Magic Flight, the hero liberates the boon from those who have been guarding it, instigating pursuit by guards or their agents. The magic flight encounters occurs only at an appropriate level of the characters’ development in recent editions of *Dungeons & Dragons* (Cook, 2003, p. 48). This was not so in the early days of the hobby, as some encounters presented in the adventure modules could result in the dreaded “total party kill.” In this regard, every encounter in these early adventure modules

was the opportunity for a magic flight. Take, for instance, the encounters in the lower levels of *B4: The Lost City* (Moldvay, 1982). As the player characters venture deeper beneath the city in search of the dreaded Zargon, they might encounter two hill giants (p. 22), a basilisk (p. 22), an eight-headed hydra (p. 22), a chimera (p. 23), a devil swine (p. 23), or a blue dragon (p. 23). Any one of these might be enough to wipe out an adventuring party, or at least deplete their resources, all before they face Zargon.

C. Rescue from Without. The third subsection of the Return is Rescue from Without. In this subsection, the hero may need mentors to return from the quest, especially if the journey caused the hero damage. Rescue from without can take place from non-player characters within the game; those characters controlled by the dungeon master. The previously mentioned female thieves, Candella and Duchess, in *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [orange cover] (Wells, 1981, p. 10) might provide Rescue from Without for the player characters. Likewise, the Protectors, also in *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [orange cover] (Wells, 1981, p. 25) might provide similar salvation. The Protectors also appear and can serve a similar purpose in *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [green cover] (Moldvay & Wells, 1981, p. 4). This manifests more concretely when the player characters arrive in the presence of a cursed pendant that will drive the wearer insane *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [green cover] (Moldvay & Wells, 1981, p. 15). Before one of the player characters has an opportunity to put on the cursed magic item, a Protector appears and, “warns the party to 'Beware'” (Moldvay & Wells, 1981, p. 15).

In like manner, the dungeon master might provide such rescue. This could take varied forms, from fudging die rolls behind a screen, to the addition of magical items that will provide the adventuring party benefit. As mentioned, in *B1: In Search of the Unknown* (Carr, 1981), the

text suggests that the, “carrying of one or two useful magic items will . . . be of great help” to the adventuring party (p. 7). Magic items are not a standard part of character creation (Moldvay, 1981, p. B 13). Where else but from the dungeon master would the player characters obtain these magic items? Through these and like actions, the dungeon master can be somewhat responsible for Rescue from Without, saving the entire party at times from inevitable doom.

D. Crossing the Return Threshold. The fourth subsection of Return is Crossing the Return Threshold. In Crossing the Return Threshold, the hero returns to the known world with the knowledge and insight obtained through the hero's adventure. In the printed adventure modules, the way “out” of the adventure can be the same as the way “in.” Presuming the player characters do not join the Protectors in *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [orange cover] (Wells, 1981), their way out of the palace is the same way in, through the portcullis at the front door (p. 8). This is likewise true for the palace in *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [green cover] (Moldvay & Wells, 1981. p. 4).

In *B2: The Keep on the Borderlands* (Gygax, 1981), the vast cave network known as the Caves of Chaos has many different points of entry, which are sometimes connected, and sometimes not. In *X2: Castle Amber* or *Château d' Amberville* (Moldvay, 1981) when the player characters are magically transmitted back to the world they knew, “the only things left intact in the ruins [of Castle Amber] are the party members, the treasure they won, and Stephen [sic] Amber” (p. 24).

E. Master of Two Worlds. The fifth subsection of the Return is Master of Two Worlds. In Master of Two Worlds, the hero shows balance between the spiritual and material dimensions. Whether or not the adventuring party returns to their world through the same threshold they left,

they are changed. The game of *Dungeons & Dragons* offers rules in the system of experience points to show how the heroes have gained mastery, by increasing the player characters' in-game abilities. Several of the adventure modules that are governed by the *Basic* rules each give explanations on how to calculate experience points gained from completing the adventure: *B1: In Search of the Unknown* (Carr, 1981, p. 5); *B2: The Keep on the Borderlands* (Gygax, 1981. pp. 4-5); and *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [green cover] (Moldvay & Wells, 1981, p. 29). In less metaphorical ways, the player characters are indeed masters of two worlds, both the worlds in which they lived before the adventure, and the worlds they conquered through its conclusion.

