

“LINK”ING MONOMYTH AND VIDEO GAMES:
HOW *THE LEGEND OF ZELDA* CONNECTS
MYTH TO MODERN MEDIA

by

Carli Wrisinger

An Abstract
presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in the Department of Communication
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May, 2014

ABSTRACT

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Critical theory suggests cultural myths tap into deeply held emotions that reflect on and help us understand the human experience. This study seeks to better understand how myth emerges in *The Legend of Zelda* video game series over time. Connecting elements within several installments to Joseph Campbell's seminal work, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, this textual analysis explores the games' mythic ties as depicted in its coded narrative components. The study breaks new ground in two areas: 1) because monomyth is typically applied to literature and traditional media, rather than video games; and 2) as such, aspects of Campbell's myth requires some adjustment to address the interactive nature of the medium. The addition of the interactive component allows the player to fill the role of the hero, and, effectively, become the hero (to the extent the game's code will allow), making the story (and myth) all the more accessible.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

“When evil rules all, an awakening voice from the Sacred Realm will call those destined to be Sages, who dwell in the five temples. One in a deep forest... One on a high mountain... One under a vast lake... One within the house of the dead... One inside a goddess of the sand... Together with the Hero of Time, the awakened ones will bind the evil and return the light of peace to the world...” – Sheik, *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*

For as long as there have been stories, there have been stories about heroes. Whether it is Siddhartha Gautama in the Far East, King Arthur in the British Isles, Odysseus or Aeneas in the Mediterranean, or even Gilgamesh in Mesopotamia, tales of those who have achieved a level of great accomplishment have been passed down, providing both cultural impact and insight. In this modern day, we have the benefit of inheritance of these ancient stories as well as multiple media forms at our disposal. This allows for the old to be revamped and remixed into works including (but certainly not limited to): the novel *Siddhartha* (1951), the stage musical *Camelot* (1960), the film *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (2000), and a radio play *Gilgamesh* (2006), respectively, as well as new, original tales of heroes like *The Lord of the Rings* (1954), *Star Wars* (1977-1983), *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* (1982), *The Matrix* (1999), *A Song of Ice and Fire* (1996-2011), and many more. As society still loves its heroes, related works such as *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949/2008) (a book in comparative mythology by Joseph Campbell) and *The Writer’s Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers* (Vogler, 2007) (a “how-to” adaptation of Campbell for screenwriters) are welcomed into the fold. The variety of media outlets available allows for the dealings of heroes to be conveyed in a contemporary format amenable to the cultural period.

One of those popular modern media formats is video games. In 2011, sales of video games were estimated to be at \$24.75 billion and 49% of U.S. households had dedicated video game consoles (Electronic Software Association, 2012). Profitability is not all a medium can achieve, however; just as with other forms of presentation, video games provide a distinct toolset that can lead to a unique (and oftentimes engaging) experience. For instance, some video games have been able to take complicated concepts and break them down into more digestible pieces, such as the urban planning of *Sim City 3000* (1999), agricultural production in *Harvest Moon* (1997), and travelling 2,000 miles for manifest destiny in *The Oregon Trail* (1985).

In addition to these entertaining derivatives, video games are able to provide a space for information to be conveyed. While not all succeed in this aim, video games have the capacity to do more than merely occupy someone's free time. One might consider, for example, *Ōkami* (2006), which depicts a tale rooted in Japanese mythology using a graphical style highly reminiscent of traditional Japanese woodblock prints. Similarly, an architecturally accurate (albeit virtual) 15th century Florence, Italy, appeared in *Assassin's Creed II* (2009) and *BioShock* (2007) is often noted for having presented a story imbued with Randian objectivism (1943). The situations and environment may be fictional and virtual, but the ideas and the inspiration behind them can be very real. As the Smithsonian Institution noted in a 2012 exhibition called "The Art of Video Games," "video games offer artists a previously unprecedented method of communicating with and engaging audiences" (Smithsonian, 2012).

Similarly, the "Preserving Virtual Worlds" project consists of a partnership between several universities looking to develop a model of how to effectively archive interactive fiction for the Library of Congress (Wilson, 2007). The final report for the first portion of the project,

available online, was published in 2010 and a second prong of research has been under way since 2011 (University of Illinois, 2011). Currently, the United States Library of Congress houses approximately 3,000 video games so far, as well as strategy guides and video footage of gameplay (Owens, 2012). Within the regards of the Library of Congress, video games are worth preserving alongside literature, music, and film as part of history.

As an avid video game player and fan for most all her life, when the author was introduced to the monomyth of Joseph Campbell (also known as "the hero's journey") that categorizes the old heroic narratives in mythology, the author immediately began connecting examples of Campbell's concepts to previous video game experiences, particularly that of *The Legend of Zelda* series. Once the investigation into monomyth began in earnest, the similarities between Campbell's structure and *The Legend of Zelda* series became more and more clear. And so, in those connections between Campbell and *The Legend of Zelda*, a research project emerged.

Plenty of work exists that explores the myth of various artistic forms (discussed further below); however, only a few of these devote discussion to video games, despite it being a popular pastime and a nearly \$25 billion dollar industry (Electronic Software Association, 2012). Due to the consistently elevated nature of the heroic task as set up by *The Legend of Zelda's* narrative, and its continued resonance for players in the real world, using a mythic lens to analyze *The Legend of Zelda* is an effective mode of analysis for this series of artifacts. The hero's journey has been a part of our cultural identity for ages. Exploring how the mythic structure manifests itself in the modern era helps to illustrate that, even with all our progress, the hero and myth still has a continued presence in our culture, although the means by which we come to understand that may be different.

Purpose

Cultural myths are used to create connections to emotions that are commonly held throughout humanity and reflect on the human experience. This research hopes to further explore the relationship between an interactive medium and the myth structure commonly found in narrative presentations. Tapping into myth and its prevalence in culture can aid in explaining why *The Legend of Zelda* series holds strong critical and popular acclaim today as well as how the text engages a player and connects with the human experience. In the analysis of this research, the elements within *The Legend of Zelda* series will be connected to the "Seventeen Stages of Monomyth" as posited by Joseph Campbell in order to help explain the game's mythic ties as seen in its narrative elements.

However, our understanding monomyth requires a degree of adjustment to fit with the structure of the text, due to the medium's nature as a video game. As the player fills the role of the hero while the story progresses, aspects of the structure related to the character development of the hero seemingly become more reliant on the player, providing elements that are not found in most other media forms and that cannot be wholly coded for in the game structure. Because the player essentially embodies the protagonist while maneuvering through the narrative, some elements may or may not be present or may be different since these aspects will reflect on the player's actions and decisions and, thus, will vary.

In times of old, these mythic, heroic stories provided an accessible example of a society's culture at work. Joseph Campbell (1949/2008) noted that mythology's "understood function is to serve as a powerful picture language for the communication of traditional wisdom" (p. 220) and narrative scholar Kenneth Burke (1966) is still famous for noting humans (in whatever age) as

symbol using and misusing animals (p. 16). Thus, the way myth manifests itself in modern day provides us with a unique opportunity to investigate and reflect upon culture in how it is lived and played out. "The dominant myth that informs a person or a culture is like the 'information' contained in DNA or the program in the systems disk of a computer," as Keene and Valley-Fox wrote (1989), "myth is the software, the cultural DNA, the unconscious information, the meta-program that governs the way we see 'reality' and the way we behave" (p. xii).

If the narrative of *The Legend of Zelda* series is in the same mythic vein as Campbell writes about, then, it stands to reason that Campbell's structure would also apply to video games. What is curious about *Zelda* in particular is that it has had several iterations over several technological generations, leading one to wonder whether the way the mythic framework "fits" a *Zelda* game changes as the series progresses, if it fits at all. This leads to the research questions: 1) Is Campbell's monomyth revealed in the games of *The Legend of Zelda* series? 2) Does the monomyth alter throughout the many iterations of the series? 3) And, if so, where do the differences lie?

Like an archaeologist's toolkit, Campbell's monomyth uncovers the schemata of our cultural story. However, like archaeological artifacts, that monomyth is inherited, observed, and lived vicariously. The interactivity of video games allows a player to emotionally participate instead of merely emotionally identify in the myth. Other representations of myth may be effective in making the narrative "come alive," but the myth structure only really becomes "lived" in an interactive medium. The world and its events may be virtual, but the impacts, emotions and reactions are still direct, authentic, and very real.

CHAPTER 2 BACKGROUND

Discussion of Artifacts

Video games have not only become legitimate interactive fiction; the medium also parallels literature (and other forms of fiction) in the sense of being presented as a series. *The Legend of Zelda* is a series of action-adventure video games developed and published by Nintendo, known for its mixture of action and puzzle-based gameplay. Considered one of the publisher's most prominent video game series (Molina, 2011; Parijat, 2011), *Zelda* games typically follows the story of a young boy named Link, who traverses the land of Hyrule on a quest to stop the evil Ganondorf (or Ganon). Ganondorf seeks to obtain the Triforce, a sacred relic that grants the wishes of its holder. Throughout his adventures, the boy Link must travel through dungeons, over vast and varied terrains, and even across time in order to gain a power that can hopefully seal Ganondorf away forever. Between instances of this recurring story are iterations that branch off from this form somewhat, expanding on Link's heroic adventures and further filling out the lore of the *Zelda* universe.

The first installment of the series, simply titled *The Legend of Zelda*, was originally released in the United States in 1987 for the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) home game console, becoming the fourth most popular title for the system (Parton, 2004). While all of the games in the series are highly received by players and critics alike, the title that likely best illustrates the prominence of the series in the world of video games may be 1998's *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*, which remains immensely popular to this day (metacritic.com). *Ocarina of Time* has had four major re-releases on different platforms, with the most recent edition, for

the Nintendo 3DS, released in June 2011. Additionally, *The Guinness Book of World Records* holds it to be the video game with all-time highest review ratings (Guinness, 2010). In the quarter century since its inaugural issue, 16 additional unique *Zelda* titles have been released for both home and portable Nintendo consoles, with the most recent being *The Legend of Zelda: A Link Between Worlds* for the 3DS portable console in November 2013, further bolstering *The Legend of Zelda* as one of the most popular and longstanding intellectual properties in video game history.

The Legend of Zelda Series

The Legend of Zelda is indeed a series of texts, and, as mentioned above, currently contains 17 unique installments. The official canon for the series (at the time of writing) consists of *The Legend of Zelda* (1987), *Zelda II: The Adventure of Link* (1988), *The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past* (1992), *The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening* (1993), *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* (1998), *The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask* (2000), *The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Ages* (2001), *The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Seasons* (2001), *The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords* (2002), *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker* (2003), *The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords Adventures* (2004), *The Legend of Zelda: The Minish Cap* (2005), *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess* (2006), *The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass* (2007), *The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks* (2009), *The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword* (2011), and *The Legend of Zelda: A Link Between Worlds* (2013).

As a piece of popular culture. In addition to the series' internal consistency and structure, *The Legend of Zelda* has also wielded a presence within the larger popular culture,

which helps to illustrate its prominence as a series of media artifacts as well as its resonance with people-at-large. Within the realm of video games, *Zelda* has not only inspired a number of cameos and allusions in other video game titles, but has also greatly influenced various aspects of game mechanics in general (such as the original *The Legend of Zelda*'s game-save function or *Ocarina of Time*'s camera targeting system [Lambie, 2011; Iwawaki, Aonuma, Kawagoe, Koizumi & Osawa, 2011]). Similarly, references to the series can be found in songs by Eminem (2013, track 13) or Motion City Soundtrack (2010, track 9); in popular television series like *How I Met Your Mother* (Fryman & Hendriks, 2012) and *The Big Bang Theory* (Cendrowski, Lorre, Molaro & Kaplan, 2010); and in works like the *Scott Pilgrim* (O'Malley, 2004-2010) series of graphic novels and accompanying film (Wright & Bacall, 2010). Not leastwise of these are the plentitude of references and fan-projects on the internet that are beyond counting.

In trying to find exemplary instances to serve as sort of a figure-head of how *The Legend of Zelda* has inspired artistic pursuits in the real-world, as well as demonstrate the enthusiasm some fans hold to the series, a reasonable example exists in "The Zelda Project"—a group of cosplayers (a portmanteau of "costume" and "play"), artists, and technical authorities who seek to portray the characters and settings of the series (with *Ocarina of Time* in particular) in the real-world (Quillian and Elam, 2012). Along with production videos and development blog posts, "The Zelda Project's" current primary goal is artistic photography. The project is still ongoing, but will portray both official characters of the series and original characters adapted to fit within the series' lore (Quillian and Elam, 2012). Whether to indulge as a fan of a particular artifact, to garner attention from other attendees of an event, or as a display of the expertise of costume creation, projects like "The Zelda Project" are able to offer a visible example of

participation and incorporation for the narrative elements of *The Legend of Zelda* series. Or, at the very least, the existence of these works suggests a level of impact from the originating artifact on audience members to such a degree as they would willingly engage in such an endeavor.

By the same token, "The Symphony of the Goddesses" (2012-2013), a touring concert series featuring symphonic arrangements of music from *Zelda*, demonstrates fans' enthusiasm to engage with elements of the games at a real-world level (and, in perhaps a less labor-intensive way than "The Zelda Project" or similar undertakings). The concert series began as a small set of celebratory events in recognition of *The Legend of Zelda*'s 25th anniversary, but turned into an additional two series worth of concerts that toured internationally, with many venues selling out (Jason Michael Paul Productions, Inc., 2012). Attendees and reviewers of the concerts commented on the zeal of the audience, noting that the event contained particularly enthusiastic applause, well-timed laughter at references to humorous moments in the games, and even tears among some audience members (Ponce, 2012; Totilo, 2012). In attending one such event herself, the author became aware of the wide range of individuals present at the event and a strange sense of collectivism (despite the series being almost solely single-player); additionally, at the conclusion of the opening piece, an attendee a few rows behind gasped audibly, to the amusement of those sitting nearby.

While not specifically related to solely *Zelda*, it is worth noting that Jason Michael Paul Productions, Inc. (the executive producer of "Symphony of the Goddesses") has begun a series entitled "rePlay: Symphony of Heroes" featuring music from several different video game series (including *The Legend of Zelda*) centered around a theme of 'heroes.' The official site bills the

event as an opportunity to “let these award-winning symphonic scores take you on a hero’s journey unlike anything you’ve heard or seen before” (Jason Michael Paul Productions, Inc., 2014), illustrating the notion of a connection between heroes and video games as not uncommon.

As a piece of media/text. As previously discussed, *The Legend of Zelda* series is a collection of action- adventure video games under the same umbrella title (i.e. all but one begin with ‘*The Legend of Zelda*’ followed by a colon and the subtitle specific to that installment, such as *The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past*) and are developed and published by Nintendo. There are currently 17 major titles considered part of the *Zelda* “canon.” Without going through a specific narrative outline of each of the games (as much of that will come forth in the analysis below), it is beneficial to discuss structural and narrative elements common throughout *The Legend of Zelda* series, as well as variations on those structures. (If it has not been made clear already, the author will often refer to the respective installment of the series by its subtitle, for sake of concision).

Each *Zelda* game follows the story of a young boy named Link, who embarks on a grand adventure to thwart the evil presence plaguing the land. The specifics of the evil, the means by which to thwart, and the nature of the landscape vary between iterations while still retaining an overall continuity. This continuity serves to further develop Link’s heroic adventures and add depth to the experience of the *Zelda* universe. So, while the names for the continents that comprise the setting of Link’s adventure may vary, they all occupy a fantastical fictional universe of the “pseudo-medieval” vein, where magic and monsters definitely exist and a variety of sentient humanoid races/species cohabitate the land.

Every *Zelda* game focuses on the collection of a series of artifacts in order to achieve some goal that will allow Link to defeat the evil presence in whatever land he is currently in (typically the land of Hyrule). For *The Legend of Zelda* (1987), *A Link to the Past* (1991), *Ocarina of Time* (1998), *The Wind Waker* (2003), *Four Swords Adventures* (2004), *Twilight Princess* (2006), and *A Link Between Worlds* (2013), the gathering of these artifacts furthers plot points allowing Link to confront some variation of the evil Ganondorf, (considered to be the main villain of the series). The specific nature of these artifacts varies between games and has significance established as part of the game's plotline. For example, *A Link to the Past* requires the collection of the three Pendants of Virtue and *A Link Between Worlds* has seven sages that need to be freed and awakened.

The Adventure of Link (1988) and the connected game narrative of *Oracle of Seasons* and *Oracle of Ages* (2001) (building off of the artifact collections of the two separate *Oracle* games) has a storyline related to the prevention of Ganondorf's return. The storylines of *Link's Awakening* (1993), *Majora's Mask* (2000), the separate game narratives of *Oracle of Seasons* and *Oracles of Ages* (2001), *Four Swords* (2002), *The Minish Cap* (2005), *Phantom Hourglass* (2007), *Spirit Tracks* (2009), and *Skyward Sword* (2011) follow the same basic artifact-collection structure, but with a villain that is not Ganondorf (however, it is still important to remember that all of the games do fit into a prevailing master timeline, so there are connections and allusions between installments in the series).

The specific artifacts vary between games, but a few relics in particular are consistent throughout most of the titles. One of the most important and iconic of these is the Triforce, a set of three separate golden triangles that connect to form one larger triangle. The Triforce is

connected to the creation myth of the land of Hyrule (the continent where most of the games take place) and when the pieces are together, the relic has the power to grant the wishes of whomever touches it, indiscriminate of “good” or “evil.” If the individual is not balanced in power, wisdom and courage (the qualities each of the three smaller triangles represent), the pieces will separate, with the wish-maker retaining one piece and the other two becoming connected to the individuals that best exemplify the piece’s corresponding quality. Traditionally, when this occurs, Link holds the Triforce of Courage, the Triforce of Wisdom resides with the titular Princess Zelda, and Ganondorf obtains the Triforce of Power. Then, reassembly is required before a wish will be granted. Another prominently featured object is the Master Sword, known as the “blade of evil’s bane,” a weapon infused with magical power that can only be wielded by a hero.

The default name for the player character is Link (and the character is referred to as such in promotional and informational materials regarding the game), an intentional choice that highlights the connective role Link holds—he is the player’s avatar, bridging the gap between the real world and the virtual world of the *Zelda* universe (Gombos, Moriki, Plechl, Sivasubramanian, Tanner, Thomas, 2013). It should be noted that in most of the games (save two) the player is free to choose whatever name he/she wishes before embarking on the story, which could symbolically add an additional level of immersion or embodiment of the character. That is not to say there is less immersion if the player does not share a moniker with the in-game character, just that it may help to heighten the association for some players. The character will be referred to as “Link” throughout this analysis.

Vocabulary

Before proceeding through the relevant literature and analysis, there are also a few useful terms and conditions used that, while common in writings about video games, may be unfamiliar to non-gamers:

- *Cutscenes* are pre-programmed cinematic sequences in the game where the player has little or no control. They can be used to strengthen character development, provide back-story, introduce new characters and advance the plot in a controlled manner, as the game designers dictate the manner in which the cinematic portion occurs.
- *Gameplay* is used in describing the interactive elements of the game, where the game structure reacts to input from the player and the player is agent to move about and interact with the programmed game space (sometimes including control over the "camera," as all *Zelda* games are played from a third-person perspective).
- *Playthrough* refers to the act of playing a particular segment of a video game from its beginning to its end, insofar as considering the segment as 'beaten' or 'complete.' Playthroughs can be specified to be smaller in scale (such as the completion of a single level or dungeon), but when used generally (as "playthrough" rather than "Water Temple playthrough"), refer to the completion of the entire game. They are distinct from "walkthroughs" which describe a playthrough experience with the purposes of guiding another player through game segments.

- Lastly, for the sake of clarity, all quotations directly from any of the games will appear in italics, as there is no effective means to accurately cite the precise instances in which they appear in the game itself but will need to be made distinct in the analysis.

As will be further clarified below, it should be briefly noted that an analysis of *The Legend of Zelda* series is not trying to assert that video games are illustrating societal values for what a hero should be/ought to do as traditional functions of myth. Or, as Campbell (1949/2008) described it, “the whole sense of the ubiquitous myth of the hero’s passage is that shall serve as a general pattern for men and women, wherever they may stand along the scale” (p. 101). Rather, the narrative presentation of *The Legend of Zelda* works alongside the mythopoeia genre; its interactive elements bring a unique quality to how the mythic themes and archetypes are, potentially, literally and figuratively “played out.”

CHAPTER 3 LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review will first attempt to address the breadth of research on video games as a whole while aiming toward critical studies of video games in particular (of which a mythic analysis is a part). Then, a discussion of the theoretical backgrounds of storytelling, narrative and, particularly, Campbell's monomyth will be introduced. Following the more broad introductions of the video game and narrative sectors, the review will narrow to those pieces that serve to link the two areas, providing the operational theoretical underpinnings for the accompanying methodology and analysis.

Studying Video Games

The study of video games in a scholarly manner is still largely an emerging field of study, likely in large part to having only recently evolved as a media form, and even more recently, one that has been considered with any degree of seriousness. The totality of existing research on video games comes from an interesting cross-section of fields with roots in the social sciences, humanities, and engineering. Of particular note are the books *The Video Game Theory Reader* (2003) and *The Video Game Theory Reader 2* (2009), a series of collected essays by "a group of leading scholars turning their attention to a wide variety of theoretical concerns and approaches, examining and raising new issues in the rapidly expanding field of video games studies" (Perron and Wolf, 2009, i). These essays consider video games as a media form in a general sense and do not go far in the way of specific application to specific games (with the exception of one "case-study" approach found in each book, considering *Combat Flight Simulator 2* and *La-Mulana*,

respectively). However, they do serve as a jumping-off point for more specific applications (such as this one) and future research as the field continues to develop.

Of the literature that exists already, however, one may typically hear of studies on news programs that explore the media effects of games, studies rooted in the social sciences, particularly those relating to violence or aggressive tendencies. In noting social-scientific research, Ferguson and Rueda (2010) discussed the division of the way video game effects are studied with regard to violence. These studies tend toward either roots in social learning theory and the fostering of aggressive tendencies through video games, or roots in catharsis theory and the use of video games as a coping mechanism for stress, diffusing overall aggression (Ferguson and Rueda, 2010). Conclusive evidence of the effects on aggression is a point of contention among scholars. Also within the social-science realm, video games are frequently explored with regard to pedagogy and effective learning techniques (Vogel, Vogel, Cannon-Bowers, Bowers, Muse and Wright, 2006) over a wide variety of subjects, from economics (Lengwiler, 2004) to language (Kovalik & Kovalik, 2002). Some video games have also been shown to improve hand-eye coordination and mental rotation skills (de Lisi & Wolford, 2002).

As a relatively new media form, the study of video games in a critical atmosphere has continued to develop as well, and many facets of the medium have begun to emerge. In demonstrating the range and variety of attempted critical approaches, consider Cunningham's (2011) case study bound in a video game design workshop for young girls. Cunningham sought to explore the relationship between race/gender and technological literacy via observation during the workshop, interviews with attendees and staff, and analysis of program materials as artifacts. While such a specific case study is not sufficient to assess the issue of gender and technological

literacy on the whole, Cunningham began to touch on and delve into the feminist study of video games. Cunningham noted women are under-represented in the video game industry, citing a 2007 statistics report from the Electronic Software Association, and added that available research tended to focus on women as consumers of video games rather than developers.

Shaw (2012) conducted an ethnography (described by the author as such, rather than an 'online ethnography' or 'virtual ethnography') situated in an artificial, virtual digital media (video game) culture, specifically that of an online forum that catered to LGBT gamers ("gaymers"). In the vein of queer theory/studies, Shaw sought a more thorough understanding of the opinions held by this segment of the gaming population with regard to recent news stories commenting on the lack of non-heteronormative characters present in video games, providing an interesting step in a complex subsection of both an emerging medium and area of study overall.

Other scholars, however, choose to look at the more mechanical elements of a game, rather than focus on the people who play them. For example, Ip (2010) examined 10 popular video game titles from a wide range of genres and quantitatively measured the length and proportion of prescribed narrative (defined as pre-coded text and cutscenes) to game whole, with little emphasis on the interactive elements. From Ip's data, one began to see which games employed a variety of narrative presentation techniques, while others did not.

Apperley (2006) considered stretching the realm of genre studies to the medium of video games by exploring the current vocabulary of video game genres. Apperley's analysis noted problems arose due to frequently used genre terms for categorizing more often come from a marketing standpoint, or are borrowed terms from other catalogues of terms, rather than any analytical approach. On a micro level, tensions also become apparent in the balance of

consideration to representational aspects of a particular game compared to that of its interactive elements (with Apperley tending more toward ergodic/interactive elements in deciding upon or describing genre distinctions).

Likewise, as in the pertinent frameworks discussed below, there are scholars still that have begun to undertake the task of laying the theoretical foundations for video game analysis, or adding additional wings to existing theories. For instance, Bogost's book, *Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Video Games* (2007) looked at a way of extending traditional concepts of rhetorical study to the new media form. For Bogost, it was important to consider how rhetoric would be different or affected when presented or used in a video game. In order to meet the changes in rhetoric that would be required to address the medium properly, Bogost proposed what he called "procedural rhetoric"; as compared to Aristotle's rhetoric being concerned with oratory and visual rhetoric being concerned with images, procedural rhetoric has to do with technological processes. Bogost's theory has been further applied and more specifically explored in articles such as Harper (2011).

In turning a critical lens specifically to that of mythic criticism, one finds scholarly work to be limited in number, but in a broad spectrum and gaining in popularity. Krzywinska (2006) illustrated how the virtual world of *World of Warcraft* became more immersive/engaging to the player because the game designers supplied a created, but consistent, mythology that supported the game's mechanics and narrative elements. Aspects of the game set the stage for player engagement because the supplied mythology conveyed a consistent explanation for the fictional culture, environment, and the player operating within it. This paved the way for players' actions

to fit in logically with the supplied mythology and consequently opened opportunity for deeper engagement with the game world.

Being a prominent series, *Zelda* is often included in discussion or analysis of video games in general (for instance, Ip [2010] included the original *Legend of Zelda* in his dataset); however, like specific applications to myth and video games, there are few publications that concern the *Legend of Zelda* series in particular. In considering game studies in general, Whalen (2004) mentions *Zelda* as having a reverse form of Wagnerian leitmotifs in its music (see also Yokota & Kondo, 2011). With regard to narrative, Consalvo (2003) focused on how players create their own how-to guides ("walkthroughs") for *The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask*, shared them online for other players, and how the walkthroughs function as narratives or help in illustrating narrative components. The focus places more emphasis on a narrative construction process with the player or between players, and places less focus with the content in interacting with the game itself, however.

Additionally, there are a few academic papers that suggest a cusp of new, more specific research on *The Legend of Zelda*, such as the senior thesis of Grasso (2010) from Princeton University, focusing on musical elements of *The Legend of Zelda* and the *Final Fantasy* series, and the ongoing dissertation work of Luke Arnott (2014) at the University of Western Ontario, focusing on the epic form in new media pieces (including *The Legend of Zelda*). And, while wholly informal, avid fans of the series frequently wax on the mythic qualities and other aspects of *The Legend of Zelda* series (and other video games as well). A simple Google search will be rife with results and discussion, such as Merrill's [2011] examination of philosophical elements within *The Wind Waker*, his explanation of the mythic origins behind the lore of *Majora's Mask*,

or Rumphol-Janc's [2011] explanation of *Majora's Mask* in relation to the Kübler-Ross model of the five stages of grief.

While these instances occupy various levels of "not-formally-published," they do serve as an indicator for *Zelda* as an artifact with critical potential, with Arnott (2014) and Merrill (2011) noting mythic elements in particular. As the purpose of this work taps into elements of mythic analysis (an approach utilized in media criticism for various mediums), it is pertinent to turn and briefly broaden the perspective of the literature review to storytelling and myth in a general sense. Once a foundation for video game research and mythic criticism has been laid, the focus centers on literature relating to the function of the two areas in the presentation of narrative in interactive spaces, particularly with concern to the tales of heroes.

Storytelling

Several game scholars have already noted the importance of narrative to video game play and contend that the story is often what makes games appealing or financially successful (Crogan, 2003; Holland, James, & Squire, 2003; Wolf, 2003). Because the accompanying analysis focuses on the narrative elements in a video game series, with particular regard to the impact of the player, the significance of story must first be established with relevant background theory before moving to the specific application within an interactive text.

Power of Stories. Gottschall (2013) discussed the function story plays in one's life, from the large societal influences of religious story on individuals, to individual dreams one's brain creates at night. "Story—whether delivered through films, books, or video games—teaches us

facts about the world; influences our moral logic; and marks us with fears, hopes, and anxieties that alter our behavior, perhaps even our personalities” (p. 148).

Green and Brock (2004), used as direct support by Gottschall (2013) in his claim, noted that when an individual effectively engages with (or, in Green and Brock’s terms, is “transported” by) a fictional world, they become more apt to be influenced by that story; in addition, the stronger the level of immersion, the greater potential for influence. In discussing the function of story as a whole, Gottschall began to take Green and Brock a step further, “now extrapolate. We humans are constantly marinating ourselves in fiction, and all the while it is shaping us, changing us. [...] [S]tories are working on us all the time, reshaping us in the way that flowing water gradually reshapes a rock” (p. 153).

This influence of story on an individual even extends to a connection to mythic stories of heroes, Gottschall (2013) continued, noting “throughout most of our history, we’ve taught myths. The myths tell us that not only are we the good guys, but we are the smartest, boldest, best guys that ever were” (p. 125). Later, in discussing how story has the power to change individuals and the world, Gottschall said that “this need to see ourselves as the striving heroes of our own epics warps our sense of self [...] but on some level, we want to be more like the heroes of fiction, and this means deluding ourselves about who we are and how we got this way” (p. 171). At the end of his chapter, Gottschall summed up the connection in identifying with a story on our sense of self:

Until the day we die, we are living the story of our lives. And, like a novel in process, our life stories are always changing and evolving, being edited, rewritten, and embellished by

an unreliable narrator. We are, in large part, our personal stories. And those stories are more truthy than true (p. 176).

Gottschall approaches the function of storytelling with an evolutionary perspective in mind, focusing more on biological determinations for the functions of storytelling, and may take some issue with the more discourse oriented Narrative Paradigm discussed below. The purpose of the inclusion of the discussion of storytelling, however, is not to debate what prompts it (as one might seek to do, particularly with myth in mind), but, rather, to illustrate the significance of storytelling in making sense of things or creating meaning.

Narrative Theory. The Narrative Paradigm, first posited by Fisher (1984, 1985, 1987 & 1989) holds that every instance of meaningful human communication is a type of storytelling or a reporting of a sequence of events. This leads to individuals making sense of the world around them through stories and understanding life to be “a series of ongoing narratives, [with] conflicts, characters, beginnings, middles and ends” (Fisher, 1987, p. 24). These stories are shaped by the progression of events through history, widely held cultural values and unique individual characteristics. Ultimately, humans experience life and comprehend life as a series of stories and communicate to one another via stories. What follows, then, is that the collection of these individuals, the human species as a whole, functions as a consortium of narrative beings.

‘Narrative rationality’ is the term used by Fisher (1987) to describe the process through which individuals create meaning through choosing stories worth living their lives by or that give meaning to life. Fisher defines narration as “symbolic actions—words and/or deeds—that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create or interpret them” (p. 58). What constitutes a

“good reason” for the basis of a decision in one’s mind is more closely related to the conveyance of a compelling story than a logical progression of evidence to form an argument and will vary depending on media, history, culture, personal character and the specifics of the situation. Thus, the stories do not have to fit together or make sense in the traditional idea of scientific or logical rationality, but, rather, the stories have to be congruent with an individual’s experience.

Polkinghorne (1988) echoed this notion, adding that narratives are created out of the experience of something, and subsequent experiences are organized based on their relationship to previous experiences. This allows individuals to create and find meaning in the relationships and patterns of relationships between narratives; it is the narrative in the context of its relation to other narratives that gives it significance.

Somers (1994) advanced consideration of narrative to such that it comprises an individual’s identity; an individual is always in the process of ‘writing’ the narrative of who they are (as opposed to being comprised of layers of previously completed, ‘fixed’ narratives). This particular view of narrative is useful in that the creation of a narrative is viewed as something that is in flux and will change as it is informed by and influences other constructed narratives around it. Somers stated, “all of us come to be who we are (however ephemeral, multiple, and changing) by being located or locating ourselves (usually unconsciously) in social narratives, rarely of our own making” (p. 606). The process, a more postmodern sense of narrative, called “narrativity,” seeks to unify various, and sometimes incongruent, parts into a whole one can make sense of.

These discussions regarding the significance of narrative to an individual is important as it directly influences the more postmodern view of narrativity, the type of narrative

understanding employed in this analysis. Having established a basis for narratives in general, the review can continue to narrow focus—this time to a structure common to a specific type of story: “the hero’s journey.”

Campbell’s Monomyth. No discussion of heroic narrative is complete without mention of Joseph Campbell (1949/2008). In his 1949 book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Campbell set forth a theoretical framework that sought to consolidate myths across world mythologies and created an archetype for the journey of the mythic hero. He said, when boiled down to its core, all myths featured “a hero [that] 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. 28). Campbell referred to this basic structure as monomyth, and, like its name implies, is intended to function as a literal metanarrative. ‘Meta’ is to ‘narrative’ as ‘mono’ is to ‘myth.’

Since Campbell was originally published, mythological study has shied away from his work. Critics have decried monomyth as overly reductionist (as discussed in Elwood, 1999), and modern advancements in understanding with regard to science may absolve myth of its explanatory functions in culture (perhaps like Gottschall’s [2013] focus on biological explanations for narrative). Similar to the contributions of Sigmund Freud to the study of psychology, Campbell’s work, while contested or found questionable in the time since its publication, is still highly influential. Thus, it is still important to note the significant contributions Campbell has made, especially due to the fact that his work has been adapted from its original purpose for recent use in the storytelling of various media industries.

Some of the most notable examples of Campbell's monomyth in modern media come from the film industry, with the most prominent being that of *Star Wars* and George Lucas. In a PBS documentary published in 1988 entitled *The Power of Myth*, Campbell discussed his influence on the films, and in a Campbell biography (Larsen & Larsen, 2002), Lucas specifically cited Campbell as an inspiration and impetus in writing the *Star Wars* films. The critical and financial success of the *Star Wars* franchise created an opportunity for Campbell's work to enter a new realm. Hollywood writer/producer Christopher Vogler has since adapted a condensed version of monomyth for screenplay writers that eventually became the book *The Writers' Journey: The Mythic Structure for Writers* (2007).

While tremendously influential, the use of Campbell's monomythic structure in narrative presentation did not stop with Lucas and *Star Wars* or even in other commercial exploits; mythic analysis had even continued into the scholarly realm with regard to these narrative presentations. In the time since *Star Wars* arrived on the scene, the work of critical scholar Donald Palumbo (2005, 2009) has been particularly noteworthy in extending mythic analysis to cover artifacts of popular culture, particularly films and books of the science-fiction and fantasy genres. From as early as 1992 with *The Monomyth of Time Travel Films* to 2009's *The Monomyth in Star Trek (2009): Kirk and Spock Together Again for the First Time*, the works under Palumbo's bibliographic umbrella has kept a consistent watch on the use of monomyth in popular culture. These analyses range over several forms of media, such as the aforementioned films, as well as short stories like *Flowers for Algernon*, or the lengthy novels of Frank Herbert's *Dune* series. Relatedly, a companion book to Vogler's work unpacks the mythic elements of fifty popular films from a variety of genres to illustrate the applicability of Vogler's concepts (Voytilla, 1999).

These examples are important to note because they illustrate how monomyth has made a leap from Campbell's original regard (more along the lines of Jungian universal archetype for all human cultural myths) to its adapted, current modern application (a narrative framework employed in recent media forms).

A link already exists between the mythic story structure and the video game medium, too. Many textbooks instructing in the creation of video games or other forms of interactive media list the "hero's journey" structure as a potential source in developing a story (again, emphasizing the newer perspective of monomyth as narrative framework). Miller (2013), for instance, stated that:

The Hero's Journey is another ancient structure that can readily be found in New Media narratives, particularly in video games... [I]t is easy to see why the Hero's Journey would be an attractive model for video games and other interactive narratives. It offers a well-defined goal and a series of challenges, and can also be shaped to offer players a rich storyworld to explore. Writers who want work in New Media do themselves a service by becoming well versed in the hero's journey, since it is such a useful model to employ ("New Media").

Concerns may arise in using Campbell as a fill-in-the-blank story structure, as well as the lack of support of its "usefulness" at work (this will be addressed in a later section), however, this quotation is one of many that indicates an attitude of any connection between video games and Campbell's mythic structure is not unreasonable and is, perhaps, even advisable.

A more deliberate example of where Campbell served as inspiration in interactive media emerges in the indie video game *Journey* (2012) from Thatgamecompany. In some behind-the-

scenes materials and commentary (included on the collector's edition disc for the game), developers revealed that they specifically sought out and used Campbell's model in forming the storyline and in pacing the level design so as to foster emotional resonance with the players. Director Jenova Chen mentioned that some play-testers cried upon completion of the game, which is notable not only because of the emotional connection, but as a testament to the coupling of Campbell's structure with the game's minimal, yet effective, presentation (the game employs very little text, instead favoring visuals/sound) of the narrative elements (*Journey*, 2012). Some informal research (Portnow and Floyd, 2012, discussed in more detail in a later chapter) of *Journey* also suggests at a tendency for players to fit into Campbell's structure even when not necessarily scripted to (either consciously or otherwise).

The Hero With a Thousand Faces. In his seminal work, Campbell (1949/2008) delineated 17 steps to monomyth that follows the hero from the onset of the story to its conclusion. The first of these steps is the "call to adventure" (p. 41), which pulls the hero from his normal life into new territory and marks the onset of the hero's journey. This call can be self-imposed (as in the stories of Theseus or the Buddha) or it can come from an outside source (such as with Odysseus). Regardless of its origins, "the call rings up the curtain, always, on a mystery of transfiguration [...] the familiar life horizon has been outgrown; the old concepts, ideals, and emotional patterns no longer fit" (p. 43). It is a moment that "signifies that destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown" (p. 48).

On occasion, the hero will deny this call or postpone the start of the journey for a myriad of reasons, although Campbell noted that these reasons amount to “essentially a refusal to give up what one takes to be one’s own interest” (p. 49). Campbell divided this “refusal of the call” (p. 49) into a separate, optional, second step. “Not all who hesitate are lost,” however, “so it is that sometimes the predicament following an obstinate refusal of the call proves to be the occasion of a providential revelation...” (p. 53), allowing the hero to continue through his story.

Frequently, the mythic hero will also be aided by one or more supernatural powers. For example, in *The Odyssey*, Telemachus was guided by the goddess Athena (Homer). According to Campbell, these supernatural beings are “personifications of [the hero’s] destiny to guide and aid [the hero]” (p. 57) through to the end of his journey, “supply[ing] the amulets and advice that the hero will require” (p. 59). “A protective figure, (often a little old crone or old man)” (p. 57), their introduction to the hero makes up the third step.

It is at this point that the adventure truly begins, as the hero “crosses the first threshold” (p. 64) from “the limits of the hero’s present sphere, or life horizon, [to b]eyond them is darkness, the unknown, and danger...” (p. 64). The steps forthcoming do not have a set number of instances, allowing for some variance depending on the length of the myth.

The hero then enters into a stage of reformation or rebirth. Described by Campbell as the “belly of the whale” (p.74), the sixth step is the turning point that prompts and symbolizes the acceptance of the growth that is to be achieved throughout the rest of the tale. Campbell specifically includes a quote from Ananda Coomaraswamy: “no creature can attain a higher grade of nature without ceasing to exist,” meaning this step beyond the first threshold “is a form

of self-annihilation," indicating a "life-centering, life renewing act" (p. 77) in describing this step.

Next comes the seventh step, "the road of trials" (p.81). This is the section of the story where the hero becomes initiated and proves his/her skill in "surviv[ing] a succession of trials" (p. 81) to make him/her worthy of dealing with the ultimate conflicts that have yet to come in the story. All the while still "covertly aided by the advice, amulets and secret agents of the supernatural helper whom he met before his entrance into this region" (p. 81). It is not uncommon to be unsuccessful in handling one or more of these obstacles as the hero travels "the long and really perilous path of initiatory conquests and moments of illumination," all the while encountering and achieving "a multitude of preliminary victories, unretainable ecstasies, and momentary glimpses of the wonderful land" (p. 90).

The next step is described as "meeting with the goddess" (p. 91). Frequently, the hero will meet a significant other at this point. This meeting also serves as another type of trial, "the final test of the talent of the hero to win the boon of love" (p. 99). The "goddess" Campbell described was a symbol treated with reverence, whether as the positive, creative, "paragon of all paragons" (p. 92), or the negative, destructive "mother" that is "absent, unattainable" or "hampering, forbidding, punishing" (p. 92), representing the "promise [of] more than he is yet capable of comprehending" (p. 97).

The "meeting with the goddess" may also potentially coincide with the eighth step (referred to by Campbell "woman as temptress" [p. 101]), which deals with a form of temptation for our hero, be it in the form of a person (often a woman, as per Campbell's title) or some other physical/material entity. The hero must move past that which would distract him from fulfilling

his true goal; Campbell wrote, "there the world, the body, and woman above all become the symbols no longer of victory but of defeat" (p. 102). The nature of the hero's task puts it on a plain higher than that of earthly delights.

Now nearing the very center of the mythic journey, the hero must confront the power in his/her life. Frequently, this is manifested in a confrontation with a male figure, so Campbell called it the "atonement with the father" (p.105). We can see this even in the Disney film *The Lion King* (1994), wherein Simba speaks to his father through a reflection and in the clouds. It is tied to the notion of the apprentice reaching the skill of the master, the call for a new regime to surpass the old, "the father is the initiating priest through whom the young being passes on into the larger world" (p. 115), moving beyond, "annihilate[ing] that key knot of [the hero's] limited existence" (p. 125).

This "atonement with the father" prompts a moment of transformation, via a figurative (or sometimes literal) death. Campbell called this step "apotheosis" (p.127) because it frequently features the hero becoming divine or enlightened in some way, "a pattern of the divine state to which the human hero attains who has gone beyond the last terrors of ignorance" (p. 127). Finally, newly fully prepared and initiated, the hero then obtains that which they have sought for so long, referred as "the ultimate boon" (p. 148), such as David's victory over Goliath (p.157), or "the Buddha's victory beneath the Bo Tree" (p. 164). Having completed the second phase of his journey (initiation), the hero may move to the third phase and make his return home, bringing his adventure full circle.

There is more than one pathway for the hero to make his/her return journey. Campbell divided these pathways into steps 12 through 14; however, each step is optional. Within the

monomyth, there may be a combination of one or more steps, or there may be an absence of all of these steps. The first of these return steps is "refusal of return" (p. 167), where the hero may resist or refuse returning to his/her old way of life after having achieved a goal or some form of enlightenment. The "ultimate boon" may be too much, as Campbell suggested, that "even the Buddha, after his triumph, doubted whether the message of realization could be communicated" (p. 167). The hero may instead remain on the more elevated plane of existence, either to the end of the adventure or the onset of "rescue from without" (p. 178), "for the bliss of the deep abode is not lightly abandoned in favor of the self-scattering of the wakened state" (p. 178).

On other occasions, the hero may have to flee immediately after achieving his ultimate goal. Campbell referred to this as the "magic flight" (p. 170), which is almost another step in the hero's journey toward achieving a goal, as true success is not attained if he cannot escape with the achievement. Campbell wrote, "If the monomyth is to fulfill its promise, not human failure or superhuman success but human success is what we shall have to be shown. That is the problem of the crisis of the threshold of the return" (p. 178). The last of these return-steps is the "rescue from without" (p. 178). In the completion of either/both of these steps, much like the hero needs outside assistance in order to complete a quest, many times a hero will need external (supernatural) help in order to return to the old lifestyle after such a grand adventure. This step can be seen in *The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King* (Tolkien, 1983), where the Great Eagles carry Frodo and Sam away from Mount Doom after destroying the Ring.

After making the return journey, the hero must then "cross the return threshold" (p. 188) and rejoin the rest of the world to continue with his/her normal life (be it a new or old form of

“normal”) and share that which has been achieved within the human realm. “This is the sign of the hero’s requirement, now,” Campbell writes, “to knit together his two worlds” (p. 196).

This successful return makes the hero a “master of two worlds” (p. 196), always recalling transformation that occurred over the course of the hero’s journey (for example, the Buddha is an enlightened being living in the ordinary world or Odysseus is a great adventurer who also lives a more domestic/retired lifestyle). As Campbell described it:

Freedom to pass back and forth across the world division, from the perspective of the apparitions of time to that of the causal deep and back—not contaminating the principles of the one with those of the other, yet permitting the mind to know the one by virtue of the other—is the talent of the master. (p. 196)

This leaves only the final step in Campbell’s process, the “freedom to live” (p. 221). Like in many fairy tales, this concept is best illustrated in the phrase “and they lived happily ever after.” The story of the myth concludes wholly, with no ties left undone and no uncertainty for the future. It is, as Campbell wrote, that “thus, the next moment is permitted to come to pass” (p. 209).

Lastly, it is also important to note that Campbell himself realized that the way the monomythic steps enact themselves will vary depending on the specifics of the myth that employs them. Particularly, certain steps in the monomythic structure may not be wholly or explicitly accounted for, but, “bound to be somehow or other implied” (p. 30), noting that in the location and degree of lack of explanation “the omissions itself can speak volumes...” (p. 30).

As video game research continues to develop, better documented and perhaps more consistent means of analysis will emerge. Given the great degree of variability the above

examples begin to demonstrate, before moving to the methodology this study employs, an operational theoretic underpinning will be presented through the following research.

Video Game Theory

It is evident that some video games have clear stories in them; a smaller group of these video game stories may even resemble the age-old mythic structure of "the hero's journey." Yet, it is also evident that the way this story is offered and consumed is different than in other forms of narrative presentation. Therefore, it serves to discuss the important unique aspects inherent in the video game medium as well as the way this more personal interactive narrative form has been previously theorized. That will allow for the establishment of the definition for narrative creation under which the accompanying analysis operates.

Mediated spaces. In trying to illuminate aspects of interactivity, consider aspects of Bandura's (2009) social cognitive theory is useful in regard to the way video games present information. While adapted and used to study the effects of video games and aggression (Anderson & Bushman, 2002), one may look to Bandura (2009) in a more general sense to assess or contemplate the potential effects of a player enacting the role of the hero in a video game. For instance, one's concept of self-efficacy, Bandura noted, serves as a closely-related factor to one's motivations and actions. A sense of self-efficacy (ability to complete tasks and reach goals) in a game seems like an obvious connection to a basic game structure, and ties into a player's sense of agency quite well. Gregerson and Grodal (2009) explained the appeal of the virtual experience of play in terms of visual, textural, and postural information. According to Gregerson and Grodal, the better a video game is at simulating this type of information, the higher the player's

sense of agency. This is part of what makes gaming fun. Even if through our actions we are only interacting with the game structure ("the computer"), there is still a sense of accomplishment because of our extended body, this part of ourselves, which is present in the game. Then, it stands to reason that the sense of accomplishment from a virtual space will tie into the sense of efficacy observed and studied under social cognitive theory.

However, interactive media is able to strike an interesting balance. Another concept of social cognitive theory is the idea of vicarious learning (Bandura, 2009), wherein one is able to learn from the experiences and actions of another. Technology has yet to allow video gaming to become a totally immersive experience, so the level of embodiment described above cannot allow a total synchronization between player and the game structure, leaving some level of awareness or disjoint between the player and the avatar. Like a Venn diagram, the player and the virtual avatar overlap, but are distinct enough (and, often, the game's content fictional enough) that the player may be able to employ a level of vicarious learning from the game structure. This is an interesting notion when considered in terms of action and the archetypal hero and the balance between the cinematic elements of a video game where the player is meant to observe, not act, and the interactive portions where a player has complete (or at least more) control in operating in/with the game's coded structure.

Additionally, existing communication research with regard to narrative identification has incorporated aspects of social cognitive theory, such as Moyer-Gusé's (2008), which synthesized existing literature (including social cognitive theory, as well the aforementioned Green and Bock's [2004] transportation theory) considering how individuals can be "swept up" in a narrative (with Moyer-Gusé's focus that of educational messages) to the point that the narrative

has influence over the individual. This leads to the consideration of the psychological aspects and impacts of storytelling on humans, and, more specifically, humans that are also players of video games.

For Myers (2009), interaction is what keeps a player engaged in both mind and body, and is often a very appealing factor. Gamers are playing with a representation of reality, albeit a virtual representation, and, being virtual, need not always reflect the 'real world.' In order for play to occur, the gamer is reliant on the structure coded into the game. But, as long as the structure presiding over the simulation is apparent and the rules are clear, then the player is able to assign value to the objects within that simulation. Gamers are beholden to the rules in order to play or have fun (adding yet another tension between the player and the game structure), but as Arsenault & Perron (2009) noted, rules are often abided.

In a video game, there is tension between the literal or denotative explanation for a represented object (often bunches of pixels or polygons) and what the player is able to value the representation as (e.g. a mushroom that prompts Mario to double in size and stamina). This concept is referred to as "the magic circle" (Huizinga, 1938), and has been adjusted to better fit aspects of video gaming (Arsenault & Perron, 2009).

Coined by Johan Huizinga (1938) the concept of the 'magic circle' states that when we are playing, we enter a realm where meaning is created with the game. Objects in the game only have value when they are recognized as part of playing the game. Arsenault and Perron have amended Huizinga's "magic circle" to a "magic cycle," which describes the cyclical nature of the game presenting a particular state of the audiovisual elements, the player assessing these elements based on knowledge of both inside and outside the game world leading to a response

from the player, which alters the game state in some way, starting the loop over. Depending on their experience, a gamer can enter into this process at one of several loops. Similarly, because different gamers will walk away from a game with varying levels of interpretation and understanding, exiting the spiral can occur on different loops (Arsenault & Perron, 2009). This concept may be useful to relate back to Polkinghorne (1988) in building connections, particularly in a player creating meaning in the context of their previous experiences, which would be added to as a player continues to operate and gain experience in the video game space.

This leads to each narrative being created by various players to be equally unique, as no player is going to come to the same (unchanging) game event with the same knowledge set as another player. However, while the game does not force us to play by rules set up by the game, these rules and structures still do exist and Arsenault and Perron (2009) said that players often choose to play by the rules. Rules limit opportunities and options within the game structure and this allows for commonalities of experience. It is the coding of a game that enables the entity to exist as a game or simulation. However, the programmers are not able to predetermine everything that happens as part of that game, as doing so would remove the interactive aspect that video games have come to be known for. Because the player has agency in the game world, he/she can make choices and see how far boundaries established by the coding can be stretched. Myers (2009) describes that games are often successful when they strike a balance between player freedom and game rules, which occurs in between "...the demands of the simulation and the gratifications of the self...the anti-form of play is bound by game rules, but is allowed, within the context of those rules, free reign" (p. 54).