F. Freedom to Live. The sixth and final subsection of the Return is Freedom to Live. In this stage, the hero no longer fears death. Once the adventure module is "completed," the foe vanquished, the realm restored, sometimes options are given for "further adventures" in *B4: The Lost City* (Moldvay, 1982), such options include uniting the factions left in the city, or destroying any remnants of the Cult of Zargon (p. 25). In *X1: The Isle of Dread* (Cook & Moldvay, 1981), further adventures include: mapping the island, or returning to the world they knew with live creature specimens (pp. 26-27). *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [orange cover] (Wells, 1981) presents adventures that are more abstract. "As play continues and the characters advance beyond 3rd level, the DM may plan adventures into the neighboring wilderness, as a break from dungeon adventures or as a part of a dungeon adventure" (p.4). Clearly, there are many options for these masters of two worlds.

As player characters advance in level, the spell casters among the party, the cleric, the elf, and the, eventually gain access to spells that have resurrection-like abilities. Thus, the need for the player characters to fear death is greatly reduced. *Expert* rules in *Dungeons & Dragons*

(Cook, 1981) outline the fifth level cleric spell, Raise Dead (p. X14), and the sixth level magic-user and elf spell, Reincarnation (p. X18). Both of these spells offer player characters who have died a chance to continue playing as the same, in the case of Raise Dead, or similar, in the case of Reincarnation, characters. Additionally, in *X2: Castle Amber* or *Château d' Amberville* (Moldvay, 1981), deceased characters have access to a grateful Stephen Amber's ring of wishes.

Conclusion

I have thoroughly examined the adventure modules in the Moldvay revision of the *Dungeons & Dragons* game for elements of the Hero's Journey. Through that process, my analysis hints at meta-narrative aspects involved in playing the game. Chapter 5: Conclusion contains more discussion of the meta-narrative aspects that emerge through actual gameplay. This chapter has allowed for variance in the approach to play of various adventure modules, as some modules are linear, while some offer open, or sandbox, style play. This variance, along with approaching the Moldvay adventure modules as narrative, has revealed some limitations. Nevertheless, within the field of narratology, Campbell's Hero's Journey has been a useful methodological tool to assess these adventure modules. Chapter 5: Conclusion shows the ways in which these modules aspects embody Campbell's *monomyth*, as well as ways they may fall short, evaluating the application of the Hero's Journey to these adventure modules, and offering suggestions for avenues of future research.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This research project considers how an edition of *Dungeons & Dragons* aimed at younger audiences builds into its structure stages, archetypes, and motifs of Joseph Campbell's *monomyth*, in order to guide novice players to shape a collective story that emerges as they play the game. This conclusion contemplates the ways the research model produced results that show convergence between Campbell's *monomyth* and the Moldvay *Basic Dungeons & Dragons* and ways the research model produced results that stretched or even broke methodological presuppositions. I consider areas of narratology, the printed game materials, and Campbell's inherent biases, including their shortcomings. As Campbell (1973) admits, “there is no final system for the interpretation of myths, and there will never be any such thing.” (p. 381). Despite this qualification, pairing the Hero's Journey with a narratological methodology has yielded fruitful results. Finally, I make the argument for ways *Dungeons & Dragons* fulfills some of the aspects of the Hero's Journey for the players themselves. I connect this argument to my experience and conclude with possibilities for future research.

Narratology

In narratological analysis, the narrator's role and function receives much attention. Typical narrative narration is first or third person, though the distinctness of the narrator's voice can vary. “Narrative theorists often use the oppositional pair **overtness** and **covertness** to characterize a narrative voice, adding whichever qualification or gradation is needed (Jahn, 2005, N1.9). Narrators can be part of their narration or do their best to be absent from it, but because of the function of narrative, the narrator is present. Typically, narrators present their point of view

from the first person or the third person (N1.10). Jahn (2005) roughly equates first person narrative with homodiegetic narrative, and third-person narrative with heterodiegetic narrative. The homodiegetic narrator serves as narrator, but also as, "one of the story's acting characters" (Jahn, 2005, N1.10). The heterodiegetic narrator "is *not* present as a character in the story" (N1.10).

In *Dungeons & Dragons*, the dungeon master serves as narrator, but also several of the story's characters, firmly placing this narrative game in the homodiegetic camp. Players build the story in *Dungeons & Dragons* communally by contributing through the actions of the characters they control. In addition, perhaps a new term, pandiegetic, is in order, as the dungeon master often narrates in the second person. In the dungeon master's question, "*What do you do?"* and in his or her adjudication of the game, roleplaying games offer an opportunity for second person narrative. For example: "Your foot trips the wire and the resulting explosion sends you flying across the room;" "Your blade strikes the orc's heel rendering him lame;" or "you manage to tell the guard your story about being mistakenly arrested so convincingly, and she frees you from the jail cell."

Jahn (2005) defines the narrated story as, "the chronological sequence of events," by asking the question, "'What happens next?'" (N4.7). The observer of a game of *Dungeons & Dragons* could answer this question in terms of the events and actions he or she witnessed through play of the game, but this tally of events would not necessarily match the order of events as they are presented in the adventure modules.

In a section on narrative modes and sense of time, Jahn (2005) offers options for, "a

narrative passage's **speed** or **tempo**" (Jahn, 2005, N5.2.3). This occurs in the following ways: isochronous presentation where, "story time and discourse time are approximately equal or rhythmically mapped," acceleration where, "discourse time is considerably shorter than its story time," deceleration where, "discourse time is considerably longer than its story time," ellipsis where, "a stretch of story time is not textually represented at all," and pause where, "discourse time elapses on description or comment, while story time stops and no action actually takes place". Jahn offers that deceleration is, "a rare phenomenon" (Jahn, 2005, N5.2.3).[22]

These limitations for narratology to chronicle accurately the narrative that emerges through the play of *Dungeons & Dragons* seem to be welcome in the field. Jahn (2005) suggests that for, "genre[s] not accounted for by any prototype" an effort to expand the model he sketches be attempted (N2.2.1). This research is doing just that, by pushing the field of narratology in its current construction to consider its edges and to grow beyond them.

Adventure Modules

In researching the adventure modules for Moldvay's revision of *Dungeons & Dragons*, two distinct types of adventure emerged: the linear module, and the sandbox module. The more-or-less linear modules, *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [orange cover] (Wells, 1981); *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [green cover] (Moldvay & Wells, 1981); *B4: The Lost City* (Moldvay, 1982); *X2: Castle Amber* or *Château d' Amberville* (Moldvay, 1981), seem to exhibit archetypal aspects of the Hero's Journey's motifs and stages in a relatively chronological pattern.

The so-called sandbox adventures, *B1: In Search of the Unknown* (Carr, 1981); *B2: The*

22 Deceleration is not a rare phenomenon for roleplaying games. Scenes which may only take moments of story time (like battle for instance) may take a whole evening of narrative game play time.

Keep on the Borderlands (Gygax, 1981); and *X1: The Isle of Dread* (Cook & Moldvay, 1981), may seem to display similar exhibition. However, they do so in such a way that the archetypal motifs and stages could occur simultaneously or out of sequence from the *monomyth*. A subsection from Initiation might exists side-by-side with a subsection from Return, in such a way that a traditional narrative might not. The aleatoric nature of design and preparation, coupled with the players' choices for where the next encounter will take place make it difficult to map these adventure modules using Campbell's Hero's Journey. The sandbox adventure modules carry with them the possibility for a structure like the Hero's Journey, but they also carry an even greater possibility for a structure unlike the one Campbell describes.

Campbell (1973) calls the Road of Trials, "A favorite phase of the myth Adventure. It has produced a world literature of miraculous test and ordeals" (p. 97). The adventure modules in Moldvay's revision of *Dungeons & Dragons* are further examples of this phenomenon. The printed module contains trial after trial. These trials constitute the "game" aspect of this storytelling game. In analyzing the adventures, I was careful taken to limit the trials included in the analysis in Chapter 4. Even when the trials led to another stage of the Hero's Journey, often there was a return to more trials.

I was concerned that the cyclical nature of *Dungeons & Dragons* would not fit within Campbell's structure, but taken as part of a larger perspective, Campbell (1973) seems willing to allow for such cycles:

> The original departure into the land of trials represented only the beginning of the long and really perilous path of initiative reconquest and moments of Illumination. Dragons

have now to be slain and surprising barriers passed–again, again and again. (p. 109)

For Campbell, it is only when the hero pierces the veil and fully transcends that he or she is not doomed to repeat the cycle. The same is true for *Dungeons & Dragons* characters who retire at the end of their adventuring career. For them the last battle has become the last battle.