Narratology vs. ludology. In keeping with this study is video game research situated in the humanities, focusing more on how video games create meaning rather than measurable effects. Of particular relevance is the ongoing debate between ludology and narrative theories with regard to video game stories. When examining previous scholarly research, analyses of video games tend to come from one of two theoretical backgrounds: either ludic or narrative theory. As discussed above, narrative theory, relates to the internal and external stories individuals create and encounter in their daily lives. Like its name suggests, a narratological perspective is concerned with narratives, their structures, and how narratives affect worldview (Felluga, 2011). Narratology tends to focus on structure and has been applied to narratives of various media.

Like with many fields of analysis, the application of a narratological study can be varied depending on the specific theoretical foundation. In order to illustrate the perspective and concern of the narratologist while still keeping a focus on video games, Nitsche (2008) referring to Aarseth (1997), highlighted the Russian formalists who view underlying structures of a text as existing separately from an audience or reader. In describing narratives, Russian formalists used the word 'fabula' to describe a chronological sequence of events, and 'sjužet' to refer to the specific way and order those events were presented (Nitsche, 2008, p. 48; Aarseth 1997, p. 112). Narratology employs many such terms with a goal of categorizing and describing the various parts of narrative presentation. But, a rigid application of the Russian terms would presume an inflexible set of events and presentation, prompting both Aarseth and Nitsche to propose adjustments for consideration of video games. Nitsche also noted that some applications of narratology, such as the work of Laurel (1986), "attempt to situate all narrative elements within

the work itself," resulting in a distinction that effectually highlights the larger separation between narratology and ludology with "plot versus interactivity" (p. 50).

Ludology, in contrast, focuses on the study of games, their players and the role games play in society. Scholars more aligned to this simulation theory (Aarseth, 1997, 2001; Frasca, 1999, 2001, 2003) argue that this active participation in the medium is a very different experience when compared with other media and traditional narrative examinations are too constricting. That is, video games are programmed to take input from the player and generate unexpected elements and outcomes. While any game is limited by processing power and programmed options; the "plot" of the game, or narrative path, is not pre-determined. They assert that the elements that are represented in a game are only incidental, thus video games cannot be understood from a narrative perspective, and, therefore, the main focus of any game study should be on the interactivity of its formal systems: the rules, the interface, and the structure— that is, the coded, procedural elements.

Theorists aligned to this general point of view reject the formal narrative approach in being applied to video games. Limiting consideration of a video game to just its output is overly reductive and does a disservice to the unique qualities of the medium; games do not produce an experience of a linear sequence of events and coherence is not a requirement, as players can challenge the game's established rule and engage in activity that does not work to an end-goal (Eskelinen & Tronstad, 2003; Frasca, 2003).

Eskelinen and Tronstad (2003) explained the disagreement with applying narrative theories to video games as "reduc[ing] computer games to a mere delivery channel for something more important or meaningful (as, rather curiously, stories or narratives are taken to be)" (p.

196), continuing that video games do not have audiences like other forms of art. This view of narrative is fairly common in the ludology perspective: that storytelling makes players passive spectators and a story can only be a static, fixed presentation of a text. Even Holland, James and Squire (2003), mentioned earlier in the chapter for remarking on the connection between narrative and a game's appeal, further this perception of narrative in games, describing that "games have had more success at creating emotional reactions through visceral action than through compelling storytelling" (p. 39), suggesting that there must be a distinction between active action and passive storytelling.

While the author agrees that forcing a static framework of traditional narrative analysis would be over-limiting and ineffectual, that fact does not strip narrative of its influence or significance in a game space. Rather than trying to set ludology and narratology opposite one another, it seems more beneficial to adjust the consideration of narrative to better incorporate the impermanent, transitory nature of a video game. If it is helpful, one might consider this a distinction between "telling" as a verb in "storytelling" and moving closer toward "creating," "constructing," or "composing" stories.

Narrativity. In applying narrative to video games, it is valuable to consider narrative more along the lines of a way of thinking, rather than a static, fixed text. Calleja (2009) argued for a distinction between the embedded narrative in the game and the emergent narrative created by the player. He called the story created from the players' interpretation of events an "alterbiography," which, although imbued with some subjectivity and out-of-game aspects, is still rooted within stable game elements. The narrative described is both an essence and an

action, affected by and affecting other narratives. This leads to meaning not being constructed or reflected by or onto any one party. Meaning is a co-construction and comes into existence via a push-pull process and every alterbiography is different.

Aresnault and Perron (2009) echoed this sentiment and discussed that the meaning and narrative are not purely constructed by the player nor are they reflected onto the player. Instead, meaning is co-constructed as the player reacts to the game and vice versa. Because the player does not interact with the game's code directly, the gamer is limited in their perspective because it consists of only their own personal understanding of the game's system, which increases as they continue to play the game.

Boje (2001) also noted the difficulty that arises in the notion of interactivity and says a conflict exists in "what to do with non-linear, almost living storytelling that is fragmented, polyphonic, and collectively produced" (Boje, p. 1). Video gaming fits in with this type of storytelling: a gamer may play the same game multiple times and in different ways. Additionally, many video games have the option of playing with a second player, or to play online with several players, allowing each gamer to be a part of the co-creation process.

To help resolve the conflict in the traditional view of narrative theory, Boje used the term "antenarrative" to describe the individual pieces that could be used to make a narrative before they have been organized into an articulate narrative (Boje, 2001). This fits in well with video games, where elements are uncovered or delivered in bits that are not linear. As gamers go through the game world, they have to guess and predict how the pieces uncovered fit together or what the ramifications will be when choosing a certain course of action on both small and large scales. For postmodern narrative, it is important to realize that different people will interact with

these same narrative (or antenarrative) pieces in different ways, ways that are fluid and changing as per Somers (1994). It is this cross-section that allows for the creation of the alterbiography Calleja (2009) described.

Narrative in interactive spaces. Nitsche (2008) does a great deal in fusing the interactive and narrative elements for understanding three dimensional, virtual spaces, and serves to effectively narrow discussion to the final case of narrativity and monomyth in a video game space. In describing the importance of narrative and its combining with interaction, he stated:

Narrative is a way for the player to make sense of the in-game situation. The main process happens in the player, but it can be evoked and directed by evocative narrative elements, formed by encounters or situations in the game that prime some form of comprehension. Evocative elements are included in virtual environments to improve the meaning-building process of the player. The elements are not "stories" but suggestive markings. They are clustered in certain ways and aimed to trigger reactions in players in order to help them to create their own interpretations. One consequence of such a model is that the stories are never in the piece itself but in the mind of the player (p. 44).

This quotation effectively encapsulates the more postmodern take of narrative creation (narrativity); recognizing not only the absence of a 'whole' story, but also understanding that different players will interpret and incorporate the narratives elements in different ways. Again, this is how Calleja's (2009) alterbiography is written uniquely by each player.

Since the interpretation of video game narrative is still a point under contention with some scholars, it is therefore important to make note of where the current analysis is situated.

This paper will employ use of the definition set forth by Tim Skelly (2009), a game developer in the 70s and 80s, in the foreword to *The Video Game Theory Reader 2*. Skelly describes the player as being “a subversive collaborator” (Skelly in Wolf & Perron, 2009, p. xiii). This definition, stemming out of Skelly’s extensive hands-on experience in the industry, acknowledges that the way a story is revealed in a video game is different than in other forms of media, like television or film. In a video game, the player collaborates with the more static narrative elements coded into the game, making neither the game nor the player the sole creator of the story. The player is subversive in that he/she does not have to take the game elements at face value as they go through the game. The creation of the story is cooperation, not just presentation. As such, there may be variations in some of the elements delineated above depending on the player.

So, the meaning-creation process of narrativity is one that is in a perpetual state of flux, however, it is anchored by stable components in the existent elements that can potentially be used to create coherent and more traditionally linear story-forms (but are also potentially not to be incorporated). These stable elements come to be understood through their relationships, whether it be to other narrative elements based on a game’s design, a player’s experiences or attitudes in real life, cultural narratives, and/or a player’s previous experiences with video games. Games can only be fully understood as they are played; narrative cannot be viewed as a static, contained text, just as something is lost if only the formal rules of a game are considered with no thought to how a player negotiates them.

Monomyth in interactive spaces. Nitsche (2008), wrote from a perspective concerning the creating of 3-D virtual spaces, and noted the significance Campbell's (1949/2008) structure lends to supporting a space's significance and is a generally effective model for video games:

[Monomyth] is relevant, because it can be applied to the comprehension processes thanks to its gradual character development. At the same time, it depends on the hero's actions to further develop. The quest is not found in the realms of the fixed work but in the experience of the player. Its basic structural schemata however remain... we look at the monomyth not as an act-like form that can be condensed to a level-driven, "numbered" structure, but as a guide for a space-driven approach to Campbell's principles (Nitsche, 2008, p. 59).

The commentary from Nitsche (2008) regarding the "numbered structure" is interesting because Nitsche mentioned both Campbell (1949) and Vogler (2007) directly, but both Campbell and Vogler specifically state that the steps in "the hero's journey" are not required to occur in any set order or without any variation (Vogler even mentions that "to force a story to conform to a structural model is to put the cart before the horse" [p. 232]). However, Nitsche was likely writing from a perspective that many pieces of media employ the monomythic elements as sort of a "fill-in-the-blank," "mad-lib" type of structure that guarantees an effective, good story (a sentiment shared among critics such as the well-known blogger "Film Crit Hulk!" [2011], who touched on both film as per Vogler's intention as well as video games).

In addressing critiques of monomyth with concern to narratology (which should be made distinct from the narrativity employed here), Nitsche stated that:

Forcing the monomyth too literally onto the game might ignore fundamental needs of gameplay that demand freedom and creativity. That is why the model is not suggested as a universal content-structuring formula in video game spaces, but primarily as a method for deciphering events in them (p. 61).

This may seem strange given Vogler's (2007) book, the advice proctored by Miller (2013), *Journey* (2012), and even in comments from Nitsche (2008) himself; however, the statement does relate to the previous advice in using monomyth as a lens (plus, Nitsche is writing with concern as a designer rather than a player). Moreover, this idea taps into the push-pull narrative process, as the creation of story elements can be informed by monomyth and later suggest a mythic influence in turn.

Nitsche (2008) also mentions that the prevalence of monomyth in media throughout history has allowed it to become a metanarrative. Nitsche explained that monomyth's continued use has created an expectation in the audience, which, in turn "increases the likelihood of a reading of the game events in accordance with the monomyth. Limiting as the dominance of one narrative form may be, it means that players are familiar with the structure and—consciously or not—look for clues to generate the context along this formula's method. In other words, it has become a convention" (p. 62). Yet, while conventional, it is not as prescriptive as some representations might make it seem, and, as mentioned above, this flexibility is valuable to the game structure, concluding:

Ultimately, it is up to the player to drive the exploration of the video game world, which can initiate a Hero's Journey, but the monomyth offers a powerful tool to recognize these journeys and optimize the structure of the game world accordingly. The spacemaker

sends players into the game world not to follow a predefined tale delivered through a linear medium but instead stages them in the center of the events that come to life through their participation. The timing of the events depends on their spatial interaction. The result is a form of quest that comes to live in the player's comprehension and his or her interaction with the game space. Not only can monomythical principles be used to support and analyze players' comprehension, they also can inform game world design (p. 64).

So while he does not come to the conclusion via the same means, from Nitsche's (2008) account, one can see how the flexible structure of the monomyth would be useful to players and designers alike. Granted, Nitsche's discussion is limited in that, while he does hold a great deal of consideration for the player, his focus is ultimately that of the creation of 3-D spaces for players to operate within. He does employ some specific examples of instances in a variety of 3-D spaces to illustrate his points, but does not systematically or thoroughly examine how a complete mythic structure exists in a particular virtual world and how its operations can be carried out by (and affect) a player. Thus, it is pertinent to turn discussion toward a method by which our understanding of the latter points can begin to come into view.

CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY

The above literature review should have clarified that the approach for video game analysis has been varied, and scholars have yet to determine a singular model or mode that will encapsulate the unique qualities of the gaming experience (and one may potentially never be so holistic). In reference to the earlier posited research questions (Is Campbell's monomyth revealed in the games of *The Legend of Zelda* series? Does the monomyth alter throughout the many iterations of the series? If so, where do the differences lie?), these discussions illuminate the need for a methodology that recognizes and incorporates both the embedded narrative elements coded into a game's programming, as well as note the potential for the emergent narrative brought to the equation by the player, all the while still allowing for a critical approach to be maintained.

In selecting a methodology, views from a structuralist approach with regard to narrative structure and critical analysis would be too limiting. As noted above, the story of a video game is co-constructed, so to only focus on the fixed, coded narrative elements and/or the perceived intention of the game's designers would be to discount the player, which has been established as a key component of the process. This is not to say that the other extreme (focusing solely on the player) is preferable, or that coded narrative elements of the game are not important, however. The presence of the coded narrative elements serve as prompts to the player throughout their playthrough experience, and these prompts help to establish commonalities between the playthrough experiences of different players. Thusly, an analysis discounting these prompts

would be akin to discounting the medium or game designers entirely (which, also as above, is noted as being full of suggestion or intention).

Reader-Response Criticism

In trying to achieve a balance between these two facets, an author-centered, post-structuralist, reader-response type of textual analysis was applicable, as it allowed for the fusing or overlap of 1) culture, 2) the reader, and 3) the media artifact in the creation of meaning. These three components (culture, the reader, and the media artifact) are reflected in the methodology and accompanying analysis in 1) presence of mythic themes in media artifacts seen through Campbell's monomyth; 2) the variable and individual player in the game playing process; and 3) the designed, coded game from the game company's team of creators, respectively. As a type of audience centered criticism, a reader-response approach was also a method that was feasible with regard to the limited number of resources available so as to complete the project in the time allotted.

Henderson and Brown (1997) described reader-response criticism as a "systematic examination of the aspects of the text that arouse, shape, and guide" a receiver, or "reader" of a particular media artifact ("Reader-Response Criticism," para. 1). This relates well to Nitsche's (2008) description of a game designer being able to use narrative elements to guide a player through the game, noting "[t]he main process happens in the player, but [narrative] can be evoked and directed by evocative narrative elements, formed by encounters or situations in the game that prime some form of comprehension" (p. 44). Henderson and Brown (1997) also stated that "the reader is a producer rather than a consumer of meanings," which helps to address the

co-creation of narrative between the game structure and player that video game scholars describe (Arsenault & Perron, 2009; Calleja, 2009; Skelly, 2009). The reader as a "producer of meanings" ("Reader-Response Criticism, Henderson & Brown, 1997) also connects to post-modern narrative considerations through Polkinghorne (1988) and Somers (1994) in understanding narratives as pieces in fluctuating context, as a reader will situate various narrative elements based on their prior narrative makeup.

Murfin and Ray (1998), in briefly describing the history of the reader-response approach, paraphrased Wolfgang Iser as noting that "texts contain gaps (or blanks) that powerfully affect the reader, who must explain them, connect what they separate, and create in his or her mind aspects of a work that aren't in the text but are incited by the text" ("Critical Approaches: Reader-Response Criticism," para. 3). Murfin and Ray (1998) go on to explain that reader-response approaches hold that literature (considered for the purposes of this research as narrative or story) becomes meaningful when it subsists in the mind of the reader, not in the existence of the work itself (as formalists would argue). Similarly, "reading" is considered an active deed rather than a passive one. This, again, connects well with Nitsche's (2008) considerations of narrative elements in a virtual world and aids in addressing some earlier criticisms like those from Holland, James, and Squire (2003) that suggested there must be a distinction between the active action and passive storytelling in video games.

In general, the means of a reader-response criticism comes from one of two areas. The first of these is by identifying, examining, and discussing the observed responses of a media artifact's readers (such as Brown's [1994] ethnographic examination of soap opera viewers, incorporating both participant observation and interviews), or, secondly, by identifying elements

within the media artifact itself (such as Wenner's 1989 exploration into the elements of beer commercials, particularly in connection to sports and patriarchy). Analyses focusing on the artifact explore the elements that attempt to engage with the reader, as well as the manner in which a reader is addressed/considered and the manner by which the artifact mediates (or attempts to mediate) the act of "reading." The following analysis is in keeping with the latter of the two forms, being a textual analysis or reading of *The Legend of Zelda* series' narrative elements with regard to myth.

These narrative elements are included as part of the game's code—elements that are composed by teams of writers and translators and implemented visually, aurally, and textually by game designers (thus, the above "textual analysis" refers more generally to a media artifact, rather than a "text" as only a body of words). Sometimes these elements present themselves diegetically (as coming from a virtual representation of a character the player interacts with) and other times may appear in a non-diegetic fashion (imposed on the player in some sort of cinematic sequence, for instance).

The post-structuralist point of view common to reader-response approaches allows for criticism to extend beyond just an author's intent, as media artifacts are considered "open" by nature. This openness also paves the way for elements of intertextuality, places where texts work with one another, or a consideration of the meaning of a text not being constrained to the structure of the text itself. This is applicable as the serial nature of *The Legend of Zelda* means that a particular installment may make reference to other installments of the series (other texts/media artifacts) and, with the included player component in narrative creation, allows for interpretation based on individual experiences in making those connections. Correspondingly,

given that *The Legend of Zelda* is presented as a series but also form a collective whole, aspects of the narrative experience in one game unavoidably intertwine with that of another, from both a game design and player-experience perspective. In the co-creation process (Arsenault & Perron, 2009; Calleja, 2009; Skelly, 2009), parts of the narrative are rooted in stable game elements, and a player is only one part of the larger narrative construction (but, a part nevertheless) in putting those pieces together.

With the presence of those individual interpretations and experiences (and because a reader-response criticism is an audience-centered approach), there is also the allowance for a level of subjective analysis on part of the critic as a reader, which is useful in reflecting on the author's unique perspective from her extensive and longstanding experience as a video game player and fan of video games. Even in a textual analysis (which, from its name, may connote some level of distance), audience-centeredness is fitting in acknowledging both the researcher in the analysis itself along with the inseparability of the player in trying to describe the overall narrative of a video game, which, again, helps in reaching the push-pull format of a video game's presentation (Arsenault & Perron, 2009). Although Nitsche (2008) cited monomyth as an effective choice for arranging video game spaces given that "players are familiar with the structure and—consciously or not—look for clues to generate the context along this formula's method" (p. 62), discussion of video game stories note the potential for a player's interpretation, or the takeaway narrative, to be but one in a plurality of narrative experiences, noted by Nitsche as story not being "in the piece itself but in the mind of the player" (p. 44).

Relatedly, given the establishment of the researcher as a participant within the larger gaming culture, she is informed of some narrative experiences beyond those of herself, or of

herself throughout the history of her experiences. The researcher, then, can be aware of the potentialities for those differing narrative experiences when encountering certain narrative elements during gameplay as the analysis unfolds. As above, reader-response criticism commonly does address the observed response of multiple readers, but, at this juncture, it is most prudent to examine the textual elements of the media artifact, leaving the precise nature of the varying narrative experience as an avenue of further exploration.

To reiterate aspects of the abovementioned premise of this research, this study seeks to extend a currently established model of narrative structure and media criticism (monomyth) to a new medium (video games), as well as refine that model so as to better fit the peculiarities inherent in that medium (interactivity and co-creation of narrative). While it cannot provide a positivistic, unquestionable 'truth,' this research can serve as a heuristic starting point in furthering our understanding of how the monomythic structure can be found or played out in a modern cultural context. However, as with most methodologies, particularly those of the humanities and qualitative approaches, there are varying attitudes toward and means by which to manage any particular approach. With the existence of those varying points of view in mind, it is important to situate and describe the specific aspects of how the methodology was carried out and the research process was undertaken.

Approach

In analyzing *The Legend of Zelda* series, the researcher will draw on her knowledge of the series as she has experienced it, including having played through each of the games at least once before the start of the project. In addition, she will work to compile a video library of her

completing one play-through of the main storyline, recording them (using a variety of hardware, such as an Elgato brand capture card for titles played on the television and a DS equipped with a capture card for handheld editions) in the interest of documentation and thoroughness. Video data of a playthrough experience is useful as it aids in serving to corroborate explanations in the forthcoming analysis.

A series of worksheets (see appendix) with spaces demarcated for each of Campbell's 17 steps were completed as the researcher reviewed the game playing experience (videos included as necessary), making note of the steps of monomyth as they occur or do not occur. This will allow for sufficient review of the coded elements of the game's narrative, which are those aspects that will be consistent in their capacity to be present between all players. Steps that are directly supported by the games' text and code will be cited with direct quotations, with mention of whether encountering the text is required (as part of the main story's cutscenes) or if the text is present, but optional (such as independently speaking to a particular character, or in the completion of a specific side-quest). In order to ensure that the variety of text encounters is taken into consideration, text dumps (created when the text data in the game's read-only memory [ROM] is ripped from the cartridge/disk and converted into a readable, text-based format) of the game's code will also be utilized. Text dumps for *The Legend of Zelda* games are readily available and easily accessed online.

To also account for the unique position the player holds in creating and interpreting the narrative, steps with no explicit support from the game's coded elements will be explored for potential situations in which the player can complete the step by him/herself (primarily through actions or held attitudes, without direct prompts), making note of any specific elements that

support one or more versions of how the step may be completed. This also includes the times when an optional portion can be completed in the overall scenario (the availability of side-quests is frequently condition specific), especially if it affects the order in which Campbell's steps might play out, as it pertains to the flexible attitude toward monomyth rather than the prescriptive one.

Documentation. Included as an appendix to this document is the format for research notes employed by the researcher. One set of worksheets were completed for the *Zelda* titles examined in this analysis. The worksheets have two monomythic steps per page to allow room for information specific to that step to be filled in. On the left hand side is the name of the monomythic step as named by Campbell, as well as a brief description of the content or significance of the step in the overall structure. On the right hand side is a series of questions that pertain to how that specific step occurs (or does not occur) in the particular title being examined, including the narrative context in which the step occurs; a specific quotation that supports the nature of the step; and whether that quotation could be avoided by the player or if the quotation is required as part of completing the main storyline of the game. These worksheets are topped by a title sheet with formatting reminiscent of the breakdown sheet of a screenplay. The cover page contains spaces for categorical information germane to the specific installment being examined, including title, publication date, which gaming platforms on which the game is available to be played, and the aggregate review score for the specific title (from either gamerankings.com or metacritic.com). In addition, information regarding the research scenario are also described for

the creation of a video library to aid in substantiating the analysis (as precise citation of various elements can be problematic).

Sample set. It is also relevant to briefly describe specifically which games will comprise the qualitative sample set for this research. Because *The Legend of Zelda* series has had such an extensive history (as far as video game series' are concerned), there have been a number of spin-offs and derivatives associated with the series. However, these will not be included in the research process, as it is necessary to bound the sample at some logical point; a point that both allows for the breadth of information required to form appropriate and accurately reflective conclusions while being limited enough so as to be feasible in completing considering the given resources. The researcher has determined that point to be those games that are considered within *The Legend of Zelda's* and Nintendo's official "canon" for the series, comprised of the 17 games listed more thoroughly in the sections above. All games are the North American versions due to the fact that these versions. These listed 17 games are considered 'canon' because they are the only games described in the Nintendo sanctioned *Hyrule Historia* (Gombos, Moriki, Plechl, Sivasubramanian, Tanner, Thomas, 2013) and (particularly in the case of *A Link Between Worlds*) those games mentioned on the series' official website: www.zelda.com. Similarly, updated and re-released versions of certain titles (such as 1995's update for *Link's Awakening* for the Game Boy Color or the Game Boy Advance version of *A Link to the Past*) are considered by Gombos et al. (2013) to be the same narrative arc and occupy only one place on the series' official timeline for the narrative canon.

Similarly, this also discounts spin-off and other derivative works, particularly with regard to the limits inherent in only considering North American releases. This means that the three Japan-only *BS Zelda no Densetsu* (1995, 1997 and 1999) for the Satellaview and *Freshly-Picked Tingle's Rosy Rupeeland* (2006) for the Nintendo DS will not be included and can be considered a spin-off because the protagonist and player avatar is not Link like in other *Zelda* titles. *Link's Crossbow Training* (2007), both a North American release and a game featuring Link as protagonist, is not included because Nintendo did not want to consider it for inclusion in the canon, but rather just to serve as a demonstration of the capabilities of the Wii-Zapper controller interface, as evidenced by its title not featuring the now-iconic "The Legend of Zelda" title prefix (Miyamoto, 2008). And, while released in North America, the games released on the Philips CD-i (*Link: The Faces of Evil* [1993], *Zelda: The Wand of Gamelon* [1993] and *Zelda's Adventure* [1994]) are also not included as they are not published by Nintendo and have been officially denounced by Nintendo as not part of the official *Zelda* canon (Cipriano, 2013). Moreover, these games do not appear in the Gombos et al. (2013) official timeline for the series; however, *BS Zelda no Densetsu* and *Link's Crossbow Training* are mentioned in a footnote (see p. 68).

In the interest of time, the sample set was further narrowed to consider the first *Zelda* game released for a particular Nintendo system. This allowed the researcher to document changes to the monomythic steps over time and technological generations, providing the depth of detail necessary, without an overburdening of details in illustrating those points. With the additional limits, the units of analysis are *The Legend of Zelda* (Nintendo Entertainment System), *A Link to the Past* (Super Nintendo Entertainment System), *Link's Awakening* (Game Boy), *Ocarina of Time* (Nintendo 64), *Oracle of Seasons* (Game Boy Color), *Four Swords* (Game Boy

Advance), *The Wind Waker* (Nintendo Gamecube), *The Minish Cap* (Gameboy Advance), *Twilight Princess* (Nintendo Wii), *Phantom Hourglass* (Nintendo DS), *Skyward Sword* (Nintendo Wii), and *A Link Between Worlds* (Nintendo 3DS). *Oracle of Seasons* and *Oracle of Ages* were released in conjunction with one another, so the researcher elected to analyze the game she played first (relevant aspects of the connections between the two games are included as well). Both *The Minish Cap* and *Skyward Sword* are included because while they were released after *Four Swords* and *Twilight Princess*, respectively, the circumstances surrounding the earlier releases (*Four Swords* originally being released on the same cartridge as the *A Link to the Past* for Gameboy Advance, and *Twilight Princess* being developed for the Gamecube, but ported to the Wii prior to the Gamecube release) are such that the researcher would rather err on the abundance of data in addressing *Zelda* games for that particular system.

CHAPTER 5 ANALYSIS

The Legend of Zelda

The original *The Legend of Zelda* was first released in 1987 and is the least technologically advanced game of the series. Yet, even with its relative simplicity, it is important to remember that this title laid the groundwork not only for subsequent *Zelda* titles, but also laid the foundation for a lot of game mechanics within the series and beyond, given that it employed a battery-save system and more efficient type of memory management (Nintendo Power, 1991). This technological advancement allowed for a type of extensively open-world game that was previously unheard of for home consoles. As such, it seems reasonable that various story-telling mechanics were still being figured out (such as video game manuals being important in the 80s than in games today), but this particular iteration of *Zelda* sets up many of the storyline staples now common to *The Legend of Zelda* series as a whole.

In this first *Zelda* game, Link and the player need to collect the eight pieces of the Triforce of Wisdom scattered throughout Hyrule in order to face off with the pig-like Ganon, a monster who possesses both the Triforce of Power and the kidnapped Princess Zelda. Over the course of the game, Link must explore Hyrule's overworld and underworld areas, obtaining various items and mastering skills along the way. This ultimately enabled him to defeat the eight dungeon bosses guarding the individual Triforce pieces he seeks.

Many of these narrative elements come to the player before she really even begins the game. While the translation has been improved since the original 1987 release, every version of this first installment begins with an exposition screen that relates that scenario to the player, then

notes: Link, you must find the pieces and save Zelda. Ending this expositional screen is brief note to the player to "please look up the manual for details." The manual would have been included with the game at the time of purchase, and does serve to further flesh out narrative details such as how Link is informed of and charged with the task of rescuing Princess Zelda in the first place. However, the goal of the analysis seeks to uncover the narrative elements within the games themselves.

Steps one and two, the "call to adventure" and the "refusal of the call," respectively, are most clearly seen when the player is plopped down in the middle of the overworld map, with no "objects of interest" on the first screen other than three paths and an entrance to a cave. The visuals serve as a prompt of encouragement for the player to explore, as each of the three paths or the cave would lead the player to a different yet unknown area. If (or when) the player enters the cave, an old man tells Link "*It is dangerous to go alone! Take this*" and presents Link with a sword. This event best fits a "call to adventure. The "refusal of the call," then, would be represented in not taking the sword or a delay in taking it. While it is possible to progress through the game without the sword, it is impossible to beat the final boss without it.

Campbell's third step, "supernatural aid," also becomes apparent during this event, in the form of the old man. After the initial sword-gaining instance, the player is clued in to consider anything an old man says as a form of advice to assist Link on his quest. For example, his appearance in Level 2 offers the information "*Dodongo dislikes smoke*" which, albeit cryptically, tells the player that the boss of the level, Dodongo, is weak against bombs. The old man is a largely helpful character that is present throughout the duration of the game, showing up in each of the nine dungeons as well as the overworld to offer advice.

There is no direct quotation to directly associate with "crossing the first threshold" or the "belly of the whale" (steps four and five), however, this step is visually indicated to the player the first time Link crosses into one of the game's nine dungeons. The act of entering a dungeon also demonstrates the willingness to face trials on part of the hero because the Triforce pieces are located in each dungeon. The collection of the Triforce pieces in completing these dungeons comprises the "road of trials," step six.

The event or character most in keeping with media tropes for "meeting with the goddess," the seventh step, would be Princess Zelda, first encountered at the end of the game after defeating Ganon. Once freed from Ganon's clutches, Zelda says, "*Thanks Link, you're the hero of Hyrule*" and then both Link and Zelda hold the Triforce pieces aloft. At this point, the game does offer a few optional collectables, and if a player wanted these, he/she could move away from the quest and seek them out. This could cause the player to want to explore the whole world rather than proceed directly to her next goal. The author has fond memories of searching under every bush for a hidden cavern (in a time before the internet, a manual search was generally necessary). Any of these distractions could serve to fulfill the "temptation" step that Campbell's eighth step describes.

"Atonement of the father" is trickier to place, as the step pertains to the hero facing up to the force that looms over his life. The figure that holds power over Link's life is best fit in Ganon, as he is the primary enemy of Hyrule and the force that that the player consistently faces. Defeating Ganon is also the ultimate goal of Link's journey and defeating Ganon would fulfill "final boon," from Campbell's ninth step to step eleven. The moment of transformation, or "apotheosis," occurs when Link completes the Triforce of Wisdom. While there is not a physical

change to Link (or even a congratulatory fanfare), the player is only allowed access to the final dungeon of the game, Ganon's lair, when the Triforce piece is complete. This step is visually indicated Link is briefly shown holding the Triforce, a sign that he has overcome the trials and is now an even match to Ganon.

After defeating Ganon, Link achieves his "final boon" (step 11) and can collect the Triforce of Power and release Princess Zelda. Very few of the "return" steps are directly supported by the little remaining text and visual elements in the game's credits. The only steps that are indicated are "crossing the return threshold" and "freedom to live" as the game states, "*Finally, peace returns to Hyrule. This ends the story,*" indicating that the characters do not live in a state of fear anymore and implying a state of normal life. Link is not shown as returning to the overworld, which would be more clearly indicative of the return steps. It is interesting to note that the exposition of the game's direct sequel, *Zelda II: The Adventure of Link* does support the step of "master of two worlds" because the premise of the game's plot (discussed in detail below) rests on the fact that Ganon had been defeated, indicating the hero status Link achieved is maintained after his return from the quest from the perspective of the larger *Zelda* timeline.

The Legend of Zelda's game data contains elements that can be connected to every step except for "refusal of return," "magic flight," "rescue from without" (steps 12 through 14), and "master of two worlds" (step 16). Step nine, "atonement with the father" is supported, but overlaps either step 10 and/or 11, depending on whether the Triforce, Ganon, or a combination of the two is seen as the presiding force over Link's journey. Similarly, in considering intertextual elements, step 16 ("master of two worlds") is supported, but only in conjunction with its direct sequel, *Zelda II: The Adventure of Link*, the next artifact of analysis.

A Link to the Past

The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past is the only *Zelda* game for the Super Nintendo Entertainment System. It establishes many recurring pieces throughout the series, such as the Master Sword. With the increase in technological power, graphical presentation is improved and many more textual, aural and visual elements are present. To briefly summarize the plot, Link must stop Ganon from taking over Hyrule through the collection of the three Pendants of Virtue to retrieve the Master Sword (the sword with great magic power) and the rescue of the descendants of the seven sages, who have the combined power to grant Link access to Ganon. Once Ganon is defeated, Link is able to make a wish on the combined pieces of the Triforce, undoing the damage Ganon had done.

The "call to adventure" comes in the form of a telepathic message from Princess Zelda rousing Link from his sleep asking him to help her, that she is a prisoner in the dungeon of the castle. "Refusing the call" is left up to the player, and will become evident in the player's reaction. Immediately after receiving Princess Zelda's telepathic message, Link's uncle (it is unclear whether he has heard the message, too) tells Link, "*Link, I'm going out for a while. I'll be back by morning. Don't leave the house.*" (The Gameboy Advance version lengthens this line, adding, "*There's no need for you to worry [...] Go back to sleep.*"). If the player were to follow the uncle's instructions first and hesitate in seeking out Princess Zelda, that action (or inaction) would fulfill the "refusal of the call" step.

Much of the guidance that is provided Link throughout his journey comes from an old man named Sahasrahla. Throughout the entirety of his quest, Sahasrahla is able to speak to Link telepathically, particularly through a set of special tiles located in every major dungeon.

Sahasrahla and the previously mentioned telepathic capabilities of Princess Zelda provide the "supernatural aid" Link needs to complete his task. It is also from Sahasrahla that the player is presented with the fifth step, crossing the first threshold to adventure (the fourth step) to "the belly of the whale," and truly accepting the potential change incurred by taking up the journey. Up until this point, the player has been exploring Link's familiar world and the only real goal known is to come to the aid of Princess Zelda. Zelda and a resident sage relay that the situation may be worse than previously considered and to seek Sahasrahla, one of the few who still knows of the Master Sword, the only weapon that can withstand such magic. When inquiring about the sword, Sahasrahla says, "*I am surprised a young man like you is searching for the sword of evil's bane. [...] Do you really want to find it?*" It is at this moment that the game's big-picture narrative really begins to unfold, and Link agrees to go beyond the confines of his current world of understanding.

The next step is the "road of trials." First, Link must acquire the three pendants in order to retrieve the Master Sword and defeat the wizard Agahnim. In the second leg of the "road of trials," Link must explore the Dark World to save the six maidens and Princess Zelda to close the divide between the worlds by reclaiming the Triforce. Once Link has retrieved all the maidens, Link can finally confront Ganon (the entity Agahnim was working for and trying to create a consistent door between the two worlds for. As is further revealed by each maiden upon saving them, Ganon wants to take over both the Light and Dark worlds and Agahnim is just a pawn.)

The next two steps that Campbell described are "meeting with the goddess," and "woman as temptress." Princess Zelda is a character with elevated significance in the narrative, being Link's counterpart in thwarting Ganon's goal of taking over the world, fulfilling the

“goddess” role. Very early in the game, when first exploring the castle to save Princess Zelda, Link comes across his uncle, who says, *“Unnh... Link, I didn’t want you involved in this... I told you not to leave the house [...] Save the Princess... Zelda is your... ..”* The end of this quote is never fully addressed, prompting many online discussions and parodies of “Zelda is my what?” to be filled in with “sister,” “betrothed,” “destiny,” etc., depending on the player, tying back to Campbell’s description of the goddess as a reverent symbol and the notion of the hero “winning the boon of love” (p. 99). The Gameboy Advance version adjusts the text here to avoid the situation, with the uncle saying, *“I suppose there’s no escaping destiny [...] Link... you must rescue Princess Zelda. Our people are fated to do so. But do not fall victim... to fate... Link...”* The presence of “temptations” are much like previous games, with multiple minigames and treasures to collect, providing a distraction from Link’s ultimate goal.

At the ninth step, the hero must face up to and be initiated by the force that wields the ultimate power over his life. This occurs when Link takes the Master Sword from its pedestal and thereafter confronts the wizard Agahnim, the sole cause of the disturbances thus far. This step typically sees the appearance of a father figure, or the person that represents the greatest power over the hero’s life, which is also fulfilled in Agahnim (particularly in Agahnim’s connection to Ganon). From this and earlier mentions, it is plausible to consider that force in Link’s life as that of fate (consider the new translation of the uncle’s dying words, for instance). Both of these considerations are made clear in the next step, called “apotheosis,” which involves a transformation to some degree. Link confronts Agahnim, but is too late to save Princess Zelda, who was recaptured just after pulling the Master Sword (providing double the impetus to stop the wizard) and transported to the Dark World. After challenging and defeating Agahnim, the wizard

transports Link to the Dark World as well, and the plot changes from stopping Agahnim from capturing the maidens, to closing the link Agahnim created between the two worlds when transporting Zelda over. After a final showdown, Link is able to defeat Ganondorf, achieving that which he has strived toward for so long, "the ultimate boon," the Triforce.

Link's return steps play out in the final cinematic cutscene (after defeating Ganon, the player has completed the entirety of the gameplay portion of the title). Skipping over "refusal of return" and "magic flight," Link is largely able to go back to his previous way of life via a "rescue from without." In this case, it is the Triforce and its ability to grant the wishes of its holder that provides the external force Link needs to return. As Link first beholds the Triforce, its essence communicates to him,

"I am the Essence Of The Triforce... The Triforce will grant the wishes in the heart and mind of the person who touches it. [...] The stronger the wish, the more powerful the Triforce's expression of that wish. [...] Now, touch it with a wish in your heart..."

The cutscene then fades to the manifestation of that wish explaining what effect Link has brought to pass, including, but not limited to, showing the King of Hyrule with Princess Zelda and the seven maidens outside of their crystals, the sage returned to health after failing to prevent Zelda's second capture, and Link and his uncle standing outside their house and raise their swords aloft together.

Link's return to his home in the end cutscene is an indication of "crossing the return threshold," Campbell's 15th step. This leaves Link to be "the master of two worlds," retaining the knowledge accrued over his adventure. While not supported directly via the text in this game, *A Link to the Past's* successors in the official timeline, *Oracle of Seasons* and *Oracle of Ages*,

(Gombos et al., 2013) does demonstrate that Link is indeed the keeper of the Triforce after making his wish, as Link is shown visiting a shrine where the Triforce is kept.

Illustrating the "freedom to live," Link is then shown returning the Master Sword to its pedestal in the woods with the text "*And the Master Sword sleeps again...Forever!*" Link is the hero over the Dark World and returns to the Light World. Because of the conclusiveness of the "forever" in the statement, the player knows that Link has his life and its possibilities ahead of him, being neither anxious about the future nor regretting the past. This holds true in the games following *A Link to the Past* in the timeline (Gombos et al., 2013), where Link has adventures facilitated by, but independent of the quest he completed in Hyrule.

A Link to the Past has all of the monomythic steps accounted for, except for "refusal of return" and the "magic flight" occupying steps 12-13 at the turn to the "return" steps of the mythic cycle. While the other return steps, "rescue from without," "crossing the return threshold," and "freedom to live" are directly supported by elements of the game, step 15, "the master of two worlds," is best supported through the consideration of intertextual elements from the sequels to *A Link to the Past*.

Link's Awakening

The plot points of *Link's Awakening* take place outside of Hyrule, but are completed by the same Link as the *Oracle* games and *A Link to the Past*. In *Link's Awakening*, Link, having washed ashore on Koholint Island (an indeterminate distance from Hyrule, the land that originally made or considered Link to be a hero) after his ship is caught in a storm, must collect

the eight Instruments of the Sirens in order to wake the sleeping Wind Fish, the magical entity that has the power to let Link leave the island and continue to his destination.

In the opening cutscene, the player is shown that Link was found on the beach by a young lady, Marin. Step one, the "call to adventure," can be encountered after Link heads to the spot where he landed on the island, finding that his sword has since washed up, when a mysterious owl suddenly lands nearby and speaks, "*Now I understand why the monsters are starting to act so violently... A courageous lad has come to wake the Wind Fish... It is said that you cannot leave the island unless you wake the Wind Fish...*" After instructing Link to head north to the forest, the owl flies away, providing no further context as to what the 'Wind Fish' is. The "refusal of the call" is not supported by a direct prompt in the game, however, after Link retrieves the sword, the player has the freedom to roam about a limited area. The player having the freedom to delay (in heeding the owl's advice to go to the woods or not) gives enough opportunity for events to fit in with the monomythic structure.

It is in meeting with the owl a second time that its role as "supernatural helper" becomes more apparent. The owl further explains the Wind Fish, "*Hoot! Ho, brave lad, on your quest to wake the dreamer! [...] I'm afraid you may find it a trifle difficult to leave the island while the Wind Fish naps...*" and gives the player direct gameplay advice by pointing out the first level of the game: "*By the by, have you ever visited the Tail Cave, which is south of the village? Go there with the key you find in this forest...*" The owl will continue this support role throughout the game. The owl is 'supernatural,' as it is one of only two characters (discounting Link) that have knowledge of the true nature of the Wind Fish and Koholint Island. It later tells Link, "*I was instructed to give you directions...*" making the owl a good fit for step three. The

“crossing of the first threshold” then becomes Link’s subsequent exploration of the forest with the goal of finding the key. The player cannot go through the woods without first encountering the owl and the design of the woods makes them distinct from the surrounding accessible areas, making a clear contrast from areas explored thus far.

The final separation of Link from the known world happens as the player collects the key to the first level and completes the dungeon found therein, introducing the distinction between the overworld map areas and the dungeon areas and marking step five’s “belly of the whale.” These events demonstrate a willingness to progress as per the owl’s earlier advice or in a desire to leave the island. It also provides segue to step six, “road of trials,” when Link obtains the Full Moon Cello at the end of the level, as he greeted by the owl who explains, “*That Instrument, along with the seven others in the set, has the power to wake the Wind Fish! You must collect them all!*” One instrument is found in each of the main eight dungeons of the game, in order to play a song that will awaken the Wind Fish.

While “meeting of the goddess” does not require a romantic encounter, the character of Marin is portrayed as a romantic interest for Link. At one point, Marin confesses to Link that “*Tarin [her father] says there is nothing beyond the sea, but I believe there must be something over there... When I discovered you Link, my heart skipped a beat! I thought, this person has come to give us a message...*” and as the conversation continues says “*I want to know everything about you... Err... Uhh, ha ha ha ha!*” While Marin’s dialogue throughout the game can be attributed to her fascination with Link since he a novelty in having come from across the sea (and not a budding relationship between the two), Marin is a good fit for step seven in that she is a counterpart to Link in desiring a life beyond the confines of Koholint Island.

Comment [ca1]: Not sure what that word is supposed to be.

As with many video games, there are several collectable items and mini-games available to Link that may distract from completing the main portion of the game. For instance, Link can collect Secret Seashells scattered across Koholint Island; he can spend time leisurely at the fishing hole; or he can seek out all of the pieces of heart. All of these variations are examples of how a player has opportunity to be "tempted" from the larger goal, as per the eighth step.

Link is confronted with the power that presides over his current situation (for step nine, "atonement with the father") when he learns the true nature of the Wind Fish. Initially, the game refers to the Wind Fish rather cryptically, such as "*The Wind Fish in name only, for it is neither.*" Yet, in collecting the key to enter the sixth dungeon, Link encounters a stone tablet: "*Awake the dreamer, and Koholint will vanish much like a bubble on a needle... Castaway, you should know the truth!*" The owl descends and explains, "*While it does say the island is but a dream of the Wind Fish, no one is really sure... [...] The only one who knows for sure is the Wind Fish... Trust your feelings... Someday you will know for sure...*" This creates more of a dilemma in proceeding because Link could potentially wipe Koholint from existence. The Wind Fish carries the life or death power for Koholint and continuing on in the face of the realization works to confront that presence.

Link's Awakening does not have an explicit "apotheosis," but the high point of the programmed narrative comes when Link approaches the Wind Fish's egg at the top of the highest mountain peak with the eight Siren Instruments in tow. Link can then play the full Ballad of the Wind Fish with all of the parts of the arrangement intact. Link is then able to achieve that which he has sought after: the "ultimate boon" of awakening the Wind Fish to leave the island. After defeating the final boss, Link ascends the staircase that appears before him and the owl

appears one last time to explain, “*Young lad, I mean... Link, the hero! [...]! As part of the Wind Fish’s spirit, I am the guardian of his dream world... [...] I have always trusted in your courage to turn back the Nightmares. Thank you, Link... My work is done... The Wind Fish will wake soon. Good bye... Hoot!*” The owl then fades away as the Wind Fish appears.

Link is able to return to his state prior to the adventure via the Wind Fish in a “rescue from without” (step 14). The Wind Fish tells Link (in uppercase), “*it be the nature of dreams to end! When I dost awaken, Koholint will be gone... Only the memory of this dream land will exist in the waking world [...] Come, Link... Let us awaken together!!*” The instruments Link reappear and a cutscene shows scenes of the landscape, the inhabitants and the skyline of the island itself slowly fade. Lastly, a geyser jet of water scoops Link up and propels him away.

Link has returned “across the return threshold” and the white fades into an open sunny sky, with seagulls in flight and the sound of the ocean underscoring. Link is adrift, clinging to the wreckage of his boat. Link sits on the wreckage and looks to the sky as a shadow passes over. A silhouette of a whale passes under the sun and Link’s expression turns to a smile, an indicator that Link has become the “master of two worlds,” if only part in memory. Link is left floating freely as the credits begin to roll. Determining Link’s fate afterward is difficult from both a cutscene and a timeline perspective, as their contents do not reveal to what extent Link has the “freedom to live,” as the cutscene shows nothing for Link beyond floating in the [ocean](#).

In *Link’s Awakening*, steps five and six, “belly of the whale” and “road of trials,” respectively, also slightly overlap one another, as they can both be found in the first dungeon of the game and the tenth step (“apotheosis”) is not as strongly supported as it is in other games. All of the monomythic steps are supported, save for “refusal of return,” “magic flight,” and,

Comment [ca2]: Again, even though you’ve cut out a bunch, my brain is still going into freeze. . .there so much stuff thrown at me that I need some help knowing what to do with all this information. Can you create a short summary here of what we’ve learned so far about the 17 steps. . . have things changed in the xxx years since the game’s inception and this year’s game. We need to do this every few games. . .again, it just so much detail it’s hard to take in and address any meaning. I’m wondering if perhaps we could do some of the games and not all for this project. This is just as overwhelming without some transitions or help to get me from section to section. And as I notice that I still have a 100 more pages of this to read, I start to wilt again. What do you think?

potentially, "freedom to live," depending on how one views Link being left adrift in the ocean, since it is the last adventure for this particular Link, leaving little room for intertextual elements to come into play.

Ocarina of Time

Ocarina of Time is one of the most iconic games of the entire *Zelda* series (noted earlier for holding a record in the Guinness Book of World Records [2010] video game with all-time highest review ratings) and is the first game to feature 3-D graphics. In this iteration, Link, a young boy from the forest, must travel through dungeons and across time in order to awaken the Seven Sages, whose powers combined can seal evil thief Ganondorf, King of the Gerudo tribe, away forever. Ganondorf seeks to obtain the Triforce, the sacred relic that grants the wishes of its holder, to take over the land of Hyrule.

After a few brief cutscenes establishing location and general exposition and peering inside Link's dreams to see the nightmare he is currently having, the call to adventure begins. The Great Deku Tree, the guardian spirit of the forest village where Link lives, sends the fairy, Navi, to summon Link, calling him "*the youth whose destiny it is to lead Hyrule to the path of justice and truth...*"

It is up to the player to decide whether step two is to occur, with the most transparent example of a "refusal" comes after travelling to the Deku Tree's grotto. The Deku Tree explains that he has been cursed and, being a tree, needs Link's help in breaking it. He specifically asks, "*Dost thou [the gamer] have courage enough to undertake this task?*" to which the player has the option of responding 'yes' or 'no.' The summons is made to the player directly and

answering the question in the affirmative is required to unlock the location of the first level/dungeon. Replying negatively will end the dialogue option, allowing Link to return to explore the areas revealed thus far, but inhibiting any progress in the coded narrative.

The third step deals with aids from supernatural powers. There are two characters that follow Link throughout his journey, providing advice along the way. The first is the fairy, Navi, emphasized in dialogue numerous times in phrases such as, "*Navi the fairy... Thou must aid Link... And Link, when Navi speaks, listen well to her words of wisdom...*" Navi's purpose in the game is to act as a guide and provide helpful hints to the player. The second "supernatural aid" is the first character one meets after "crossing the threshold" to adventure, which is the fourth step. The threshold begins when Link leaves the forest village he grew up in for the very first time. Link is stopped by a large talking owl, which is already aware of Link's destiny. He says at their first meeting, "*It appears that the time has finally come for you to start your adventure! You will encounter many hardships ahead... That is your fate.*" He provides direction while Link is young, but stays close as he gets older to monitor Link's progress, much like a mentor. And, because one aspect of the gameplay involves time travel, some instances where Link appears as a child are actually rather far along in the narrative.

Both the Deku Tree and the owl tell Link to seek out the Princess Zelda at Hyrule Castle. It is here that Link goes through the fifth step, "the belly of the whale," meaning the hero agrees to undergo some sort of metamorphosis. Zelda recants a dream that symbolized how Ganondorf wishes to conquer Hyrule and obtain a sacred relic called the Triforce. The player is given a text option to decide whether to believe the princess's prophetic dream and accept the quest or say "I don't believe you," which results in a text loop leading back to accepting the

quest (i.e. the player is required to accept in order to continue with the game). It is during this time that the game's big-picture narrative starts to become clear, and Link is presented with the ultimate end-goal for his quest: defeating Ganondorf. By accepting Zelda's request, Link agrees to face whatever challenges lie before him as he makes his way toward the goal.

The sixth step is the "road of trials." As his first task, Link must collect three spiritual stones from the leaders of the three other major clans/tribes in Hyrule (the other, aside from the castle proper, is the Gerudo tribe Ganondorf hails from), as per Zelda's instruction. Link already has one in his possession, given to him by the Deku Tree before he left. The other two require Link to complete a dungeon/level in order to obtain. The second section of "the road of trials" occurs after Link has traveled to the future. Link must awaken the remaining six sages in order to stop Ganondorf, who has accumulated a great deal of power over seven years, once and for all.