Campbell Hero's Journey

In the introductory pages before he reveals the basic tripartite theme of the Hero's Journey, Departure, Initiation, and Return, Campbell (1973) writes in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* of the ways in which story exposes us to dangers of the mind from which we might learn or we might conquer, while remaining safe from any real danger. He sums:

> "It is the business of mythology proper, and of the fairy tale, to reveal the specific dangers and techniques of the dark interior way from tragedy to comedy. Hence the incidents are fantastic and 'unreal': they represent psychological, not physical, triumphs" (Campbell, 1973, p. 29).

One might include *Dungeons & Dragons* on his list along with "mythology proper" or the "fairy tale," or use these sentences as an academic rendering of why people engage in the type of play storytelling games offer.

Moldvay's revision of *Dungeons & Dragons* overlaps with stages of the Hero's Journey, moving players of the game through the "dark interior," or dungeon, using "fantastic" and "unreal" elements to bring imaginary victories. This thorough examination also brings the peripheral elements of common tropes found in fantasy roleplaying games and the meta-game aspects these virtual victories exhibit into conversation with the Hero's Journey.

President of the American Folklore Society, Alan Dundes (2004), stated in his plenary address, “Despite the lack of evidence, Campbell appears to have no doubt about the existence of folklore universals. In this respect, he is a throwback to nineteenth-century theories of psychic unity” (p. 396), and “professional folklorists have tended to ignore Campbell and failed to criticize his oeuvre” (p. 397). Professor Dundes was known to have a flair for the dramatic, but it served to spark a necessary conversation. If a structure such as Campbell's is part of the academic discourse, why not use that framework as a jumping off point for study and perhaps in the creation of new theories, as Dundes suggests, describing new subjects at hand to the academy, namely *Dungeons & Dragons*? As previously discussed, academic discourse on tabletop roleplaying games remains in its infancy, and I have chosen Campbell's model, for better or worse, as a place to begin.

Campbell's model is certainly not without its issues. His writing style is dated and he uses his meticulously researched *monomyth*, which points to trends if not a staid, static apparatus, to support his philosophical metaphysic, namely: “The mighty hero of extraordinary powers . . . is each of us: not the physical self in the mirror, but the king within” (p. 365). In a postmodern or post-postmodern world, some do not (or do not have access to) measuring a life's worth in achievements (p. 27); some do not have the choice to choose the adventurous way (p. 28); and some do not have the luxury to live our story (p. 28) according the pattern of the *monomyth*. Principally the Hero's Journey was among the first modern devices for deconstruction of folklore. Now the device is showing its age and Campbell's biases and the assumptions inherent to his modern, Western worldview.

Male Bias

The issue of male-bias is one that plagues the early days of roleplaying games, the literature that inspired their creation, and Campbell's model. With rare exception, Lovecraft's protagonists are male. This is also true of his primarily male contemporary authors found in Appendix N (Gygax, 1979, p. 224) and Moldvay's (1981) "Inspirational Source Material" (p. B62), and the characters they created. Any attempt to catalog the literary authors most influential to the game's design results is a list of white men. As these appendices admittedly represent the body of work that inspired the designers of *Dungeons & Dragons*, there is little wonder that the earliest editions of the game have this male-bias as well. Likewise, the designers of the game, with the exception of Jean Wells, (1981), are white men. While we cannot be party to inter-office decision making from over thirty years ago, when *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [orange cover] (Wells, 1981) is compared to *B3: Palace of the Silver Princess* [green cover] (Moldvay & Wells, 1981), ironically, the module (authored by a female) may have been recalled because of its more prevalent sexual content.

Recently, the roleplaying game industry has started to respond to this male bias and the resulting discrimination. Whitney Beltrán is a female author and live action and tabletop roleplaying game player. She recently wrote about the largest game convention in North America, Gen Con, making strides to be more inclusive. Beltrán (2016) shares that "for the first time in the convention's 48-year history, the Industry Insiders slate has gender parity: of the 25 featured speakers, 13 (a whopping 52%) of the cohort are women," with similar intention being paid to including LTBTQ game designers and game designers of color (2016). Beltrán (2016)

calls, Gen Con, “both a barometer of taste and a precedent setter.” In intentionally opening the hobby to be more inclusive, Gen Con shows the hobby progressing and hints at the work that remains to be done.