There is room for the player to infer a counterpart to the hero as the story progresses, tapping into an aspect of the "meeting with the goddess" step in "winning the boon of love" (p. 99). The first two instances are two of the sages awakened in "the road of trials." Early in his quest, in trying to obtain the sacred stone from the Zora tribe, Link inadvertently agrees to marry the princess of the tribe. The princess is the Sage of Water, playing an important role in Link's quest, thus ascribing her character with significance and making her more of a counterpart to Link than your average denizen of Hyrule. The other instance is Link's childhood friend from the forest village, Saria. Saria is the Sage of Forest, giving her the same significance as Princess Ruto, but, when coupled with the somewhat maternal attitude she takes toward Link early in the game (she is protective of Link as he is ostracized from the other Kokiri), may be a stronger fit as a "goddess" character.

The last of the potential "goddess" character is again fulfilled in Princess Zelda. Encounters with the Princess herself are relatively few and she is not present in the "future" portion of the game until the last level, and textual elements do not indicate a relationship with Link like the two sages. However, she may be the best fit for a goddess, as, in addition to being one of the seven sages, Zelda also possesses one of the pieces of the Triforce, making her more of a complement to the hero. None of these avenues are explicitly stated or supported over another by the rest of the game's programming, allowing the player more inference while embodying Link and his potential thought processes during gameplay.

This iteration of *Zelda* also has opportunity for the hero to deviate from the completion of the quest, giving into "temptation," the eighth step. There are multiple optional side-quests for a player to investigate and complete, as well as the presence of mini-games that may distract a player for a time. The completion of these quests and mini-games are often rewarded with one of the game's many collectables, such as pieces of heart or upgrades to Link's adventuring gear.

At the ninth step, the hero must face up to and be initiated by the force that wields the ultimate power over his life. This comes when Link takes the spiritual stones to the Temple of Time and unseals the door that leads to the realm of the Triforce. The force in his life is that of fate, which is repeatedly mentioned by several characters up to this point. This is made clear in the next step, called "apotheosis," which involves a transformation. When Link opens the door, the only thing in the room is a sword resting in a stone pedestal. Link pulls the sword, some ethereal blue light appears, and Link finds himself in an unfamiliar place and having aged seven years. He meets the first of seven sages, who explains the situation to him:

You were too young to be the Hero of Time... Therefore, your spirit was sealed here for seven years. And now that you are old enough, the time has come for you to awaken as the Hero of Time! Well, do you understand your destiny?

Once Link has completed all of the dungeons, the final sage, Princess Zelda, is kidnapped by Ganondorf, requiring Link to enter his dark castle for a final showdown. After traversing through the obstacles in Ganondorf's castle, Link and Ganondorf finally confront each other face to face and Link can achieve that which he has strived toward, in step 11, "the ultimate boon."

However, with Ganondorf's final breath, he casts a spell that will cause the castle towers to collapse, hoping to take Link and Zelda down with him. This "magic flight" portion of the gameplay is timed, requiring the player to navigate back through in three minutes. This escape is "magical" inasmuch as Princess Zelda is able to magically lift the barriers on all of the doors. Events turn as Ganondorf transforms into a great monster and emerges from the rubble. Link must once again battle, and upon winning, may begin his true journey home. This time around, the return comes in the form of the step "rescue from without." This step requires a guide to bring the hero back to ordinary life. Zelda, as the Sage of Time, is able to use her power to return Link back to before he unsealed the door. She says, "*Now, go home, Link. Regain your lost time! Home... where you are supposed to be... the way you are supposed to be...*"

Having crossed the return threshold, the fifteenth step, Link is a 10-year-old once again and the direct sequel, *Majora's Mask*, indicates that Link retains the memories and wisdom he accrued over the course of his quest. This makes Link a "master of two worlds," having had an adult's perspective and experiences, but retaining his adolescent appearance and having succeeded in one timeline to return to his original time. Having followed through with his

destiny, Link exists with the rest of his life and its possibilities ahead of him, giving him the freedom to live, being neither fearful toward the future nor plaintive about the past.

While it is not required for all of the monomythic steps to be met to have a mythic reading of an artifact (recall that Campbell said that "the omission [of a step] itself can speak volumes..." [p. 30]), *Ocarina of Time* contains narrative elements that satisfy the most monomythic steps thus far. The support for "refusal of the call" (step two), is more explicit than in earlier iterations, and the presence of a "magic flight" (step 13) is a new addition to the return steps. Like earlier iterations, however, intertextual elements from the game's direct sequel are necessary to make a clear case for the "master of two worlds" step. In making the jump to 3-D graphics, the game structure also benefits from the new technology, adding additional layers of dynamic presentation, such as the greater cinematic sequences, varying camera angles, and more unique character models.

Oracle of Seasons

Both games in the 'Oracle series' begin the same way: Link (the same Link as in *A Link to the Past*, much later in the timeline from *Ocarina of Time*) comes to a castle-like building that houses the three pieces of the Triforce inside, a magical portal appears around Link and he is sent to the far-off lands where each respective game takes place. *Oracle of Seasons* follows Link's adventure in Holodrum, as he collects the Eight Essences of Nature to stop the machinations of General Onox who has made the passage of seasons in Holodrum go haywire. General Onox is working for Twinrova, a pair of witches who wish to revive Ganon after his defeat in *A Link to the Past*.

These particular iterations are unique, as the conclusion of one game will generate a passcode that will allow a player to transfer data to the other; while much of the content remains the same, characters that are in both titles will recognize Link from earlier and some aspects are adjusted depending on a player's decisions. This turns the story of the games from parallel adventures to a more linear sequence of adventures. Additionally, completing the adventure of the 'linked game' (the file that was started with the passcode) will open up an added storyline concerning Ganon and Zelda, which would not otherwise appear. Either game can be selected as the "first," and the researcher will make every effort to distinguish between *Oracle of Seasons*, *Oracle of Ages*, and 'linked game' aspects as the analysis proceeds.

After Link is caught up in the Triforce's magic, he is dropped in Holodrum near a troupe of musicians and dancers. A cyclone emerges, catching a dancer named Din. The force inside the cyclone introduces himself as Onox, General of Darkness, and taunts Din, the Oracle of Seasons, for unsuccessfully trying to hide. Onox issues the expositional statement, "*As you know, if I imprison the Oracle of Seasons and bury the temple that houses the Season Spirits, the seasons of Holodrum will be cast into chaos [...] That is the world of darkness that I long for!*" and imprisons Din within a crystal and the Temple of Seasons is shown descending, as if its foundations had been removed. Suddenly winter, Princess Zelda's nursemaid, Impa, remarks that the triangle on the back of Link's hand means he was fated to meet Din and asks if he would be the hero the world needs, first indicating step one, the "call to adventure."

She then instructs Link to visit with the Maku Tree, a great tree spirit, who tells Link, "*Alas, how I've withered! [...] With the seasons in chaos, the land is robbed of the very essence of nature, draining all of my might! Can you save Din in my stead?*" and gives Link his true

charge: *"You'll need the Essences of Nature that lie sleeping in Holodrum. Gathering all eight is the only option."* The "call to adventure" is not issued as a formal question, so Link can "refuse" by ignoring Impa's request to visit the tree. Link is also introduced to the "supernatural aid" at this point, as the Maku Tree, being a nature spirit, can speak to Link telepathically and does so after each dungeon, pointing him in the direction he should go next.

The "crossing the first threshold" (step four) may be viewed as the transition between Holodrum (as it is very similar to Hyrule, despite its distance) and Subrosia, the below-ground realm the Temple of Seasons has plummeted into. Subrosia can only be accessed via a hidden magical portal and has very different terrain from any areas this iteration of Link has explored. Step five, the "belly of the whale" could be incorporated with one of the transitory moments above, but is also shown when Link opens up the first dungeon of the game (with a key that the Maku Tree gave him), creating the distinction between the overworld map of Holodrum and the 'underworld' map that contains the visual break to the game's dungeons. *Oracle of Season's* "road of trials" fits the task the Maku Tree gave to Link: traverse the eight dungeons and retrieve the Essences of Nature to restore enough of the Maku Tree's power so that Link can meet and defeat General Onox and save Din, restoring order to the seasons.

There are two events that are directly supported by the game's text that suggest step seven, "meeting with the goddess." The first is early on in the game, when Din asks Link to dance with her and remarks on the triangle mark on Link's hand (as a symbol of a fated hero). This portion of the text in a 'linked game' goes, *"...I am also a target, but I refuse to fall, no matter the enemy! And my heart lifts when Link is beside me! Let us dance!"* As the titular Oracle of Seasons, Din is a key character, which lends her some significance in representing a

"goddess" figure, all the more compounded as the name Din comes from one of the three creator Golden Goddesses of Hyrule. Similarly, at the very end of a 'linked game,' (the small additional branch of gameplay that concerns motives to assist in reviving Ganon), when Link defeats a partially resurrected Ganon, Princess Zelda will give Link a kiss on the cheek, again with note to a tendency to consider romantic elements with this step. Zelda may be a preferable "goddess" to players because the basis of each *Oracle* game's plot is related to the resurrection of Ganon through Zelda, which elevates her character between the two games.

The *Oracle* games feature a number of collectables, side-quests and mini-games. In particular, Link can collect a set of 64 magic rings between the two games. Magic rings are one of the few items that transfer between a 'linked game.' There are also pieces of heart and upgrades available, and while they may potentially be useful to Link, they could also serve as a "temptation" away from Link's main quest.

From its title and the mechanics of its gameplay, it is evident that the authority over Link's quest (that General Onox seeks to disrupt) is nature and the changing seasons. Link's initiation into that power comes to him after receiving the blessing of each of the four Season Spirits that reside in the Temple of Seasons. This blessing allows Link to affect the landscape around him to a particular season. Following his mastery of the four seasons, the Season Spirit tells Link, "*Please hurry to Din's aid. [...] This is all the help we can offer you. Oh, courageous youth... Din and all Holodrum are counting on you.*"

Apotheosis, (step 10) comes when Link finally collects all eight Essences of Nature and the Maku Tree reaches out to him telepathically, telling Link that the restored Essences "*have filled me with my former power! I have something to give you now, so come see me!*" In visiting

the Maku Tree's grotto, Link gets a seed that is representative of the combined power of the Essences. The Maku Tree also acknowledges Link's growth, stating that Link has "*become a true hero who understands the Essences of Nature. You are hope for all that live!*" The seed allows Link to the barrier to General Onox's tower that had previously thwarted anyone from crossing. Twinrova, elderly twin witches that served as Ganon's surrogate mothers appears and say that they put General Onox to the task of disrupting Holodrum, a necessary part of the ritual to revive Ganon.

Traversing through General Onox's castle, Link eventually confronts Onox himself. Defeating him, Link has achieved the "boon" of this particular quest, rescuing Din and restoring the flow of seasons in Holodrum. Free from the crystal, Din proclaims that "*the trials you faced to collect the Essences of Nature have made you a true hero!*" Link accompanies Din back to the village where the Maku Tree resides and as the credits begin to roll, a cutscene shows that Holodrum is peaceful once again. The return steps of this portion are not directly described or shown, instead, the player is left with the message of "*Continued in Oracle of Ages*" since the games were designed to connect with one another. In a 'linked game,' the credits conclude with Link boarding a boat, the same one that will get wrecked prompting *Link's Awakening*. As such, the only real evidence a player has of Link returning with the boon comes from the 'linked game' as characters in the second quest will make note of the first. Direct support from the game for "rescue from without," "magic flight," and "crossing the return threshold" are not very strong, but "master of two worlds" can be, depending on interpretation.

The final levels of a 'linked game,' however, wrap things up a bit more conclusively. In a 'linked game,' before Link can enjoy the benefits of having achieved the respective "ultimate

boon" of his most recent quest, he learns that Twinrova has successfully kidnapped Zelda to complete the rites that will bring Ganon back from his banishment. Before Link sets off to this final portion of his quest, the game informs the player that "*mystical power fills [Link's] body!*" as he has achieved "*knowledge of the Essences of Time and Nature.*" One might view this as an additional, or extended "apotheosis" step for the larger, connected narrative, leaving the player with "*may the divine protection of the Triforce be with the hero of the Essences of Time and Nature!*" before Link is dropped off magically to Twinrova's location.

Link then must face off with Twinrova, who hope to dispose of Link before he can interfere in the rites to resurrect Ganon. With Twinrova defeated, and Zelda saved, Twinrova decides to sacrifice herself in Zelda's stead to complete the revival of Ganon. Zelda later explains that "*Since they could not sacrifice me in their final rite, the powers of darkness could revive only a mindless, raging Ganon.*" After defeating the faultily revived Ganon, Link has truly achieved his "ultimate boon" and the lands affected may finally rest at ease. Zelda awakens and gives Link her thanks, "*Your power, wisdom and courage were able to prevent Twinrova's planned resurrection of Ganon. Now hope and peace can return to the hearts of the people. Thank you! You are a true hero! Let us return to the others!*"

Just as Zelda finishes thanking Link, the walls begin to crumble. One might suspect that this would lead to a gameplay segment fitting in with "magical flight" much like in *Ocarina of Time*, but, before Link and Zelda can make a break for it, a telepathic message comes from the Maku Tree, "*Link, you did it! I knew you could! Leave this to me!*" The Maku Tree then magically transports Link and Zelda to her (or his) grotto, where Impa, Din and Nayru are all waiting. After offering their congratulations, Zelda explains to Link the level of his achievement,

The three [triangle marks] on your left hand symbolize power, wisdom and courage-- these are the mark of the hero who is fated to appear when peace crumbles in Hyrule. With the Essences of Nature and Time and the courage you possess, you have fought back the powers of evil! The guidance of the Triforce has made you into this legendary hero! Thank you, Link.

The final cutscene gives the player a more in-depth view of the world at peace, showing vignettes such as children playing, Din returning to dancing, and Zelda watching a shooting star from a balcony. After the credits, Link is shown departing from the far-off country to lands unknown in a boat, an indicator of “crossing the return threshold” with knowledge of his adventure intact and providing the timeline prompt necessary to lead into *Link’s Awakening*, which intertextually indicates Link as “master of two worlds” and “freedom to live.”

The coded narrative elements of *Oracle of Seasons* provide support for most of the monomythic steps. “Crossing the first threshold” and “meeting with the goddess” are particularly interesting due to the potential of add-ons if considering the intertextual elements and storyline additions present with the connection to the other *Oracle* game. Similarly, any return steps are largely not present in an ‘un-linked’ game (aside from step 15, “crossing the return threshold”) and require the added storyline in order to have narrative elements to fits these steps. In considering intertextuality of the *Zelda* series as a whole, the adventure arc of this particular Link could cast even more shadows over the return steps, as *Oracle of Seasons*, *Oracle of Ages* and *Link’s Awakening* connect, but each end ambiguously enough that a player cannot guarantee that Link’s journey truly comes full circle. Including the ‘linked game’ portion in consideration,

Comment [ca3]: Is Link becoming more of a the hero rather than the kid who is passing through all these steps? With his elevation to Hero, I’m presuming, then does that change the 17 steps?

Comment [C4]: I’m not sure I understand fully. It is in going through the steps that Link becomes a hero; a few iterations have the same Link going on multiple adventures (going through the steps each time)

“master of two worlds” and “freedom to live” are afforded much stronger backing, especially if a player is aware how the *Oracle* series works intertextually with *Link’s Awakening* in particular.

Four Swords

Four Swords is probably the most anomalous of the series, as its first release was bundled with the Gameboy Advance re-release of *A Link to the Past* in 2002 as a multi-player only game, but the ability to play with only one player was added to *Four Swords: Anniversary Edition*. The *Anniversary Edition* was available for download for free from the Nintendo eShop for a brief time, from September 28, 2011 to February 20, 2012 (Davison, 2011), with another download window from January 10, to February 2, 2014 (Smith, 2014). Although the original required multiple players, the analysis will proceed with the *Anniversary Edition* in mind, as accounting for multiple persons in the co-creation of a game’s story is beyond the purview of this research.

It is a comparatively short game, with the main emphasis being on the new collaborative gameplay elements rather than a traditional *Zelda* story, but as it is included on the canonical timeline and available in a single-player format, so, too, will it be considered herein. The plot follows Link as he pulls the Four Sword, a blade that splits Link into four versions of himself, as he proves his courage to the three Great Fairies of Hyrule, who will grant him access to the sorcerer Vaati’s palace among the clouds to rescue the kidnapped Princess Zelda.

The game opens with a cutscene of Princess Zelda and Link visiting a shrine that houses a sword. Zelda tells Link, “*That is the sacred blade I spoke of, the Four Sword. Sealed away in its forged steel is Vaati, the wind mage. Lately I have been sensing weakness in the seal. It worries me.*” As she investigates the seal, a shadowy arm scoops her up from up above; the two

were too late and Vaati has already escaped the seal. He leaves the shrine, knocking Link unconscious in the process, "*Onward we go, to my palace of winds!*"

"*Open your eyes... Young hero...*" say three fairy spirits as they descend on the shrine where Link still lies. The fairies explain, "*Princess Zelda has been carried off to Vaati's Palace. Hurry! You must go to her... But you cannot go alone... You have need of the Four Sword...*" Link pulls the sword out of its containing stone and splits into four clones of himself (identified by wearing different colored tunics). Between the four Links, they should have enough power to face any enemy and the Great Fairies will aid in pointing the right direction, "*If the Great Fairies acknowledge your abilities, they will show you the way.*" The fairy spirits charging Link with the task of rescuing Zelda sets up step one of the monomyth, the "call to adventure." Any sort of "refusal" would be in a player's attitude or action in not seeking Zelda right away.

Fairies play the role of the "supernatural aid" in this game, as they collectively guide Link through his quest. The first fairy that Link can speak to in the regular gameplay tells him, "*You will find many traps and puzzles in the areas ahead. We will give you advice that will aid you in your quest. Do not fail to heed it,*" giving direct indication that the presence of fairies are to serve as guides.

For a player, it is effective to place the "crossing the first threshold" (step four) in selecting the first level, a tutorial level, called the Chamber of Insight, where the fairies take Link through different courses to practice various aspects of needing four Links to complete puzzles and battle enemies. Going through these training grounds demonstrates a willingness to learn the new mechanics, which might symbolically translate to Link's willingness to learn to negotiate himself when split into four. "Belly of the whale" relates to the hero's determination to continue

with the journey in the face of metamorphosis, and while Link has certainly transformed himself physically, the training helps him/the player with the mental aspect. The player has to deliberately step on a warp point in order to leave the Chamber of Insight (visiting the Chamber of Insight is required at the start of a new file, but completing all the courses is not). This works well as a "crossing of the first threshold," as Link leaves the first area and leaves the safety net of the fairies' guidance behind to face the adventure proper.

Link's "road of trials" (step six) in this game operates in a unique manner. There are three areas in the game, a forest, an active volcano, and an icy cave, representing the setting that will affect some of the game mechanics. Each area has three parts that must be completed: two 'floors' of semi-random compiled puzzles (the Links must battle and solve puzzles to reach a warp point) and a third 'floor' that contains a consistent boss battle. Once the boss is defeated, the Links visit the Great Fairy that guards the particular biome and if the Great Fairy commends the group's effort (by reaching a certain Rupee-benchmark), she will award the Links a key. Collection of keys from each of the three areas will unlock the route to Vaati's Palace, which follows the same structure, culminating in a battle with Vaati. However, the game is meant to be played through three times, with Vaati's Palace the third time around containing twelve floors instead of three.

Steps seven through nine, "meeting with the goddess," "temptation," and "atonement with the father," are difficult to place, as the game's simplicity does not provide much text or other coded story elements for reference. The only "goddess" figures are the three Great Fairies of Forest, Ice, and Flame; however, there is no real indication of their character serving as counterpart to Link, discounting the assistance they provide in granting Link the keys to travel to

Vaati's Palace. Their dialogue does place an emphasis on fostering growth for the Links (tapping into considerations of a nurturing motherly figure [see p. 92]); depending on how many times a player has completed the game, the fairies will dub the four Links either "*little eggs, waiting to hatch into heroes,*" to "*bravest of heroes.*" This change in dialogue will only be noted in completing the game multiple times, however. The fairies' relative position of power may make them a good fit for this step, whereas their role as "supernatural aid" might detract.

There are no side-quests or collectable treasures in *Four Swords* as there are in other titles, but the Rupee collection system to earn the key from the Great Fairy can "tempt" players to work against one another instead of cooperatively. Between levels, each player's standing will be evaluated with different bonuses being awarded. However, this function is largely defunct in a single-player game, as all Links are the one player.

"Atonement with the father" is best combined with the "apotheosis" step and wrapped up in the Vaati's Palace level. Since the prevailing force over Link for this short game is Vaati's breaking out from his seal, Vaati's evil presence and the resulting split with the Four Sword is the best fit for the aspect that holds the most power over Link. This is affirmed by Zelda's dialogue after she is rescued, "*The Four Sword is the only blade that can contain the wind mage. Since you have fulfilled that destiny, the sword's power over you will fade.*" Thus, traversing Vaati's keep could serve as an adequate initiation to this force, especially since it is the first time the player addresses Vaati directly (rather than obtaining access to his Palace as in earlier levels). And, although Link has already had a significant physical transformation in this game, another type of transformation could be considered when the Links have collected the three Great Keys that unlock the path to Vaati's castle in the sky. Being able to open the door indicates a level of

transformation, as the Great Fairies will not award keys unless they find the Links' performance worthy for them to "*acknowledge your courage.*"

The "ultimate boon" and the eleventh step is achieved when the Links defeat Vaati's multiple forms and he is once again sealed in the Four Sword. Zelda is rescued safely and tells Link, "*Oh! You saved me, didn't you? Thank you! [...] Now, let us return! And let us return the Four Sword to its shrine once again.*" As the credits roll, the multiple Links are on a floating platform moving through the sky; it is unclear whether this is merely for the player to collect/compete for additional treasure before the end of the level (as fairies will fly by dropping Rupees and treasure chests will occasionally appear) or if it is intended to be viewed as some sort of "crossing the return threshold," since Link had been restored to a single body in speaking with Zelda just before, but appears as multiples here. Either way, the last scene of the game shows Link and Zelda again at the Four Sword shrine, the sword returned to its stone. Link and Zelda exchange a glance and walk away and the fairy spirits are left hovering just above. Free to go about his life, Link can exit the shrine presumably with the "freedom to live," a notion that is supported by the official timeline, as Vaati will not reappear for a very long time.

Being such a short game, *Four Swords* does not have as many narrative elements as others in the series. In particular, step eight ("temptation") is largely not present, especially without the cooperative or competitive elements that come from the multiplayer experience. "Meeting with the goddess" is more tenuous than in other games, and "atonement with the father" and "apotheosis" overlap a great deal. The only return step directly indicated is step 15, "crossing the return threshold," leaving "refusal of return," "magic flight," "rescue from

without," and even "master of two worlds" without direct support. The last step, "freedom to live" becomes clearer when viewing *Four Swords* in the context of the larger *Zelda* timeline.

The Wind Waker

The Wind Waker is an indirect sequel to *Ocarina of Time* and follows Link's journey through a flooded Hyrule to prevent the villain of legend, Ganondorf, from obtaining the Triforce and restoring his power. To do this, Link must sail across the Great Sea, prove himself worthy of wielding the Master Sword, and collect the pieces of the fragmented Triforce of Courage to complete the relic before Ganon has the chance to wish his dark designs for Hyrule into reality.

Following a prologue section, *The Wind Waker* opening events have Link's little sister, Aryll, carried off by a monstrous bird, much to Link's distress. The mailman that travels between the islands relates that many young girls have been getting kidnapped, even going so far as to say that the bird mistook Aryll for the pirate captain Tetra (who had recently escaped the bird) making Tetra the party responsible. Tetra relents and allows Link to travel with her pirate crew to recover Aryll. This is when the "call to adventure" really comes forth, as Tetra notes, "*once we leave, you won't be coming back here for a while, so you'd better go say good-bye to you family while you have the chance,*" later asking, *If you're ready, then let's go! Are you ready?*" to which the player can reply "Yes" or "No." Responding with the negative will delay the departure of the pirate ship, allowing Link to continue exploring the island. Putting off the departure of the ship also defers the start of Link's journey, so any dawdling or negative response to Tetra's question fits step two, "refusal of the call."

The “supernatural aid” of Link’s quest is the spirit that inhabits his primary means of transport, the boat named The King of Red Lions, although he will not be introduced until after Link makes an initial attempt to save his sister and is knocked into the ocean. The boat recovers Link and its figurehead, a face reminiscent of a Chinese dragon, speaks to him. This fact also elucidates the boat’s “supernatural” properties, as the boat explains, “*As wide as the world is, I am the only boat upon it who can speak the words of men.*” Much like the helpers in other *Zelda* games, the King of Red Lions provides helpful advice to Link throughout his adventure. The boat confirms in telling Link, “*I shall guide you as we go forward... advising you on what you should do, and where you must go.*” Much later in the game, the player learns that the spirit in the boat is that of an old King of Hyrule and plays an additional important role.

The cutscene that follows Link’s acceptance of his quest and Tetra’s request to leave effectively illustrates step four, the “crossing the first threshold.” Link leaves his aptly named Outset Island for the first time. The King of Red Lions explains that a man named Ganon commands the giant bird that has been kidnapping girls. He also confirms that Ganon is the very same Ganon from the legends of old. The King of Red Lions asks, “*Tell me, Link... Do you still wish to save your sister from him? And will do anything to save her?*” Link nods to both questions. The boat explains that “*The key to defeating Ganon is locked away in a great power that you can wield only after much toil and hardship. Do you understand?*” making it apparent that Link’s journey to recover his sister will be an arduous one. Link’s acceptance of this task in this exchange, even in knowing labors are imminent, illustrate Link’s commitment to the task in the face of metamorphosis, fulfilling the criteria for “belly of the whale.”

The King of Red Lions then guides Link through step six, his "road of trials," where he must collect the three Goddess Pearls that function as keys to bringing the Tower of the Gods forth from the sea. The Tower of the Gods holds the Master Sword, which must be recharged with the power of the sages. Link awakens the two remaining sages on the Great Sea. In the last segment of his trials, Link must find the fragments of the Triforce of Courage which have been scattered as buried treasure across the map.

The character that best fulfills the role in "meeting with the goddess" is that of Princess Zelda. After completing the Tower of the Gods, retrieving the Master Sword and heading back to the Forsaken Fortress (where the bird had taken the kidnapped girls), Ganondorf is surprised to learn that Tetra has a piece of the Triforce and reveals that Tetra is actually Princess Zelda. Tetra/Zelda is very much Link's counterpart as the plotline progresses and her connection to the Royal Family and the Triforce instill an air of the 'all-powerful.' Interactions with Tetra do indicate she and Link share a caring relationship. Additionally, Zelda plays a key role in the final battle against Ganon and the King of Hyrule makes it clear that Link and Zelda will continue to be connected.

"Temptations" are replete throughout *The Wind Waker*, fulfilling step eight. Not only are there the usual heart-piece collection and item upgrade side-quests, but many unique collectables can be obtained as well. A player can spend a great deal of time sailing between islands to fill out the contents of his/her map as new landforms are discovered and, a number of optional 'treasure charts' which not only have to be collected, but then followed in order to discover the treasure they depict, are present. In one of the author's favorite side-quests, Link can also sail about the Great Sea collecting pictographs of the characters and enemies he meets, which can be donated

to a sculptor who will craft a figurine to add to his gallery. There are 134 figurines to collect in total, with a description to accompany each piece, giving information about the subject and adding a level of detail in filling out the lore of *The Wind Waker*'s world.

A return trip to the Forsaken Fortress triggers events that tie to the "atonement with the father." Link meets with Ganondorf face-to-face and the details surrounding events becomes clearer. Ganondorf had been kidnapping young maidens across the Great Sea because he knew he would eventually come across Princess Zelda's manifestation and the Triforce of Wisdom. Ganondorf was responsible for Aryll's abduction, making him the presiding power over the first motivation of the journey, and, in uncovering the connection between him, Link and Zelda with regard to the Triforce, is also the force that influences the last half of Link's quest.

The "apotheosis" is a gradual transformation of Link as he restores the Triforce of Courage. When complete, Link takes the completed piece of the Triforce to the Tower of the Gods to show forth his achievement. The Triforce of Courage then comes to dwell within Link, symbolized by the triangle mark that appears on the back of his hand. The King of Red Lions exclaims, "*Oh! What is this? There, on your hand—the Triforce piece now dwells within you! That is the Triforce of Courage—proof that you are indeed the true hero.*"

With the aptitude befitting a hero realized, Link can set off to achieve his "ultimate boon" (step 11), eliminating Ganon to make a safer world for his sister, Tetra, and all the denizens of the Great Sea. Link meets Ganondorf at his tower beneath the sea where he has Zelda. With all pieces of the Triforce present, Ganondorf unites them with a mind to wish Hyrule under his control. Yet, the King of Hyrule appears, and, in touching the relic first, has his wish granted instead. The King of Hyrule's wish resembles a plea for Link and Zelda to no longer be burdened

by the destiny of the Hyrule of old, but to be able to pursue a hopeful future in a new land. The surrounding magical bubble begins to break, and the waters of the ocean come crashing in. Ganon has no inclination of letting the two escape, however. In the final battle, Link faces Ganondorf in a swordfight, with Zelda coming to his aid. Link achieves his "ultimate boon" and the finale cutscene wraps up the storyline.

With ocean water still rushing in, the King of Hyrule bids farewell to Link and Zelda, encasing them each in a bubble, in a "rescue from without." Link and Zelda are sent back toward the surface, with Link reaching back toward the King, who slowly fades into the ocean below.

Both Link and Zelda "cross the return threshold" as they emerge on the surface of the Great Sea, with Zelda returned to her appearance as Tetra. Tetra's pirate ship pull up next to them, with Aryll and the two sages aboard to recover Link and Tetra. The remaining portion of the cutscene occurs after the credits and illustrates the world returning to a more peaceful state.

The last scene of the concluding cutscene shows Link aboard the King of Red Lions, although clearly just a regular boat and no long spiritually animated, at port at Outset Island (an unclear time after completing his quest). This illustrates the "master of two worlds" step (number 16), however, as Link clearly retains the boat, King's spirit notwithstanding, indicating that he has clearly gone on the journey and returned. Since he is docked at Outset Island, the adventure has come full circle as well, and Aryll is seen safely at home with her and Link's grandmother, further indicating a return to a normal way of life. Link's deeds in this game are confirmed at the beginning of *The Wind Waker's* sequel, *Phantom Hourglass*.

That leaves only one step in the monomyth: the "freedom to live." This final scene ends with Link and Tetra and crew pulling from the dock together. Tetra gives the orders to her crew,

"Anchors aweigh! Hold the tiller steady!!! As for our destination... The wind will guide us!"

Leaving Aryll and his grandmother bidding him farewell, Link and Tetra set off to the open sea, with the freedom to travel wherever the wind takes them.

In *The Wind Waker*, all of the monomythic steps are individually supported, save for "refusal of return" and "magic flight." Even the return steps of Link's journey have direct connection to narrative elements in the game, so the intertextual elements (those of *Phantom Hourglass* in particular) just bolster the specifics surrounding the steps first indicated in *The Wind Waker* itself, instead of functioning as confirmation for a connection to a particular step. This game is also one of the first instances of Princess Zelda taking on a cooperatively active role with Link in achieving his aims, and, while not required for the "meeting with the goddess" step, does bring with it a greater level of consequence in consideration that continue as the series (and analysis) progresses.

The Minish Cap

The game begins as a festival is being celebrated in Hyrule, commemorating a hero defeating the great evil of the land with the use of a force inherent in all things (like the life force in *Phantom Hourglass* and *Spirit Tracks* below and different from the Triforce) and a single sword gifted from the Picori, among the smallest of all beings. With these gifts, the hero was triumphant and a festival has been held to honor the hero's deeds and the coming of the Picori ever since, until the story faded into a legend among the people. The gameplay of *The Minish Cap* centers upon this theme, with Link being granted the ability to shrink down to miniscule sizes to find the truth in the old story and stop the sorcerer Vaati, who wants the force for

himself. The general storyline chronicles Link's journey to collect the Four Elements that will turn the ceremonial sword mentioned above into the Four Sword, revealing the backstory for Vaati and his presence later in the *Zelda* timeline along the way.

Princess Zelda comes to visit her childhood friend Link's house because she would like to attend the festival with him. At the festival, Vaati uses magic to release a horde of evil spirits, chasing everyone at the event away, but a light shields Zelda so the spirits do not approach. Vaati is aware of the mystical force that inhabits the ladies of the Royal Family of Hyrule and turns Zelda to stone to insure no interference with his plans. When the dust settles after the attack, the King implores Link to seek out the Picori for a way to undo the magic that turned his daughter to stone. The legend of the Picori says the tiny beings can only be seen by children, making Link the best fit for the job. This introductory section sets up the "call to adventure," (and the first monomythic step) where Link must set out beyond the confines of the village to restore Princess Zelda, with the King of Hyrule making the actual charge. Although areas are blocked off to Link (under the pretense of 'security' following Vaati's attack), there is a platform for a "refusal of the call" if a player does not immediately accept the quest. Link "crosses the first threshold" (step four) as he heads into Minish Woods, a separation from the society the player has experienced thus far and challenging the story Link had been brought up believing to be a folktale.

The "supernatural aid" for this particular *Zelda* journey is Ezlo, an enchanted cap (who turns out to be a Picori that had been cursed by Vaati to exist in hat form). Ezlo functions much as other helper characters in the series do; he follows Link around (by staying on Link's head) and provide helpful advice and hints to the player throughout Link's journey. His supernatural nature is confirmed when his backstory is revealed: "*I was once a famous sage and a renowned*

Minish craftsman. Vaati was only a boy when I took him on as my apprentice. But... he became enchanted by the wickedness in the hearts of men." Ezlo's magic can also shrink Link down to the size of a Picori, also known as the Minish, a key mechanic in the completion of his quest.

The "belly of the whale" step, marking Link's acceptance of undergoing some sort of transformation over his journey, occurs when he hears the requirements for forging a new Picori Sword to save Zelda. The Minish elder tells Link, *"If you want the blade reforged, you will need the four elements. These are the crystalline forms of the energies that fill our world."* Visiting the Minish village signifies Link's removal from his known world (in travelling to the tiny world of the Picori) and the information he gains here segues directly to the first "underground" portion of the game (the first dungeon is accessed hereafter and only while in Minish form). In entering to the first level, the plotline also shifts to the main dungeon portion of the game and step six, the "road of trials." Link must travel to the dungeons that contain the Four Elements that are required for repairing the broken Picori Blade to save Zelda, representing Link's "trials" as hero.

The next step, "meeting with the goddess," does not clearly occur in this installment of the series. Link's interactions with Zelda at the festival at the start of the game indicate that they do have a caring relationship for one another, with Zelda winning a prize for Link (a shield) at one of the festival games, rather than choosing a prize for herself. The shield is an item that becomes useful to Link as he takes on the quest (Zelda being petrified at that point), but giving the shield is a nurturing or a loving act, providing some indication of a complement for Link.

In true *Zelda* fashion, *The Minish Cap* also has a number of side-quests and collectables that can "tempt" a player to forestall the progression of Link's journey. Noteworthy to this title are figurines and Kinstones. Figurines are earned through a kind of raffle system, so it can take a

long time to collect all 136. Kinstones are medallion-like items that have been split in half; Link can speak with other characters in trying to match up the halves he has collected, as a completed Kinstone will unlock various types of treasure. While some items do indirectly help Link on his quest, others, are purely optional and more for the gratification of the player.

Link meets a Minish blacksmith that can repair the broken Picori Sword., but Link will have to visit the Elemental Shrine to infuse the blade with the powers of the elements. Between each dungeon, Link visits the shrine to charge the sword with the respective Element (seen manifest in the changing color of the sword), and further initiate himself into the power that presides over his life. This fits step nine, "atonement of the father," and connects very closely to the "apotheosis" step as well. Each time Link adds an element to the sword, he is also given the ability to create one doppelganger of himself, with a total of four Links by the end of his trials.

This leads to the transformation of this game where, "*with the power of the four elements, your blade has become the Four Sword!*" A door opens in the Elemental Shrine which reveals that Zelda now holds the force from the legend that Vaati continues to seek. Upon exiting the Elemental Shrine to the interior of Hyrule Castle, Link finds that the castle has also been transformed by Vaati's growing power and all the employees have been turned to stone like Princess Zelda. However, with the Four Sword, Link can summon the magical energy necessary to free the people from their statuesque forms. Travelling through the castle results in Link getting the chance to face off with Vaati, consequently allowing for the rescue of Princess Zelda. Once the princess is no longer petrified, Link has achieved his "ultimate boon," however, Vaati's transformed castle begins to crumble, prompting a "magic flight" if Link and Zelda are to escape

with their lives (and thus the boon as well). After escaping to the Elemental Shrine, Link defeats Vaati once and for all

In the final cutscene, Princess Zelda begins with an initial congratulation to Link that quickly turns sorrowful, "*Link, thank goodness you're safe... You defeated Vaati... You did well... But we've lost so much... The castle... All those people...*" Yet, things are not as bleak as they might seem, as Ezlo's curse is broken with Vaati's demise Princess Zelda is able Ezlo's magic and restore her Kingdom. This action is a "rescue from without" as the magic is the only way for Link to return to the Hyrule he knew before and also serves as step 14, a "crossing the return threshold."

The game closes with a brief segment after the credits, showing an updated stained glass to ones featured earlier in the game, depicting Link's deeds in saving the land. Omniscient text indicates that Link continues to go on with life, as a "master of two worlds," "*Thus did Link's quest come to an end. But surely, this is not the end of Zelda and Link's adventures in Hyrule,*" and hints that the characters are left with the "freedom to live" free from a looming threat, "*The legend will continue... as long as the power of the light force echoes throughout the ages.*"

It is likely not a surprise that *The Minish Cap*, too, contains narrative elements to support most of the monomythic steps. In this particular iteration, connection to "meeting with the goddess" is strained, but the inclusion of a "magic flight" has carried over from *Ocarina of Time*. In tracking changes over the past few console generations, the games have progressed to the point that narrative elements do well in demonstrating the monomythic cycle on their own, and do not require intertextual connections in the completion of steps.

Twilight Princess

Shifting gears, the general story arc of *Twilight Princess* (several generations after *Ocarina of Time*, but parallel to *The Wind Waker*) takes Link across Hyrule in efforts to protect it from being consumed by a parallel dimension known as the Twilight Realm. Aided by a creature of the Twilight Realm, Midna, Link restores the power to the guardian deities of the provinces of Hyrule and helps Midna collect magical artifacts that will help keep the dimensions separate.

Link is a ranch hand in the village of Ordon, a province south of Hyrule proper. The game begins with a short introductory segment of Link going about his daily life in Ordon. But, having never been outside of the province before, Link is charged with the task of delivering a gift to the castle on behalf of the people of Ordon. Link was already planning to venture off into the unknown with his visit to Hyrule, and that alone may be enough motivation to fulfill step one, the “call to adventure,” even though the true nature of his journey has yet to be encountered. Delaying this portion, particularly after the mayor notes, “*It’d be... bad... if the representative of Ordon were to be late for such an occasion, you get me, lad?*” would represent a “refusal of the call.” On the day he is supposed to leave for Hyrule, a band of monsters enter the village and kidnap the children along with Link’s childhood friend. Link sets off to investigate, heading back the main portion of the village, only to find a large black shroud with strange symbols creating a curtain along the path. Link hurriedly breaks his gait, but as he stops to wonder at the mysterious cover, a shadow hand emerges and pulls Link through. Link is now in the Twilight Realm, an area that features heavily in the plotline and connects to the titular Twilight Princess.

Fully in the Twilight Realm, the shadowy hand is shown to be connected to a very strange beast that continues to drag Link along, throwing him into a jail cell. In the prison, a

different creature, but still dissimilar to Link, makes herself known to him. She is Midna, a small impish creature with a somewhat impudent attitude, and becomes Link's "supernatural aid." Midna helps Link escape from the jail and, as their goals align somewhat, travels with Link so they might both achieve their aims. Midna has a variety of abilities that help Link, such as her capacity to wield a form of shadowy magic (used to break Link's chains in the jail cell and transport large objects by dissolving them into shadow, including Link himself) and her preference/need to literally hide in Link's shadow whenever in the normal, lighter world.

Pulling Link into the Twilight Realm is a fitting event for step four, "crossing of the first threshold," as he has certainly left the confines of the world he understands, even further than his removal in travelling to the castle would have been. Link's triangle birthmark on the back of his hand becomes more pronounced in the Twilight and, after some struggle and physical pain, Link's body is transformed into a wolf. It is later explained that normal people cannot physically exist in the Twilight and only their spirits will remain, but Link's connection to the Triforce allows his spirit to physically manifest itself, this time taking the form of a wolf.

To further emphasize the distance of the Twilight from Link's known world, "the belly of the whale" can be seen in Link's exit from the Twilight back to Ordon. Just before he leaves, Link discovers that much Hyrule has been taken over by the shadowy force. In expelling the dark creatures from a healing spring, a glowing spirit emerges, speaking:

To save this land from the king of twilight, the lost light must be recovered. The three light spirits who have lost their light must be revived. There is but one but one who can revive them and redeem this land... You. You still have not discovered your true power...

The being further explains that Link will also need to revive the light spirits if he is to have any hope of returning to his human form and Midna had previously reminded Link of Ilia and the children whose whereabouts are unknown. If Link is to recover his friends and dispel the darkness, he understands now that it will require the completion of a series of tasks.

The "road of trials" consists of Link reviving the four light spirits of each of Hyrule's provinces to eliminate the Twilight of each area and return it to the world of light/normalcy. Midna has designs of her own, and, Link returns Midna's favor by assisting in the recovery of the Fused Shadows—strange stone artifacts infused with magical power. Midna seeks these items to take on Zant, the touted "*king of twilight*," so searching for them is useful to Link as well. For the second section of the game's trials, Link and Midna look for the Mirror of Twilight which will allow them to travel back and forth between the two realms.

With regard to step seven, "meeting with the goddess," the coded narrative elements are unique here. The "goddess" is supposed to be a loving figure that is also representative of some level of power. First, as has become fairly common, Princess Zelda can be viewed as embodying these criteria. She plays a key role at the end of the game, particularly during the final boss, as she wields the bow and Light Arrows, which have the power to overcome darkness. In a cutscene, Zelda prays to be granted the power necessary to save the kingdom, which illustrates her magical power as well as her power as ruler. With the arrows in her possession, Zelda formally asks for Link's help, "*Link... Chosen hero! Lend us the last of your power!*" and bows ceremoniously. Instead of responding in the same formal way, Link offers his hand to Zelda, an act that could also be viewed as a gesture of affection. Much earlier in the game, during Link's first meeting with Princess Zelda, Midna also hints at Zelda's importance in connecting her to

the title of the game (albeit with levity), "*So, don't you think you should explain to him what you've managed to do? You owe him that much... Twilight Princess!*"

The second character that could fit the "goddess" role is Midna, the true, or at least more literal, Twilight Princess. Through much of the game, it is known that Midna understands more of the situation than she lets on. Zelda asks of Midna, "*The shadow beasts have been searching far and wide for you. Why is this?*" to which Midna flippantly replies, "*Why indeed? You tell me! Eee hee hee!*" Originally the Twilight's princess, Midna was usurped and cursed by Zant (earlier noted as "*the king that rules the twilight...*") to the impish form the player meets her in. At the very end of the game, she is restored to her proper (and more womanly) form and when Link sees her, she responds to his expression with, "*What? Say something! Am I so beautiful that you've no words left?*" which causes Link to smile. This reinforces the change that occurs between the two characters; initially, Midna is clear about only working with Link out of necessity, but will later soften so that a friendship is established, wanting Link reach his goal.

Twilight Princess is rife with side-quests and collectables that may lure a player away from working toward achieving Link's goal. There are multiple, optional item upgrades, pieces of heart and side-quest collectables like the 60 Poe Souls or the 24 golden bugs on the item side of things and several mini-games and general side-quests on the more action-oriented side. Many times these are useful to Link, however, the time it takes to complete them and the "temptation" of the reward could exemplify a player abandoning their quest goal, even temporarily.

The turning point of the game's plotline, which also suits the "atonement of the father" and "apotheosis" steps (nine and ten) occurs halfway through the dungeons of the game, when Link collects the Fused Shadows in order for Midna to go after Zant. However, Zant waylays

them just after the last Fused Shadow is collected, and curses both Midna and Link. For Link, Zant forces Link to stay in his wolf form, even outside the Twilight Realm. Zant exposes Midna's physical form to a Light Spirit, which gravely injures her. Zant's magic of darkness is the presiding threat over the game, a magic that Zant claims was bestowed upon him by "*a god*."

Link visits Princess Zelda to find out how to undo this magic. She tells him that Link must seek the evil dispelling power of the Master Sword. Link then collects the Master Sword and has the power to change between forms at will, indicating mastery over his transformation (and signifying the "apotheosis"). The player learns that the god Zant speaks of is actually Ganon, who uses Zant as a means to get resurrected.

After the second leg of the "road of trials" and the Mirror of Twilight is restored, Link is finally able to confront Zant, save Zelda, and defeat Ganon in order to achieve "the ultimate boon" of his quest. There are many forms to the final boss battle and a few seeming "rescues from without" (step fourteen) as a sort of misdirection that the fight is over. After Ganon's beast form is defeated, Midna uses her magic to transport Link and Zelda a safe distance away, however, Ganon shows up on horseback moments later; secondly, Zelda prays to the Spirits of Light as Ganondorf charges toward them and they vanish just in time to where the Light Arrows are bestowed upon Zelda. But, this latter instance is understood to be only temporary.

With Ganondorf defeated, the curse on Midna is broken and she can return to her true form. Link can begin going through the return steps to a normal way of life. The cutscene that runs under the credits shows all of the areas Link has visited restored to a more peaceful state, including the children returning to the village of Ordon. Midna bids Link and Zelda farewell and travels back through the Mirror of Twilight, shattering it behind her. Before leaving, Midna

reminds Link and Zelda to, "*Never forget that there's another world bound to this one.*" Zelda confirms this "master of two worlds" (step 16) mentality, "*Shadow and light are two sides of the same coin... One cannot exist without the other.*" One can affirm Link "crosses the return threshold" (step 15) in laying the Master Sword to rest in its pedestal, returning to Ordon village and later leaving Ordon again via horseback, suggesting that he has put the quest behind him but has the "freedom to live" life as he chooses, with expanded knowledge from his experience.

Twilight Princess also fits the mythic structure well, with all steps being accounted for except for steps 12 and 13, "refusal of return" and "magic flight." Considerations for "meeting with the goddess" in *Zelda* and Midna are both quite strong, and Princess Zelda returns to helping Link during the final boss battle (a mechanic not present in *The Minish Cap*), which helps to balance Midna as a complement to Link as she travels with him. There is also no need for consideration of intertextual narrative elements in the completion of the monomythic steps, carrying a level of "completeness" over from the previous few games.

Phantom Hourglass

A direct sequel to *The Wind Waker*, *Phantom Hourglass* features the same Link and chronicles his adventures in travelling with captain Tetra and her pirate crew. Far out to sea, Link and the pirates come across the ghost ship that had been rumored to haunt the area, swallowing up boats. Tetra, believing the ship to be a ruse for another gang of pirates, boards the ship, but falls/phases through it. Link jumps after her, yet is unable to reach and slips into the ocean. The plotline follows Link's quest to find the Ghost Ship and rescue Tetra; to do so, Link must find the Spirits of Wisdom, Courage, and Power and rid the Temple of the Ocean King of the evil monster, Bellum, which created the Ghost Ship and dwells at the temple's center.

Link is recovered by a fairy spirit, named Ciela. Link speaks with Ciela, the wise man, Oshus, and Captain Linebeck to learn about the Ghost Ship. This initial dialogue connects to the “call to adventure,” since it illustrates Link’s desire to rescue Tetra. After Link rescues Linebeck from the Temple of the Ocean King (a central dungeon, discussed below), Linebeck agrees to take Link on his boat to seek the Ghost Ship. Ready to shove off, Linebeck asks, “*Ready to set sail, Link?*” to which the player can reply, “*Ready.*” or “*Not yet.*” If the latter is chosen, Link will put off disembarking, delaying their trip and “refusing the call,” for step two. This instance is particularly telling because Linebeck scoffs and says, “*Be quick about it, then! Adventure calls!*” In choosing the first option, Link and crew can then set sail for the main adventure.

Ciela is Link’s “supernatural aid” throughout this journey. She functions as the cursor during the gameplay portions of the game, as the control scheme requires the use of the touchscreen to move about, but she also offers helpful information like other fairy companions in the series. Ciela’s supernatural qualities show through when she is discovered to be the Spirit of Courage (one of three Spirits Link must free over the course of the game).

Embarking on Linebeck’s boat is also a good fit for the “crossing of the first threshold,” as it is the first instance of Link being able to travel beyond where he initially washed ashore. However, as Link is already an experienced traveler and sailor given his adventure in *The Wind Waker*, his willingness to cross into the unknown comes in rescuing Linebeck from the Temple of the Ocean King. Walking about the corridors of the Temple will slowly drain Link/the player’s life meter, making the mechanics of the Temple of the Ocean King unlike anything this Link has encountered before (and, up until the release of *Spirit Tracks*, the only dungeon of its kind in *Zelda* history) and is definitely a departure from the known world.

Step five, the “belly of the whale,” is summed up in the choice is given to Link during his visit with the fortune-teller, Astrid. Her reading tells Link, “*If you really want to find the Ghost Ship, Link... You must be ready to clash with the very darkness itself! Knowing that, do you still want to rescue Tetra?*” and she directs him to the game’s first proper dungeon level. As with other iterations of the series, entering into the first dungeon signifies Link’s desire or willingness to move toward the goal, even in the face of metamorphosis.

Link’s “road of trials” to recovering Tetra involve him freeing three imprisoned sprites (representing the qualities of power, wisdom and courage) in order to find the Ghost Ship and the collection of three Pure Metals that can forge a sword with the capacity to defeat the shadowy being that controls it. These rewards are granted to Link as he conquers the game’s six dungeons, as well as travelling deeper and deeper into the Temple of the Ocean King between each dungeon for clues and maps that lead to the next trial.

Given the nature of the game’s plotline, the clearest indication of a “goddess” figure (for step seven) is Tetra since Link’s goal is not saving the world as much as it is saving his friend. If considering *The Wind Waker* as a precursor that would inform a reading of this game’s elements, this becomes all the more clear. The only instance that gives direct support in *Phantom Hourglass* occurs at the end of the game when Tetra is finally back in Link’s company. The two share a look of happiness at being reunited and almost hold hands in the cutscene as well, supporting a nurturing or loving relationship, but Bellum interrupts the scene.