A Sum Greater than its Parts

Whitney “Strix” Beltrán (2012) also happened to write something that could serve as a closing argument for this research. It is important to name the title of her essay, “Yearning for the Hero Within: Live Action Role-Playing as Engagement with Mythical Archetypes,” here as it shows that at least one other author is thinking about the intersection of roleplaying games and Joseph Campbell's work. In this essay, she writes about monomythic influences on the live-action role-player and his or her “internal changes [experienced] and the emotive power of the journey” (Beltrán, 2012, p. 95). In this regard, it might be that *Dungeons & Dragons*, and games like it offer one solution to issues presented by the inherent biases in the Hero's Journey.

Referring to Campbell's *monomyth*, Milspaw (2010) espouses that roleplaying games are, “a way for people to act out their own hero journey. There is a part of the person in [his] character, and that is the hero's journey . . . Science has taken away our dragons so we must create our own myth. It's a way to act out and tell your own story as part of a larger one” (p. 212). These larger framing stories can shape society. Campbell (1973) catalogs the danger of larger framing stories losing their value as myth when taken literally: “Whenever the poetry of myth is interpreted as biography, history, or science, it is killed. The living images become only remote facts of a distant time or sky” (p. 249). *Dungeons &* Dragons presents no such danger. Only the most unbalanced person would take the adventures produced by playing the game as

biography, history, or science.

Metanarrative

Metanarrative has been a topic that has tempted me many times over in writing this paper. As I imagined the players' characters traversing through the stages of the Hero's Journey, I imagined the players themselves undergoing a Hero's Journey by virtue of playing the game. Playing the game represents a departure from this world: The Call to Adventure might be a hobby shop's bulletin board peppered with fliers wanting players or the older brother's abandoned cache of adventure modules. The Refusal of Call could be the stigma these games carry to mark the players as "uncool." More seasoned players or a welcoming dungeon master could embody the Supernatural Aid and Mentor figures. Crossing the First Threshold becomes sitting at a table and participating in a fantastical collaborative storytelling game and so on. A case could be made for the tabletop role-player venturing into the unknown, besting his fears, and returning to the known world, equipped with an understanding of story structures that quell the real fears in their lives.

In addition to the metanarrative temptations I faced, I also had an etiological question rearing its hydra-heads: why tell stories at all? Work done in this arena is clearly outside the scope of this investigation. I could toddle down paths of escapism or entertainment, but I point first to evolutionary advantage. If people group A and people group B both struggle for dominance over the same environment, the group that can share past triumphs and failures – through story – is the group that thrives. Modern people lead more compartmentalized lives and do not always see the way that the stories we tell or hear inform how we live our lives. An easy

way to see this connection is through religion or politics, but it goes deeper than groups with which we identify, to the metanarrative of stories and storytelling. Through the power of imagination, the hearer of a story that follows the pattern of the Hero's Journey becomes the hero or heroine. Engaging in the story as an active listener draws the hearer into the story world.

My Story Revisited

When I was learning to play *Dungeons & Dragons* nearly thirty years ago, there were only a handful of ways to go about obtaining this knowledge. First, you might find yourself invited to play in a group that already knew the rules and the game. Depending on the group's outlook, your experience with them, or the various personalities involved, you might find yourself lucky – forming friendships that would last a lifetime or unlucky – turned off from the hobby for years. With so many options left to chance in role-playing games, initiation into this world may depend on the throw of a cosmic die. Another way would be to attend a convention, but thirty years ago, conventions and convention culture were not as prevalent and popular as they are now. The final way to learn to play would be to purchase or borrow the books and learn from the authors. This was the intention of Moldvay's *Dungeons & Dragons*, the edition I played. In this edition, both the rules themselves (Moldvay, 1981, Basic, p. B3) and introductory modules, like *B1 Keep on the Borderlands*, (Moldvay, 1981, B1, p. 2) allowed for novice players and dungeon masters to be exposed to the game's rules by reading, and then learn the rules' application by trial and error through playing.

I heard an off-hand comment at a recent convention that players of the most recent edition of *Dungeons & Dragons* learn by watching videos of other groups playing the game on

internet sites such as YouTube or streaming content sites such as twitch. The ways to learn the game are more varied now, but the game continue to be played, and continues to expose children and adults to the stages, archetypes, and motifs of the Hero's Journey, guiding novice players in shaping collective stories. It taught story to me: as a player of the game and later as a student of storytelling. The game offers players a chance to participate in the story world in ways other narratives do not or cannot. Characters are guided by their players, not an author's whims, and elements of what makes a story a story, as exemplified by the *monomyth*, are ingrained into the hearts, minds, and imaginations of those who play the game, both young and old alike.

Future Research

The way elements of the Hero's Journey are ingrained into the hearts, minds, and imaginations of role-players is warrants further research. This research attempts to show how, through play, players experience the Hero's Journey by using a specific sample set. Next steps might include conducting studies with living participants involved in actual play sessions. This research could include interviewing those who have played the game, to ask what appeals to them about the game experience, or recording and analyzing play sessions to do further work with the intersection of narratology and ludology.

Future research might also show the ways *Dungeons & Dragons* benefit those who play it. Marketers have already recognized the benefits of playing the game. Tactical Studies Rules (TSR), the publisher of *Dungeons & Dragons*, went as far as hiring Dr. Joyce Brothers to "[promote] the game as a useful exercise that contributed to the creativity, intellectual development, and emotional development of young players" (Laycock, 2015, p. 99). What began

as a commercial venture, I would like to see realized as research to find if, as "Brothers also emphasized . . . *D&D* kept young people out of trouble and was an alternative to drugs and alcohol" (Laycock, 2015, p. 99).

Researchers might explore the ways games based on authors like H. P. Lovecraft, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Michael Moorcock contain similar elements as those explored in this research. I suspect that the games based on Lovecraft's work and Moorcock's work, depart from the source material (Lovecraft's "broken" return, modified to allow for repeated play with the same characters and Moorcock's cyclical nature of his fiction, modified to allow for cyclical play of characters) for the game to work smoothly. Lovecraftian roleplaying games, like *Call of Cthulhu* (Leavenworth, 2014), differ from Lovecraft's fiction. In the game, *Call of Cthulhu*, players are encouraged to act out the characters' neuroses and psychoses to a lesser extent than Lovecraft's literary characters who end their lives in madness (Leavenworth, 2014, p. 342). This change highlights ways in which Lovecraftian roleplaying games, while being less true to the source material, are perhaps more true to the model of the Hero's Journey, allowing heroic characters to return from campaign to campaign. Likewise, I would be interested in the ways Tolkien's party of heroes affects a Campbell's model intended for an individual hero. *Dungeons & Dragons* similarly departs from the Hero's Journey by having multiple characters, as Tolkien did, in order that the game may work smoothly. Further research could be an exploration of the ramifications spurred by this departure.

The research detailed in this thesis is of import not only to an academic audience, but to the wider community as well. Tabletop roleplaying games like *Dungeons & Dragons* have

become more mainstream, due in no small part to the popularity of nostalgia-based entertainment media, including shows like *Stranger Things*. As more and more people become familiar with these games, I cannot help but speculate that their origins and impact would be of interest. Such interested parties might find other ways to incorporate existing narratological structures or create new ones to describe the narrative that emerges through game play.

I cannot be sure whether the designers of early iterations of *Dungeons & Dragons*, and other roleplaying games were familiar with Joseph Campbell's work, though I am heartened by an answer Gygax gave an interviewer who asked about the game's popularity. Gygax replied that *Dungeons & Dragons* "enables people to experience what Joseph Campbell called the heroic quest. And it's got all those elements." (Inskeep, 2008). The answer to this question of pedagogy is lost to the ages, or perhaps to the sages, but I remember my 2018 interaction with Frank Mentzer, the reviser of the edition of *Dungeons & Dragons* that came after the version studied in this paper. He recalled seeing Campbell's books on the shelves in the offices of Tactical Studies Rules (TSR), the publishers of *Dungeons & Dragons*.

The shape of entertainment is changing. I was surprised through this research to find that video games outsell cinema in this country. In my cursory survey of video game design manuals (Carreker, 2012; Dickey, 2011; Duggan, 2011; Eck, 2010; King, 2006; Nitsche, 2008; Perry, 2009; Sheldon, 2014; and Smed, 2011), I found that the *monomyth* is routinely encouraged and cited as a tool in the design of quest-based games.

It would seem that a convergence is taking place. The circle of influence has come around once again. Stories and story forms, like those outlined in the Hero's Journey, influenced story-

based roleplaying games. Story-based roleplaying games inspired new types of games, like video games. Video games, along with their vast market share, now incorporate those same story structures, thus influencing the capacity to grasp and internalize story forms for new generations. In the exploration of Moldvay's *Dungeons & Dragons* as a link in this formative chain, I hope future researchers will be inspired to seek other such connections.

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	Trustee, University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee, 2014-2017
	Guest Lecturer, *Contextual Education I*, University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee, 2013-2015
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