There are side-quests and treasures that Link can collect before proceeding in his journey and potentially “tempting” him from his quest. In addition the usual item upgrades and heart pieces, this game features a treasure collection system. This loot can be used to complete other

side-quests, traded for items, or sold for rupees, which can be used to buy other items such as new boat parts for Linebeck's ship. While these items can prove useful to Link in the completion of his quest, they are largely optional and being can be a distraction from the main goal.

"Atonement with the father" occurs after Link has freed the Spirits of Power, Wisdom and Courage, he able to board the Ghost Ship (the game's middle dungeon) to find Tetra. After completing the level, Link finds Tetra, only to see that she has been petrified and her life force is gone. Oshus intervenes, introduces himself as the Ocean King and tells Link how Bellum invaded his Temple and feeds off his life force. If Link can defeat Bellum before the Ocean King's life force is depleted, his power will return and he can save Tetra. Before this dungeon, Link's goal was merely to find Tetra, but Link comes to know the true evil presence of the game's story, a figure with "life and death power" as per the "atonement with the father."

Link's transformation for step ten occurs after collecting the three pure metals that will forge a sword capable of defeating Bellum. Initially after forging, the sword has no handle, but Oshus fuses the Phantom Hourglass (which protected Link's in the Temple of the Ocean King) onto the sword, creating the Phantom Sword and granting Link the time he needs to reach and defeat Bellum before the Temple depletes his life force. The moment signifies Link's trials coming to fruition and is representative of the growth through reaching toward his final goal.

The "ultimate boon" is achieved with Bellum defeated and life restored to Tetra's petrified body. During the face off against Bellum in the depths of the Temple of the Ocean King, Bellum causes the structure of the Temple to crumble. Oshus is able to magically teleport Link and Ciela back aboard Linebeck's ship in a "rescue from without." Oshus removes the petrification from Tetra, but, the fight with Bellum is not over. Once completely defeated,

Bellum disintegrates into the life force sand of the Ocean King, Oshus's power is fully restored, Tetra is alive and safe, and Link's "ultimate boon" (and step 11) is achieved.

Link's return steps begin with the Ocean King, who has regained his true form: a sea spirit in the shape of a whale. The Ocean King tells Link, "*The time for you to return to your world is near... The door to your world is about to open,*" A fog begins to envelop the wreckage of the Ghost Ship and S.S. Linebeck that Tetra, Link and Linebeck have been floating on, the screen fades to white and the credits begin to roll, indicating the approach of perhaps another "rescue from without."

A final cutscene shows Link and Tetra awakening on the deck of an intact Ghost Ship, with Tetra's ship pulling up alongside, signifying the "crossing the return threshold" back to the boat Link came in on. Tetra begins scolding her crew for the lack of assistance to their captain in a time of need and all the troubles Link had to go through instead, when a crewmember remarks that the pair had only been gone for 10 minutes, suggesting Tetra was probably having a nightmare. Admant that her experience was not a dream, Tetra goes into another oration with the crew. Link, gazing out to sea at the lack of Ghost Ship, reaches in his pocket to find an empty Phantom Hourglass. Link looks over the deck's edge to see the S.S. Linebeck in the distance (with whatever customizations had been put on it), indicating that some aspects of the journey had not been a dream. Link, Tetra, and Linebeck had returned back to their world as "masters of two worlds," with knowledge (and physical evidence) of the adventure in tow and, safe in their respective boats, now have the "freedom to live" and set course for wherever they please.

Phantom Hourglass shows strong indication of the monomythic structure through its narrative elements. In particular, the "refusal of the call" step is more explicit textually, rather

than just in attitude of the player (a trait it shares with *Ocarina of Time* and *The Wind Waker* thus far). "Meeting with the goddess" is mostly corroborated through intertextual considerations of Tetra based on the storyline from *The Wind Waker*, although her presence in the game is enough to justify that step. Even with the dream-like state indicated by the ending, the "freedom to live" step is fully supported by the elements of the game itself (but bolstered by its sequel, *Spirit Tracks*), further indicating that more steps are being encapsulated in the content of each game (although "refusal of return" still has yet to appear).

Skyward Sword

Although one of the most recent additions to the series, *Skyward Sword* occupies the earliest space in the official timeline and helps to imbue recurring relics of the series (such as the Master Sword and the country of Hyrule) with additional significance within the series' lore. The first portion of the game takes place on a series of islands that float high above the clouds, inhabited by beings that travel on large birds. Their culture pays reverence to a deity called Hylia, with the origin of Skyloft attributed to her gathering the remaining humans on a section of land and lifting them to safety in the clouds from Demise, a Demon King, and the warring world below. Demise and the combatant armies sought the Triforce, which Hylia was charged with protecting. Throughout his adventure, Link will travel to the world below to seek his friend Zelda, uncovering a greater destiny for them both in protecting the world from Demise.

After starting a new game file, a disembodied voice says, "*Rise, Link... The time has come for you to awaken... You are fated to have a hand in a great destiny, and it will soon find you...*" This is a player's first indication of a "call to adventure," but it also plays into what is

now a common *Zelda* trope, where the game begins with Link literally awakening somehow. It happens to be the day of the final test and graduation ceremony for Link's class at the Knight Academy; culminating in a final ritual that symbolically reenacts the story of Hylia and her chosen hero. This year, the headmaster's daughter (and Link's classmate and best friend), Zelda, has been chosen to play the role of Hylia and Link is selected to participate in the ceremony as the "*chosen hero*." Afterward, Link and Zelda are on a recreational tour through the skies when a dust storm erupts and Zelda is pulled into a whirlwind down through the clouds below. Link tries to catch her, but is whipped away by the wind and knocked out.

While blacked out, Link has a vision that introduces the player to the "supernatural aide" of the game, a spritely spirit named Fi. In this iteration of the series, it is easy to make a clear connection to the "call to adventure" and the "refusal" of such, as this call comes literally to Link. The voice beckons Link to a statue of Hylia. The player has free reign to move about at this point, so a player electing to deny the summons would fit as a "refusal" or delay thereof. Fi specifically tells Link that her role is to "*aid you in fulfilling the great destiny that is your burden to carry*." For the most direct "call to adventure," Fi continues, "*Come, Link. You must take up this sword. As the one chosen by my creator, it is your destiny*." After confirming that Zelda is alive and also bound to the same destiny, Fi directly asks Link, "*I highly recommend you take up this sword before you set out to search for her. [...] Are you ready to accept this sword?*" The dialog ends and, instead of Link obtaining the sword via a cutscene, the player is given opportunity to walk forward to the sword's pedestal and deliberately choose to take up the sword (implementing the Wii's motion controls such that the player makes a literal "sword from the stone" motion), again, providing opportunity for a potential delay.

Step four, the “crossing the first threshold” follows this lengthy introductory sequence of gameplay, with Link granted the ability to pass the cloudy partition separating Skyloft from the surface world. Link then goes through the game’s first three dungeons in searching for Zelda and gaining information regarding the “*great destiny*” of which he seems to be a part. The “belly of the while” occurs at the onset of these three levels, as it represents Link choosing to do whatever it takes to reconnect with Zelda, even in the face of the ever looming “*great destiny*,” as well as having the overworld to underworld break in entering the dungeons.

The “road of trials” can be considered as Link’s travels through the three temples in following after Zelda; collecting the Sacred Flames to create the Master Sword; and the gathering of the four parts of the Song of the Hero that will open the way to where the Triforce is kept. In the case of the dungeons with the Sacred Flames, Link must also pass through a spiritual trial before being granted entry into the dungeon to “*claim proof of [Link’s] spiritual growth.*” Facing these trials will allow Link to rise to the role of the goddess’ chosen hero and stop the plot to release Demise from imprisonment, fulfilling Zelda’s role as the human vessel for the spirit of the goddess Hylia in protecting the world from Demise.

Skyward Sword has one of the most directly applicable “meetings with the goddess,” because much of the plot centers on Zelda being an incarnate form of the goddess Hylia. The game also indicates that any descendants of Zelda shares “*the blood of the goddess,*” which would provide an explanatory function for Zelda’s role as “goddess” in almost every *Zelda* game. The game features a caring and potentially loving relationship between Link and Zelda, especially in setting up elements before Link travels to the surface. Cutscenes show them exchanging glances and dialog from other citizens notes their deep friendship. Lastly, Fi’s

explanation of the “*great destiny*” includes “*The youth who draws forth the guiding sword shall be known as the goddess’s chosen hero, and it is he who possesses an unbreakable spirit. [...] And united with the spirit maiden, shall bring forth a piercing light that resurrects the land.*”

The cutscene at the end of the game leave enough open to interpretation that this phrase (particularly “*united*”) could point to Link staying with Zelda on the surface to found Hyrule.

As seems to be the trend, *Skyward Sword* also has a number of quests and items that, while potentially useful to Link on his quest, are not required and may “tempt” him to stray from pursuing his ultimate goal for a time, fulfilling step eight. This iteration in particular features an equipment upgrade system that, if the required ingredients are collected on the surface, can be brought to a craftsman in Skyloft for improved gear. While Link will encounter many of these items along his quest, he may have to purposefully seek out the items to have enough for the upgrade and then backtrack to Skyloft to the shop. Similarly, the typical heart piece collection is also present (increasing the player’s health bar), as are mini-games and some side-quests.

Throughout the game, characters note that Link and Zelda are entwined in part of a “*great destiny*” that will become clear to them if they proceed as the goddess intended. The “atonement with the father,” representing the force that wields influence over the hero’s life, can then be connected to Hylia and the revelation of Zelda as the goddess incarnate becomes the moment that represents this step. This dearth of information clarifies what Link’s task had been from the beginning: to fully eliminate Demise from the world instead of his current status of magical imprisonment.

Link’s transformation, or “apotheosis,” occurs when he collects the most sacred relic in all of *Zelda* lore: the Triforce. In between Link’s earlier trials, he would be required to enter the

"Silent Realm" and pass a test of spirit before being allowed to proceed. When entering the final Silent Realm trial, Fi tells Link that in completing the trial, Link "*shall finally be recognized as the true hero of legend. Only then will you be shown the door that will lead you to the Triforce.*" Having passed through the tests in the Silent Realm before, Link has the capacity to enter again in three separate areas of Sky Keep to retrieve the three separate pieces of the Triforce hidden there. The whole premise of Sky Keep is to reserve the Triforce for a true hero, so in attaining the spiritual growth to open it signifies Link's transformation into the goddess's "*chosen hero.*"

After a complicated turn of events in wishing on the Triforce and traveling between eras through the Gate of Time, Link is finally able to face off with the true form of Demise, uninhibited from any magical seals. With the Master Sword, Link is able to defeat Demise, achieving the "ultimate boon." Demise leaves with the prophetic words which give clarity to much of the recurring sequences seen in all of the subsequent Zelda games in the timeline:

Those who share the blood of the goddess and the spirit of the hero... They are eternally bound to this curse. An incarnation of my hatred shall ever follow your kind, dooming them to wander a blood-soaked sea of darkness for all time!

Zelda and Link are able to "cross the return threshold" in passing back through the Gate of Time to their proper age. One might view this as a "rescue from without," as the Gate of Time is a magical device associated with the deities of the surface, however, this is not as direct an indication of outside assistance as in some of the other games. At the end of the final cutscene, Link is made the "master of two worlds" when, on the surface, Zelda tells Link she wants to remain on the surface and watch over the Triforce, asking him, "*What about you, Link? What will you do now?*" In response, Link smiles, and both he and Zelda's birds take off, indicating

that Link might also stay on the surface, with the “freedom to live,” leading to the founding of Hyrule (described as occurring after this game), and retaining the knowledge of both past and present, sky and surface.

In reflecting on intertextual elements and the *Zelda* series as a whole, *Skyward Sword* contributes a great deal to the consideration of the “meeting with the goddess” step overall, as the somewhat retroactive continuity additions makes every iteration of the Princess Zelda a literal incarnation of a goddess. Other “goddesses” can still function with the non-Zelda entities in mind, but those with less backing could become more warranted from these additions to the lore. It is also has the most overt mythic ties, as the game makes direct reference to Link’s spiritual growth over the “road of trials,” and the separation between upper and lower planes of existence reinforce an ‘elevated’ atmosphere for the narrative elements on the whole. Additionally, it also seems to have more narrative elements to work with from the game itself, with more text and longer cutscenes than earlier *Zelda* games.

A Link Between Worlds

Finally, the analysis has come to the most recent iteration of *The Legend of Zelda* franchise. *A Link Between Worlds* is a distant sequel to *A Link to the Past*, taking place in the same version of Hyrule (but a long time after *Link’s Awakening* and the *Oracle* series). This Link (different from the hero of the earlier games) travels between Hyrule and the parallel dimension of Lorule when the two accidentally become connected. Yuga, yet another sorcerer, travels from Lorule and captures Hyrule’s Seven Sages, the protectors of the Triforce. Link frees the Sages

from the paintings they were trapped in, while also uncovering the Lorulean plot to arrogate the Triforce since they do not have their own.

A Link Between Worlds begins as many of the other games; Link is at home asleep and is awakened by the Blacksmith's son. Link is the Blacksmith's apprentice and is late for work. Upon arriving at the smithy, Link is tasked with a delivery to the Sanctuary, encountering royal guards scrubbing vandalism off the castle along the way. A routine drop-off becomes less when the Sanctuary suddenly becomes locked amid a scream. The facility's grave-keeper, who had been waiting in the yard with Link, charges Link with helping, and the grave-keeper's dialogue gives the player a chance to hesitate in transitioning from errand-boy to addressing the danger potentially within the sanctuary. Any combination of the answers to the grave-keeper will ultimately result in Link "borrowing" the delivery sword, so while there is not a direct refusal, the inclusion of the option for hesitation creates a space for a player's attitude to come forth.

After travelling through the passageway into the sanctuary, a cutscene launches wherein Link discovers a sorcerer (named Yuga) turning people into paintings. Link (without assistance from the player, as is typical with cutscenes) dashes forward to help as Yuga, using the same magic, quickly jumps into the wall behind him in a similarly painted form (but retains the ability to move along the wall unlike stationary figures he created). Link slams into the sanctuary wall and the impact renders him unconscious.

Link awakens back in his own bed, and is startled by a figure wearing a hood and cloak (such that makes the wearer look like a rabbit). The player is introduced to Ravio, a traveling merchant and the primary journey-long helper of *A Link Between Worlds*. Ravio asks if he can stay at Link's house for a while, and, after the player agrees, gives Link a strange (but

significant) bracelet in lieu of a deposit on rent. The bracelet and the items Ravio has for sale are instrumental in Link's ability to complete his tasks successfully. Early on in the game's story, Ravio may not seem so supernatural, however he does fit in well as step three, "supernatural aid," in that he is definitely tied to the "out-of-the-ordinary" magic that Yuga uses (as far as plot is concerned, it is Ravio's bracelet that allows Link to become a painted figure, the key game mechanic). While not as far reaching as perhaps Ravio, there are additional characters that aid Link via supernatural ability, in the form of the wise elder Sahasrahla, and Princess Hilda of Lorule, Hyrule's dark-world mirror counterpart. Both inform Link of the location of the dungeons necessary for proceeding and Hilda in particular always greets Link telepathically upon entering a new area of Lorule and has the ability to "sense" the presence of the sages.

This game's iteration of the fourth step, "crossing the first threshold" comes during Link's meeting with Princess Zelda. In another cutscene, Princess Zelda introduces herself to Link, but confesses that she is already familiar, as *"I've seen your face in my dreams of late. For I've dreamt of a hero locked in battle with a terrible evil."* Sahasrahla, the elder that keeps the knowledge of Hyrule's legendary past, unfolds the depth of Link's task, *"This Yuga you speak of, he must be after the Seven Sages of our day. He surely intends to free Ganon."* The dialogue of these characters indicates that a transition from peace to troubling times is underway. Yuga continues to create painting by trapping the Seven Sages, and after Link completes the first dungeon (trying to reach a Sage before Yuga does), an earthquake strikes. Yuga has placed a barrier around Hyrule Castle to impede anyone as he pursues a painting of Princess Zelda.

Step five's "belly of the whale," happens as Link literally leaves the world he knows behind in traveling through the fissure after Yuga flees with a painting of Zelda. Emerging in

Lorule Castle, the ruinous mirror counterpart of Hyrule, a cutscene illustrates that Yuga has successfully captured the Seven Sages and the Princess Zelda in paintings. Using the power of the paintings, Yuga summons and fuses with Ganon in order to obtain Ganon's Triforce of Power. Link is about to be attacked when Princess Hilda swoops in and places a barrier on the beast akin the one Yuga placed on the castle. Hilda then explains to Link that he must obtain the paintings of the Seven Sages from across Lorule, laying out Link's "road of trials" before him. The narrative pacing becomes a bit more open-ended, as the levels do not have to be completed in any particular order (unlike earlier *Zelda* titles, but very similar to the original NES release).

Revelations from *Skyward Sword* notwithstanding, there are narrative elements surrounding Zelda that fit with "meeting with the goddess." A side character, known only as the Rumor Guy, tells Link, "*You didn't hear it from me, but [...] The princess stopped in front of a large painting [...] of a hero and princess from several generations ago,*" and that Zelda's viewing "*brought out a look of such admiration that had never been seen before in the princess. Now you've heard it. Go on, now. That gossip ain't gonna spread itself!*" This is indication from the game for Zelda to be viewed as Link's counterpart, particularly because the hero in the painting greatly resembles Link (the subject is of a previous *Zelda* storyline that has become "legend" to the characters of this iteration). The premise of this rumor is further developed in the end cutscenes of the game, where Zelda holds the powerful Triforce of Wisdom (complementing Link's Triforce of Courage) and the two characters approaching the completed Triforce together.

Due to the open nature in which to complete the dungeons in particular, there are many opportunities to become distracted from Link achieving his ultimate goal, meeting the "temptations" of step eight. There are several mini-games present where a player can win

treasure, as well as several optional collectables scattered throughout the map. There are also several purposeful miniature puzzle-dungeons in various areas with treasures at the end. Time spent gathering treasures detracts from completing dungeons that house the Sage paintings.

The center point of Link's journey (and step nine), the "atonement with the father" appears after Link collects the paintings for each of the seven sages, completing his series of trials. Through the combined powers of the sages, Link is granted the Triforce of Courage, marking him as having earned the title of 'hero' and giving him the necessary boost to face Yuga and save Princess Zelda. Now Link has the capacity to achieve his "ultimate boon" which is saving the land of Hyrule from Yuga's devices.

Princess Hilda originally presented herself as wanting to aid Link, however, Hilda was only using Link so that he would earn the Triforce of Courage. Princess Hilda explains that Lorule once had a Triforce like Hyrule, but it was destroyed to stop the "*endless war*" over it. The kingdom collapsed without the presence of a Triforce, so when Hilda learned of another Triforce in another kingdom, she designed to take it to save Lorule. Princess Hilda takes the Triforce of Wisdom from Princess Zelda's portrait, and Yuga, fused with Ganon, has the Triforce of Power. In order to complete the relic, Link's Triforce of Courage is needed and Lorule is willing to take it by force if necessary. Princess Hilda releases Yuga-Ganon from his bonds, throwing the player into the battle with the beastly form of Yuga-Ganon.

Yuga has a betrayal of his own planned and turns Hilda is turned into a painting right alongside Zelda, allowing Yuga-Ganon to take the Triforce of Wisdom from her in her frozen state. Eventually, Link is victorious over Yuga-Ganon, Princess Hilda is freed and Link releases Zelda from the painting. Link has succeeded in thwarting the evil that threatened in the form of

Yuga, thus achieving step 11, his "ultimate boon." Yet, Link's journey must come full circle to satisfy the heroic cycle, and he has yet to leave Lorule.

And still, Princess Hilda refuses to abandon her plan to salvage her kingdom and begins to approach Princess Zelda (albeit somewhat weakly), when Ravio bursts in. Ravio finally lifts his hood and reveals himself to be the Lorulean counterpart of Link, and pleads with Princess Hilda to not doom Hyrule in trading lack-of-Triforce status, explaining that her means by which to do and the symbolism of the gesture would "*bring out the absolute worst in Lorule*" and the scenario only serves to perpetuate Lorule's condemnation.

Ravio's words bring about a change of heart in Princess Hilda, admitting that Link's noble acts illustrate Hyrule's deservedness in keeping their Triforce. Princess Hilda leads Link and Zelda to the fissure where she first discovered Hyrule, asks for the bracelet that Ravio had given Link, and uses the last of its power to send both Link and Princess Zelda back through the divide as the bracelet turns to dust. This act represents step 14, a "rescue from without."

Having been transported back to Hyrule, Link "crosses the return threshold." Princess Zelda and Link emerge to find the Triforce complete. Zelda tells Link, "*Thanks to your heroic efforts, our Triforce and Hyrule itself have been made whole again,*" and asks that Link touch the Triforce and make his wish, remarking, "*Yet, after all that we've seen, do we not share the same wish?*" The player can then walk up to and touch the Triforce, triggering the cutscene that wraps up Link's story. It shows Hilda and Ravio in a crumbling Lorule, when Lorule's (inverted) Triforce returns, turning the landscape from gloomy to bright. Princess Hilda thanks both Zelda and Link. Small vignettes illustrate characters returning to a peaceful life and one can see how Link has become the "master of two worlds" in travelling from Hyrule to Lorule and back. At the

end of the series, Link, dressed as the Blacksmith's apprentice rather than in his later defensive armors, returns the Master Sword to its pedestal in the Lost Woods, no longer in need of its power, and walks away, free to continue living his life as per the final step.

The narrative elements of *A Link Between Worlds* provide yet another example of a *Zelda* game fitting well with the monomythic steps. Particularly, this iteration contains a more text-based "refusal of the call" (like *Ocarina of Time*, *The Wind Waker*, and *Phantom Hourglass* before it) as well as a more open-ended completion of the "road of trials." "Meeting with the goddess" is lent support with the intertextual elements borrowed from *Skyward Sword*, but also has direct elements to connect Princess Zelda with the "goddess" role. Similarly, all of the steps of *A Link Between Worlds* are met without the benefit of knowing what follows in the timeline, continuing without reliance on intertextual elements for the completion of steps. The only steps not directly indicated are steps 13-14, "refusal of return" and "magic flight," respectively, making "magic flight" an inconsistent step and "refusal of return" completely absent from the analysis.

A Link Between Worlds, at the time of writing, is the most recent game in the franchise, thus concluding the lengthy analysis section of this research. A clear foundation should be established with regard to how the coded narrative elements in *The Legend of Zelda* series connect with the 17 steps of monomyth. Having already facilitated an understanding of the works and perspectives synthesized in the literature review, this research can now proceed to discuss the broader implications found in the associations between the preceding literature and analysis sections as well as the limitations to this study and areas for further research.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSIONS

As discussion begins, it is important to revisit the goal originally laid out prior to analysis. *The Legend of Zelda* is one of the most longstanding series in video game history and has had several iterations over several technological generations. In general considerations, the way each of the games are laid out hint at a 'heroic' type of scenario, so questions naturally begin to arise regarding whether the way the elements of the mythic framework appear in a *Zelda* game changes as the series progresses, if they appear at all. To more directly reiterate the research questions: 1) Is Campbell's monomyth revealed in each of the games of *The Legend of Zelda* series? 2) Does the monomyth alter throughout the many iterations of the series? 3) And, if so, where do the differences lie?

Acknowledgement of the potential for a connection between monomyth and video games is not new. However, it is not often that specific games are examined with regard to Campbell's (1949/2008) framework to see just how any acknowledgement of that structure could come to exist in a video game world. Across the nine gaming systems, 17 games and more than 25 years of video game history, and for all its various permutations and specific instances, one thing becomes clear through this analysis: the narrative elements of *Zelda* are strongly connected to the monomythic steps and, on the whole, the heroic cycle is revealed in *The Legend of Zelda* games.

In tracking the manner in which the various monomythic steps have been presented over time, while the general sense has strong mythic indications throughout the series, the directness or strength of the connection to specific narrative elements has been improved over time. For example, in the original *The Legend of Zelda*, four of the mythic steps went without support (in

the "return" step portion) and another was indicated, but required overlapping in order for its functions to be satisfied. Fast forward to the most recent games and one can see that more of the steps are indicated more often (although no game supported all 17), and in a more incremental way, allowing for connections to be made to specific elements without much overlap needed.

Similarly, the newer games tended to not rely on intertextual elements for the completion of a particular step as greatly as earlier games. Campbell specifically stated that the mythic steps are "bound to be somehow or other implied" (p. 30), suggesting that the presence of many steps should be common, but also noted that a weakness or complete lack of a particular step "itself can speak volumes..." (p. 30), indicating that all steps need not be present in order for a story to be mythic or heroic. Even with the possibility for absent steps, all games analyzed addressed a majority of the steps, and the incorporation of narrative elements from other *Zelda* games allowed for more steps to be conclusively met in some games.

Sometimes the "call to adventure" would be made more overt in the narrative elements (such as Linebeck in *Phantom Hourglass* telling Link that, "*adventure calls!*"), but the step was present throughout all 17 of the games. This seems logical as the view of games in general typically involve some sort of scenario that allows one to 'win' (coupling the "call to adventure" with the "ultimate boon"), so games are often designed with that frame in mind.

"Refusal of the call" is a step that is more firmly entrenched in the action of the game itself, even though it relied a great deal on the attitude of the player in most instances. From the author's personal experiences, neither accepting nor denying the call would be unusual; in playing a game a second time, a player may purposely opt to answer the call opposite their original playthrough to see what happens, or accept the quest without hesitation in order to move

through the initial narrative elements more quickly. Very few had a direct text question asking whether or not Link was to accept the “call to adventure,” making the determination of a “refusal” somewhat less precise. However, this may ultimately be a strength to the step as Portnow and Floyd (2012) have noted.

In an informal study of gamers playing the aforementioned *Journey* (2012), Portnow and Floyd (2012) found that all participants rebelled against the game structure within the first 30 minutes of gameplay, attitudinally fulfilling the “refusal of the call” by purposely defying the game’s prompts to proceed in a certain manner, instead choosing to test the constraints of the game structure. In *Journey*, players are directed to walk through a desert in the direction of a mountain on the horizon. However, early in their playthrough, each of Portnow and Floyd’s participants intentionally walked in another direction to see how far the game world would support them before running into a barrier (as most games are coded in such a way that they cannot render an infinitely generating three-dimensional space). Even though players generally understand that “accepting the quest” will be necessary to continue progressing, there is still the hint of Skelly’s (2009) “subversive collaborator” making a “refusal of the call” possible.

“Supernatural aids” were also very present throughout *The Legend of Zelda* series, and became more focused as the series progressed. Where the earliest games had a general series or group of characters represented by the same graphical cues (the Old Man of the first game in particular), later games usually consolidate the role to one character. In a few instances, such as the Great Fairies in *Four Swords*, Midna in *Twilight Princess*, the helper character overlaps with another step (usually “meeting with the goddess,” although Ciela in *Phantom Hourglass* connects to “atonement with the father”).

Link "crossing the first threshold" away from his known world was present in each game, with some variations depending on what constitutes a separation based on Link's character (such as the hero of *A Link to the Past* being transported by the Triforce to the settings of the *Oracle* games). Some games made Link's insular life very clear, like the confines of the forest in *Ocarina of Time*, or having never seen Hyrule Castle in *Twilight Princess*. The clear distinction between Link's previous limits and the openness of the adventure made this step easier to place.

"Belly of the Whale" can always be wrapped up in the transition from the "overworld" portions of the game to the "underworld," usually in entering the first dungeon. Sometimes there were elements that indicated a level of resolve for Link in pursuing his quest, which is an important component of the step. This is also a step that relies more on visual information than textual pieces, and the included worksheets are limited in addressing this step effectively (discussed further below).

Step six is the "road of trials," which is where a player spends most of their time, as well as a step that can be broken into sections around other steps, something that does not come through well in the analysis. As the researcher was completing the analysis, it occurred to her that the dungeons (or "trials") also fit a monomythic cycle individually (particularly in later iterations), which she had not considered before. Dungeons often follow a general structure: entering the dungeon is like "crossing a threshold," the "trials" of the level requires Link to travel through rooms, completing puzzles and fighting enemies to get the four 'big items,' (map, compass, boss key and big treasure). Gaining the 'big treasure' usually allows for the puzzle leading to the boss key to be completed (and the gain and mastery of the item creates a small "transformation"), the 'boss key' opens the door to the boss's lair, where the 'big treasure' is

used defeat the dungeon boss so the quest item can be collected (the "ultimate boon") before Link is warped back to the overworld ("crossing the return threshold").

Princess Zelda usually fit the "goddess" role for step seven, especially if considering the information from *Skyward Sword* in an intertextual manner for all the games (as the Royal Family of Hyrule follows a blood-lineage, so the incarnate form of the goddess Hylia is also passed down). There were a couple of variations, particularly consideration for Midna in *Twilight Princess*, or particular sages in *Ocarina of Time*. With the exception of *Skyward Sword*, this was one of the more difficult steps to place, as there was not always a clear moment to connect to and the tendency to overwrite romance into considerations of the step.

The inclusion of the hero being "tempted" away from the quest also played out interestingly in each of the *Zelda* games. None of the games featured an overt gesture of 'trying' to keep Link from pursuing his quest in the traditional sense. However, it is very common for adventure games to include many collectables and side-missions to encourage exploration of and add depth to the game world and *The Legend of Zelda* is no exception. Campbell's order puts the "temptation" step in the midst of the "initiation" steps, but, from the experience of the author, many times being in a new area (with no pressing threat) is all the temptation a player needs to waylay a bit, with the sense that the rest of the quest will always 'be there,' and the risk of passing up a treasure too great. Monomyth was created with oral or literary tradition in mind rather than video game convention, and those mediums are generally understood to have a greater relative degree of clarity and/or consistency (or at least more difficulty in relating steps as happening simultaneously), but the presence of temptations in this way make for interesting

combinations or considerations of the order of steps, as this step could occur multiple times or overlap many other steps in going through the cycle.

"Atonement with the father" was always very closely related to "the ultimate boon," as the force that presided over Link's life was often the final boss of the game (that placed Hyrule in to peril in the first place). Occasionally, there is a degree of separation (such as Agahnim working for Ganon in *A Link to the Past*, or Zant being only a pawn *Twilight Princess*).

Link's transformations for the "apotheosis" step were never very overt (except for maybe *Ocarina of Time* in the physical change to Adult Link). Often this step was the completion of the "road of trials" and the declaration that Link had acquired the capacity to meet his final goal. This was fairly subtle in *The Legend of Zelda*, with suddenly being able to open the wall to the final level (with a normal bomb, no less) and briefly holding the completed Triforce, to the more grandiose presentation of *Skyward Sword*, making multiple notes of Link's spiritual growth and extreme fanfare in obtaining the Triforce. Other games, like *Link's Awakening* and *Oracle of Seasons*, had the transformation manifest in Link's ability to navigate parts of the landscape.

The ending of many *Zelda* games are also left open-ended enough such that a player would need to provide a greater level of interpretation to ensure the "return" steps of the journey were completed, particularly in the more 'happily ever after' aspects, like "master of two worlds" and "freedom to live," as relatively few conclusory cutscenes included any 'happily ever after' statement to indicate the balance of Link's experience and the continuation of his life free from the adventure. Having knowledge of the "canon" or official timeline helps in this regard, but that would mean consideration of the series as a whole over the storylines of specific games themselves. But, as above, there are definite aspects where the monomythic steps do not play out

as concretely or as insulated as they might appear when reading about them or in describing them with words like "framework" or "structure."

The "ultimate boon" for each game was always wrapped up in the defeat of the final boss, which would right whatever issues had been going on, very much in a "good triumphs over evil" manner. The "road of trials," which prepare the hero for obtaining the "boon" (through transformation) were always directly connected to one another through the programmed story arc, making the destination of the journey more event-oriented than a physical end-point.

"Refusal of return," step 12, is one of the most interesting steps because it is the only step that was never clearly apparent in any of the games. The structure of the game was always set up that Link would want to return to his old way of life and/or allow others to benefit from what he gained over the course of his quest. There is perhaps some chance of a player filling this in attitudinally, but the pre-programmed elements always have Link acting unselfishly toward his achievements. As has been mentioned before, all steps need not be present in order to have connection to mythic themes, but Campbell (1949/2008) did specific comment on how "the omission itself can speak volumes..." (p. 30), allowing for some interesting questions to be drawn to the effects of these specific mythic instances forgoing this particular step.

Similar to the overlapping of steps in individual dungeons, step 13, "the magic flight," only appeared in the videogame convention of the sequential boss fight. Partway through the boss battles of *Ocarina of Time* and *The Minish Cap*, a player has to flee from successful completion of one stage of a boss battle to reach the others. This is usually paired with a false sense of security that the battle is finally won (although, arguably, similar events happen with enough frequency that an experienced player will assume a "magic flight" is not indicative of the

end). So in *The Legend of Zelda* series (so far) a “magic flight” works in conjunction with the completion of the “ultimate boon” or “rescue from without” steps. “Rescue from without” was a more frequently occurring “return” step to that of “the magic flight,” often tapping into the presence of magic or mystical power in Hyrule (particularly that of the Triforce).

“Crossing the return threshold” occurs clearly throughout the series, however, connections to the step are more tenuous early on. The criteria for this step makes meeting it fairly easy, since it is in combination with the other return steps that the precise manner the hero returns becomes more important. Since Link returns from his quests, “master of two worlds” is also frequently met, as he is often returning to one world from another. Step 16 is one of the steps that benefited most from intertextual elements, as the sequels to a particular game often provided direct confirmation that Link retained the knowledge of his previous quest (for example, the introductory text to *Phantom Hourglass* confirms Link continues on from his adventure in *The Wind Waker*).

That leaves just step 17, “the freedom to live,” which was another step aided by the incorporation of intertextual elements, as knowing a sequel adventure was to follow for a particular iteration of Link helped in understanding the conclusion of one adventure leaving things open enough for another. In considering some games by themselves, the “freedom” Link has is not necessarily the positive (such as *Link’s Awakening* leaving the hero adrift in the ocean). All of the games end with a degree of finality, knowing that the quest is truly over, with no cliffhanger-type scenarios to leave a player wondering a great deal.

What follows from this are questions regarding the impact of the continued presence of the hero in culture might have in affecting a player’s or reader’s worldview. Connections

between Bandura's (2009) social cognitive theory and video game spaces might indicate incorporation of mythic themes to other aspects of life, such as looking at any of life's struggles as a series of "trials" that require a level of growth in character or spirit in order to be effectively met and overcome. Individuals might see themselves as always progressing to address the ever-changing nature of life, which is also reinforced by the continuity between iterations; for example, the Link that became a hero in *A Link to the Past* still had to undergo trials and transformations to achieve his goals in *Link's Awakening* and the *Oracle* series. There is also the potential for a more binary approach in this way; if an individual sees themselves in the role of the hero, there may be a tendency to place some entity into a role as villain. This notion becomes all the more interesting in remembering that video games are media frequently consigned to the realm of children's play and toys (although data from the Electronic Software Association [2012] indicates this is a somewhat limited view), meaning exposure to myth can begin at an early age.

Because the narrative elements coded in the game fit well with the monomyth, it becomes easier to perceive where the game is situated in popular culture and why it resonates with players. Interactivity has the ability to connect the player to the game structure, then to the narrative structure, and even then to the mythic structure found in many media forms (and, as Campbell would have it, even further connected then to all of humanity). Nitsche (2008) reminds that, "Ultimately, it is up to the player to drive the exploration of the video game world, which can initiate a Hero's Journey, but the monomyth offers a powerful tool to recognize these journeys and optimize the structure of the game world accordingly" (p. 64), but the story of *The Legend of Zelda* is one that a player relates to in being able to see themselves in it.

The inclusion or presence of a heroic narrative allows the player to encounter the mythic structure in an interactive setting within the text, instead of experiencing it as a more static, contained product like in a book or film. Because the player is situated so as to fill the role of the hero, one of the major implications of this analysis is the additional level or layer of connection to the emotions and themes common to myths and the archetypal structure of monomyth, which, sociologically tap into commonalities in human experience. In filling the role of the hero, the player effectively becomes the hero (to the extent the player and game code will allow), making the story all the more real and myth in the culture all the more prevalent or readily accessible.

Because a player moves along with the story as it unfolds, that, perhaps, even leads to a player feeling or considering him/herself as becoming a hero (or at least 'like' one). Nitsche (2008) stresses that the crux of the takeaway narrative lies in the unique qualities brought by the player, ("The quest is not found in the realms of the fixed work but in the experience of the player" [p. 59]) and not in some archetypal pattern. Even as the connections to monomyth may be clear, it is still important to continue to explore the unique narrative qualities that interactivity provides, as the "result is a form of quest that comes to live in the player's comprehension and his or her interaction with the game space" (p. 64).

A limitation to the analysis in addressing this aspect of the research questions is that the researcher was clearly playing the games with Campbell's structure in mind, meaning that connections could have been made that may not have tendency to do so otherwise. While the author did realize that Campbell and *Zelda* fit together early on (as that observation motivated the continuation of research), the extreme level of connection found here may not be what is typically encountered by a player because the player would not be explicitly looking for it.

However, the research question merely sought to examine what elements could connect to a particular step, and that aspect is addressed. As the earlier quotation from Nitsche (2008) illustrated, game designers include elements intentionally, hoping to influence a certain perspective, but this interpretation is limited to the author's perspective of those elements that "prime some form of comprehension," (p. 44) as informed of the sub-culture of *Zelda* as she may be. Thus, the likelihood or degree to which players actually fit the narrative elements into the monomythic structure in the most natural game playing scenarios becomes a key opportunity for a more thorough exploration.

In what is one of the biggest drawbacks to the included analysis, because the player has the ultimate say in how these steps will be perceived, the amount of time devoted to each can greatly vary. For instance, should a segment be particularly difficult, a player might indicate that "the road of trials" was an arduous one, or a particular "trial" was more difficult than the rest (such as the famously difficult water levels). By that same token, a very experienced player may view the "road of trials" as a long one, but one that Link met handily, as their relative progression conjured a "less stuck" feeling overall.

Relatedly, another limitation comes from the means by which the monomythic steps were documented, namely, the worksheets included in the appendix to this document. While it was noted earlier that one of the primary goals of the analysis was to determine ways elements in the game could be connected to a particular monomythic step, in light of the discussion of the importance of the player in making these connections, the worksheets could have better addressed the various means by which a player might find a particular step. Perhaps the inclusion of a space that asks something like, "does this event remind you of anything?" rather than "Does

quotation support/conflict with any previous information?" would make the inquiry open to the mention of connections to a variety of sources instead of just textual ones.

Ideally, this would better address the significance of a quotation in the mind of the player and in the construction of a story rather than putting the quotation on a pedestal and making the quotation itself the focus. What a quotations or narrative element does or adds in story creation supersedes what that element is. Similarly, language could be changed so as to include events or actions rather than just quotations, as, with several examples mentioned above, in some cases, the completion of a step is more reliant on attitude or can be found in visual game elements but not in textual ones. Perhaps even stronger still would be to further distance analysis from a reader-response textual analysis, and more toward audience-centered reader-response approaches. A metaphor for this viewpoint is briefly outlined below for research incorporating more of a player's considerations.

Ultimately, moving into the future with regard to research is moving beyond the limited perspective one gamer (even an informed one) can provide. Essentially, future applications should survey other gamers' experiences or multiple game experiences. The inclusion or consideration of other gamers and other playthrough experiences will aid in addressing how different players approach the same game structure and which areas of the experience seem to be the most consistent between individuals (or, conversely, which areas of the experience have the greatest differences between players). One might also look to the variety of narrative sources beyond the game itself as well and situate a playthrough within a wider narrative context.

In this similar vein, extensions to the study of narrative in games (and/or, more specifically, monomyth in games) can shift focus to other video games. As the earlier mentioned

video game symphony, "rePlay: Symphony of Heroes" has indicated (Jason Michael Paul Productions, 2014), there are multiple video games with heroic connections. The symphony itself (North, 2014) includes the already mentioned *Journey* (2012), and *The Legend of Zelda* (1987-2013), as well as *Final Fantasy* (1987-2014), *Metal Gear* (1987-2014), the *Elder Scrolls* (1994-2012), *Halo* (2001-2014), *God of War* (2005-2013), and *Dear Esther* (2012). Other games like *Chrono Trigger* (1995), *EarthBound* (1995), *Xenogears* and *Xenosaga* (1998, 2002-2006), or the *Mass Effect* series (2007-2012), are among a dearth of programmed storylines that appear to lend themselves well to a mythic mode of analysis, and there are many other pieces of interactive fiction that warrant a more thorough examination from a variety of lenses as well.

An article in *Entertainment Weekly* (Staskiewicz, 2014) noted the "conventional hierarchy of pop cultural snobbery" is, to paraphrase, considered to be "books are greater than movies, which are, in turn, greater than video games." The same article furthers, in consideration to film, "Let's give up adapting video games' often-weak story elements while failing to provide the one thing they offer: the ability to play" (Staskiewicz, 2014). While this quotation may still fall prey to cultural connotations toward video game stories, it touches on the uniqueness of interactivity and its potential contribution to story. With interactivity and narrativity (at least as far as monomyth is concerned), players are charged with the duty of filling the role of the protagonist and hero. The presence of video games in our leisure time and our scholarly considerations has increased. Rather than relegate video games to a cultural narrative of triviality, hopefully a point of view has been promoted such that as technology allows for media be more accessible, so, too, are the stories and structures within them.

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APPENDIX
METHODOLOGY WORKSHEETS

RESEARCH BREAKDOWN SHEET		Separation Steps- GREEN Initiation Steps- RED Return Steps- BLUE
GAME TITLE: The Legend of Zelda: _____		RESEARCHER: Name:
DESCRIPTION:		RESEARCH DATES: Start Date: End Date:
ORIGINAL PLATFORM:	ORIGINAL RELEASE: <i>(North American release)</i>	RESEARCHED VERSION: System:
RE-RELEASE SYSTEMS:	RE-RELEASE DATES:	TEXT DUMP SOURCE:
REVIEW AGGREGATE SCORE: <i>(Aggregate scores accessed from metacritic.com and/or gamerankings.com)</i>	ASSOCIATED SOUND/VIDEO FILES:	
PARTICULAR NOTES/FINDINGS: _____ _____ _____		

<p>Name of Step:</p> <p>Call to Adventure</p> <p><i>The hero starts off in a mundane situation of normality, from which some information is received that acts as a call to head off into the unknown.</i></p> <p>Notes:</p>	<p>Direct quotation to support:</p>	<p>Quote Encountered?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>Yes <input type="checkbox"/>No</p>
		<p>Required or Optional?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>Required <input type="checkbox"/>Optional</p>
	<p>In what context is the quotation encountered:</p>	
	<p>Does quotation support/conflict with any previous information?</p>	
<p>Name of Step:</p> <p>Refusal of the Call</p> <p><i>Often when the call is given, the future hero refuses to heed it. This may be from a sense of duty or obligation, fear, insecurity, etc.</i></p> <p>Notes:</p>	<p>Direct quotation to support:</p>	<p>Quote Encountered?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>Yes <input type="checkbox"/>No</p>
		<p>Required or Optional?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>Required <input type="checkbox"/>Optional</p>
	<p>In what context is the quotation encountered:</p>	
	<p>Does quotation support/conflict with any previous information?</p>	
<p>Name of Step:</p>	<p>Direct quotation to support:</p>	<p>Quote Encountered?</p>

<p>Supernatural Aid</p> <p><i>Once the hero has committed to the quest, consciously or unconsciously, his or her guide and magical helper becomes known</i></p>		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
		Required or Optional? <input type="checkbox"/> Required <input type="checkbox"/> Optional
	In what context is the quotation encountered:	
	Notes:	Does quotation support/conflict with any previous information?
<p>Crossing the First Threshold</p> <p><i>Hero actually crosses into the world of Adventure, leaving the known limits of his/her world and venturing to the unknown</i></p>	Name of Step: Direct quotation to support:	Quote Encountered? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
		Required or Optional? <input type="checkbox"/> Required <input type="checkbox"/> Optional
	In what context is the quotation encountered:	
	Notes:	Does quotation support/conflict with any previous information?

<p>Name of Step:</p> <p>Belly of the Whale</p> <p><i>Represents the final separation from the hero's known world and self. By entering this stage, the hero shows their willingness to undergo a metamorphosis</i></p> <p>Notes:</p>	<p>Direct quotation to support:</p>	<p>Quote Encountered?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
		<p>Required or Optional?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Required <input type="checkbox"/> Optional</p>
	<p>In what context is the quotation encountered:</p>	
	<p>Does quotation support/conflict with any previous information?</p>	
<p>Name of Step:</p> <p>Road of Trials</p> <p><i>A series of tests, tasks, or ordeals that the hero must undergo to begin the transformation. The hero may fail one or more of these tests, which often occur in threes.</i></p> <p>Notes:</p>	<p>Direct quotation to support:</p>	<p>Quote Encountered?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
		<p>Required or Optional?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Required <input type="checkbox"/> Optional</p>
	<p>In what context is the quotation encountered:</p>	
	<p>Does quotation support/conflict with any previous information?</p>	

<p>Name of Step:</p> <p>Meeting with the Goddess</p> <p><i>Hero experiences a love that has the power and significance of the all-powerful, encompassing, unconditional love not unlike an infant and mother</i></p> <p>Notes:</p>	<p>Direct quotation to support:</p>	<p>Quote Encountered?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
		<p>Required or Optional?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Required <input type="checkbox"/> Optional</p>
	<p>In what context is the quotation encountered:</p>	
	<p>Does quotation support/conflict with any previous information?</p>	
<p>Name of Step:</p> <p>Temptation</p> <p><i>Those material temptations that may lead the hero to abandon or stray from the completion of his/her quest</i></p> <p>Notes:</p>	<p>Direct quotation to support:</p>	<p>Quote Encountered?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
		<p>Required or Optional?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Required <input type="checkbox"/> Optional</p>
	<p>In what context is the quotation encountered:</p>	
	<p>Does quotation support/conflict with any previous information?</p>	

<p>Name of Step:</p> <p>Atonement with the Father</p> <p><i>Hero must confront and be initiated by whatever holds the ultimate power in his/her life. Many times, this is a father figure with life/death power. Center of story.</i></p> <p>Notes:</p>	<p>Direct quotation to support:</p>	<p>Quote Encountered?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
		<p>Required or Optional?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Required <input type="checkbox"/> Optional</p>
	<p>In what context is the quotation encountered:</p>	
	<p>Does quotation support/conflict with any previous information?</p>	
<p>Name of Step:</p> <p>Apotheosis</p> <p><i>Moment of transformation; when someone dies a physical death, or death to the self to live in spirit, or he/she moves to state of divine knowledge/love/compassion/bliss.</i></p> <p>Notes:</p>	<p>Direct quotation to support:</p>	<p>Quote Encountered?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
		<p>Required or Optional?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Required <input type="checkbox"/> Optional</p>
	<p>In what context is the quotation encountered:</p>	
	<p>Does quotation support/conflict with any previous information?</p>	

<p>Name of Step:</p> <p>Ultimate Boon</p> <p><i>The achievement/goal of the quest. It is what the hero goes on the journey to get/accomplish and all previous steps serve to prepare/purify hero for this moment.</i></p>	<p>Direct quotation to support:</p>	<p>Quote Encountered?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
		<p>Required or Optional?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Required <input type="checkbox"/> Optional</p>
	<p>In what context is the quotation encountered:</p>	
	<p>Notes:</p>	<p>Does quotation support/conflict with any previous information?</p>
<p>Name of Step:</p> <p>Refusal of Return</p> <p><i>Having found bliss/enlightenment, hero may not want to return to bestow the boon onto his fellow man.</i></p>	<p>Direct quotation to support:</p>	<p>Quote Encountered?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
		<p>Required or Optional?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Required <input type="checkbox"/> Optional</p>
	<p>In what context is the quotation encountered:</p>	
	<p>Notes:</p>	<p>Does quotation support/conflict with any previous information?</p>

<p>Name of Step:</p> <p>Magical Flight</p> <p><i>Sometimes the hero must escape with the boon. Can be just as adventurous or dangerous to go back as the journey toward.</i></p> <p>Notes:</p>	<p>Direct quotation to support:</p>	<p>Quote Encountered?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>Yes <input type="checkbox"/>No</p> <p>Required or Optional?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>Required <input type="checkbox"/>Optional</p>
<p>In what context is the quotation encountered:</p>		
<p>Does quotation support/conflict with any previous information?</p>		
<p>Name of Step:</p> <p>Rescue from Without</p> <p><i>The hero may need a powerful guide to bring him/her back to everyday life, especially if the person has been wounded/weakened/otherwise affected by the experience.</i></p> <p>Notes:</p>	<p>Direct quotation to support:</p>	<p>Quote Encountered?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>Yes <input type="checkbox"/>No</p> <p>Required or Optional?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>Required <input type="checkbox"/>Optional</p>
<p>In what context is the quotation encountered:</p>		
<p>Does quotation support/conflict with any previous information?</p>		

<p>Name of Step:</p> <p>Crossing the Return Threshold</p> <p><i>Retaining the wisdom gained on the quest, integrating that wisdom into a human life, possibly sharing wisdom with the rest of the world.</i></p> <p>Notes:</p>	<p>Direct quotation to support:</p>	<p>Quote Encountered?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>Yes <input type="checkbox"/>No</p>
		<p>Required or Optional?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>Required <input type="checkbox"/>Optional</p>
	<p>In what context is the quotation encountered:</p>	
	<p>Does quotation support/conflict with any previous information?</p>	
<p>Name of Step:</p> <p>Master of Two Worlds</p> <p><i>Achieving a balance between the inner and outer worlds (the wisdom/ personal success/ spiritual world and the material world of "normal" life)</i></p> <p>Notes:</p>	<p>Direct quotation to support:</p>	<p>Quote Encountered?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>Yes <input type="checkbox"/>No</p>
		<p>Required or Optional?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>Required <input type="checkbox"/>Optional</p>
	<p>In what context is the quotation encountered:</p>	
	<p>Does quotation support/conflict with any previous information?</p>	

<p>Name of Step:</p> <p>Freedom to Live</p> <p><i>Master leads to freedom from the fear of death, which, in turn, is the freedom to live. Hero is free to continue on, neither anticipating the future, nor regretting the past.</i></p> <p>Notes:</p>	<p>Direct quotation to support:</p>	<p>Quote Encountered?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
		<p>Required or Optional?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Required <input type="checkbox"/> Optional</p>
	<p>In what context is the quotation encountered:</p>	
	<p>Does quotation support/conflict with any previous information?</p>	

Additional Notes:
