



PROGRAM



11 April Tuesday

9:30-9:50 Reception and Registration

9:50-10:50 Inaugural Speeches

Ulrich Schädler “Arab and Turkish Games on the Ayasoluk”
Alex de Voogt “The Board Game Lens”

10:50-11:10 Coffee Break

SESSION 1 “Games across Cultures and Genders”

Moderator: Fatih Parlak

11:10-11:30 **Jonas Richter:** Winning with a broken die

11:30-11:50 **Hannah Freundlich:** Women and Luck in Myths and Literature

11:50-12:10 **Jacob Schmidt-Madsen:** Akshadyuta: Legacy of a Lost Game

12:10-12:30 Discussion

12:30-13:30 LUNCH BREAK

SESSION 2 “Divination and Rituals”

Moderator: Marco Tibaldini

13:30-13:50 **Eddie Duggan:** Is that a hnefi in your mouth, or are you just pleased to see me? An intriguing example of game-piece placement in an early Viking ship burial at Salme, on the Estonian island of Saaremaa

- 13:50-14:10 **Ilaria Truzzi:** Theories for the use of the *Tesserae Lusoriae: sortes, pittacia* or a game?
- 14:10-14:30 **Marco Tibaldini:** Astragals and dice: gaming device and tools for divination
- 14:30-14:50 **Anne-Elizabeth Dunn-Vaturi:** May the players be protected: benevolent motifs on the game of 58 holes
- 14:50-15:10 Discussion
- 15:10-15:30 Coffee Break

SESSION 3 “Online presenters”

Moderator: Ilaria Truzzi

- 15:30-15:50 **Micael Sousa:** Rolling, flipping, and writing in modern board games: practical application to game design and teaching
- 15:50-16:10 **Alfonso Atala:** Revisiting the path from Pachisi to Poleana: opening debates about cultural diffusion of board games
- 16:10-16:30 **Aswini Gawli:** Documentation of Ancient Board Games from Rock Cut Caves of Maharashtra, their Cultural Continuity and Possibility of Relative Dating
- 16:30-16:50 **Singh Gyaneshwar:** God Comes to Play: Lord Venkateshwara plays the board game – Pagaday, with his devotee
- 16:50-17:10 **Dharmendra H.S.:** Goddess and her solitary game
- 17:10-17:30 Discussion

Game night at STOA Center for Body Arts and Studies



12 APRIL WEDNESDAY

SESSION 4 “Games beyond Myth”

Moderator: Tiago Hirth

9:30-9:50 **Chris van de Riet:** The Assembly of the Wicked: Notes towards a unified theory of board games

9:50-10:10 **Samantha Hammond:** "A Perfectly Elegant Political Solution": Board Games, Contemporary Fantasy, and the Political Unknown

10:10-10:30 **Elke Rogersdotter:** Once upon a time, when famine prevailed... Juxtaposing creation myths with urban myths regarding games and gaming

10:30-10:50 Discussion

10:50-11:10 Coffee Break

SESSION 5 “Evolution of Roman Board Games”

Moderator: Jacob Schmidt-Madsen

11:10-11:30 **Alessandro Pace:** Playing in Pompeii: research on the play culture of the ancient city

11:30-11:50 **Gabriella Carbone:** Allusions to gaming practices in the Cento de Alea

11:50-12:10 **Georgi Markov:** Messing about with tables boards

12:10-12:30 Discussion

12:30-13:30 LUNCH BREAK

SESSION 6 “Play as Politics and Legendary Players”

Moderator: Alex de Voogt

13:30-13:50 **Mary Flanagan:** The Myth of Innocent Play: Colonialism and Boardgames

13:50-14:10 **Lei Tianyue:** “The Genealogy of Chinese Shengguan tu: The Transformations of Culture and Space on the Game Board after the Qing Dynasty”

14:10-14:30 **Marten Walinga:** Draughts, myths and legends in 19th century Friesland.

14:30-14:50 Discussion

SESSION 7 “Sacred Geometry of Chance”

Moderator: Eddie Duggan

14:50-15:10 **Walter Crist:** Tackling the Myths of Ancient Play: Reflections from the Digital Ludeme Project

15:10-15:30 **Carla Cardoso:** Cardano, the physician and mathematician, in his role as a gambler in the 16th century

15:30-15:50 **Fatih Parlak:** La Fortuna, Crisis and Board Games in Early Modern Period

15:50-16:10 **Liliana Silva:** Numeri e Pedine Project: teaching myth of mathematics by board games

16:10-16:30 Discussion

16:30-16:50 Tea break

SESSION 8 “Contemporary Narratives in Board Games”

Moderator: Walter Crist

16:50-17:10 **Samuel Francblu:** Myths and promises of narrative gaming. How can we analyze the emergence of procedural narrative in board games?

17:10-17:30 **Aylin Pekanik:** Construction of Persona Through Personal Mythology in Dungeons & Dragons

17:30-17:50 **Himadri Agarwal:** Open D&D: Dungeons & Dragons as Democratic Mythmaking

17:50-18:10 Discussion

20:00 CONFERENCE DINNER IN STOA



13 APRIL THURSDAY

CULTURAL EVENTS

Pickup and Drop Point: <https://goo.gl/maps/XEnNWMzsj1j3URrg9>

Departure at 09:30

Trip to Ephesus
Artemis Temple
Ayasuluk Fortress
Ephesus Archaeological Museum



14 APRIL FRIDAY

- 09.30-11.30 Round Table Discussion about the future of the Board Game Studies Colloquium
- 11:30-11:45 Last speech of the organizers and greetings
- 11:45-12.00 Board Game Studies Colloquium 2024 Tampere, Finland.
- 12:00-13:30 Farewell Lunch
- 13:30 Post-Colloquium Excursion to Magnesia and Kuşadası Castle.

ABSTRACTS



Alex de Voogt, Drew University: “The Board Game Lens”

In 1998, I wrote in BGS: “the individual disciplines need to be complemented by a perspective which is primarily concerned with the board games themselves. ... to develop and show the importance of such a perspective providing academia with an insight unknown to the practitioners of its established disciplines.” Now, 25 years later, it is opportune to evaluate to what extent we succeeded to contribute to academia not just with information 'about' board games but with insight 'from' board games?

Anne-Elizabeth Dunn-Vaturi, The Metropolitan Museum of Art: “May the players be protected: benevolent motifs on the game of 58 holes”

In the absence of texts related to the game of 58 holes, we rely on the equipment and on the archaeological contexts to interpret them. The structure of the track as well as the shape and decoration of the gaming sets reveal symbolic aspects. The iconography of boards from one particular period of ancient Mesopotamian civilization, the Neo-Assyrian Empire (883-612 BCE), can be singled out. Several stone fragments of the game of 58 holes were found in the excavations initiated in the 1850s at Nimrud and Nineveh, the Neo-Assyrian capitals situated in northern Iraq. They were described then as “small monuments”, not games, because they were decorated with carved reliefs.

The themes deployed on the slabs that decorated the Assyrian palaces are reproduced in miniature on these gaming boards. The ornamental reliefs, which emphasized military conquest and glorified the Assyrian king, are imbued with symbolic meaning. The protection of the players is expressed by safeguard symbols, such as the shield applied to the shape of the board, and motifs associated to special holes on the track. Moreover, other apotropaic representations are illustrated on the Neo Assyrian stone boards, for instance animals and mythological beings. Since their publication in 1934 by C.J. Gadd, keeper of the Western Asiatic Department in the British Museum, the Neo-Assyrian gaming boards have not been studied as a group. This paper, adding new pieces to the corpus, offers to present these “small monuments” in light of recent iconographic studies.

Ilaria Truzzi, University of Milan: “Theories for the use of the *Tesserae Lusoriae*: *sortes*, *pittacia* or a game?”

The lecture will revisit all the theories about the destination of use of the so-called *tesserae lusoriae* from the years of the first studies in the XIX century until the most recent interpretations and discoveries. The initial hypothesis about the employment of the sticks

would associate their use to the provision of public donations like *frumentaria* or *alimenta* or to the indication of the seats in a theater or gladiator performances. In 1887, when a set was discovered together with other gaming material in a funerary context in Perugia, the first attempt to relate the specimens to a ludic purpose occurred. During the XX century the scholars would propose these different interpretations without coming to a single and accepted solution, meanwhile more and more *tesserae* were recovered from a variety of contexts. This research aims to discuss all the theories with a focus on the ludic ones: these rectangular sticks would serve to perform a sort of lottery game during banquets or events; finally, the different rules which have been hypothesized for this activity will be presented and examined.

Marco Tibaldini, University of Genoa: “Astragals and dice: gaming device and tools for divination”

The use of astragals as divinatory tools in the Graeco-Roman world is widely known, mainly thanks to the astragalomantic inscriptions that, starting from the late XIX century, have been found in Turkey and have been subject of several scientific publications.

What still remains quite obscure is their role in ritual or divinatory practices other than the ones described by the lot of oracles of Asia Minor, or how they evolved in the following periods.

Differently from astragals and despite their similar role in ancient gaming practices, the ritual and divinatory implications of cubic dice has been neglected by most scholars.

In this lecture I would like to present a selection of archaeological findings, a few Greek papyri, some medieval and Patristics texts that can give a more clear idea of how dice and astragals were used also as divinatory tools. This evidence can even show how the tradition of casting lots evolved from the Bronze Age till the Middle Age (and even further), adapting to the casting device that was more popular at the moment, without the necessity of changing its mechanics.

Eddie Duggan, Independent researcher: “Is that a hnefi in your mouth, or are you just pleased to see me? An intriguing example of game-piece placement in an early Viking ship burial at Salme, on the Estonian island of Saaremaa”

Some 12 years ago, a remarkable Viking ship burial was excavated in a farmyard in Salme, a village on the narrow part of a spit of land on the south-west part of a Baltic island off the west coast of Estonia, above the Gulf of Riga.

The ship burial, known as Salme II, is the companion to the smaller Salme I ship burial, excavated two years earlier and located nearby, both on the south bank of the Salme River (Salme jõgi). The two ships, one some 11.5m in length, the other 17.5m, contain human remains (more than 40 skeletons, with evidence of battle injuries) and a number of high-status artefacts, including weapons, (about 40 swords, some gilded with bronze), shields, spears, combs, several dice of antler and ivory, and at least 250 whalebone and walrus ivory gaming pieces, and various animal remains (bird, fish, and mammal). What is

described as “a complete set” of gaming pieces was found in the lap of one skeleton. The Salme II bodies were under a layer of shields, in turn covered with textile, possibly the ship’s sail, apparently weighted or secured with stones. The material is dated to ca. 700–750 AD (i.e. the early Vendel period, or the beginning of the Viking age).

The Salme twin-ship burial is remarkable for a number of reasons, such as the new evidence it provides for Viking ship burial funerary ritual, for the large number of bodies contained within the vessels (seven skeletons in Salme I; at least 34 in Salme II), and for the remarkable arrangement of the bodies – the seven bodies in Salme I were arranged post mortem as six oarsmen, sitting in pairs, with the seventh body placed as a steersman, while the 34 bodies (along with an extra skull) in the larger Salme II craft, were stacked in four layers. Bodies in the lowest layer were laid head-to-toe, and at right-angles to those in the three upper-layers. The excavation has not yet been fully published, but one of the bodies (XXXII, or Z) in the lowest Salme II layer had a bag of game pieces in his lap. A skeleton (XII, or L) in the second layer had a gaming piece or hnefi (king piece) – distinguished with a metal pin – placed in his mouth.

After setting out some of the details about what is known of this highly significant Viking mass-inhumation burial, the presentation will conclude with some consideration – naturally speculative – of the significance of a king piece in the mouth of a high-status skeleton that might be considered to have been placed “near the edge of the board” with regard to its position relative to the other skeletons.

Jonas Ritcher, Göttingen Academy of Sciences : “Winning with a broken die”

Dice can break, which renders them dysfunctional. If that happened during play, we would probably throw them away and get new dice for a proper roll. However, you could also count the pips on the broken die that are facing up. This may sound like an odd speculation. But it is actually a literary motif used in several medieval legends. We hear about gambling saints – and how a breaking die lets them win even after their opponent rolled the highest result possible. The motif juxtaposes (games of) chance and divine power.

Caesarius of Heisterbach tells an exemplum featuring saint Bernard of Clairvaux playing dice in one of his homilies. A saga about Saint Olaf in the Old Norse Heimskringla by Snorri Sturluson contains a similar story. Yet another version is included in the Galician Songs of Holy Mary, by king Alfonso X. of Castile (well known among game historians for his book of games).

The presentation will look at these legends from the 13th and 14th centuries, and compare them with some younger uses of this motif, up to modern times.

Hannah Freundlich, Université Sorbonne Paris Nord: “Women and Luck in Myths and Literature”

From the opposite point of view of the call for papers, my presentation will aim to study the link between women and luck in myths and the literature that has emerged from them. The study of the presence of women (playing or not) around the gaming table will lead us to

approach different types of games: Ludo/Pachisi; dice; cards. In fact, considering the distribution of the presence of women as prototypes of the mythic literature, which hosts one of the forms of expression of the legendary, I would like to propose a typology of these archetypes.

Jacob Schmidt-Madsen, University of Copenhagen: “Akshadyuta: Legacy of a Lost Game”

Arguably the most famous hymn in the earliest literary work from South Asia, known as the Rigveda, is "The Gambler's Lament". Composed in Vedic Sanskrit some 3000 years ago, it tells the story of a hapless gambler who lost all his possessions, including his family and friends, to the deceitful yet addictive vibhitaka nuts used as a form of dice. The impact of the game on South Asian culture can hardly be overstated. It played an important symbolic role in Vedic ritual, stood at the center of the celebrated Mahabharata epic, gave name to the four Puranic world ages, and informed the system of stick die divination thought to have originated in India. This despite the fact that the method of play did not survive into post-Vedic times. Only the idea of the game did. As a conceptual framework onto which new meanings, whether cultural or ludic, could be inscribed. Perhaps the most important thing to understand about the Vedic game of dice is that it was not a single game, but rather a family of games named after the dice, or akshas, with which it was played.

The game is never referred to by any specific name in the Vedic literature, and later terms such as aksha-dyuta and aksha-krida, translating as "dice-play", are used to designate a variety of games involving dice, including games played with pawns on a board. Attempts at reconstructing the Vedic dice game have not only suffered from the lack of any comprehensive description of it, but also from the facile attempt to artificially conflate multiple games into a single game. The present paper shifts the focus away from reconstructing any supposed original game and toward reconstructing the cultural and ludic legacy of Vedic dice-play as a whole. It does so by considering the cultural tropes to which it gave rise and by embracing current ludemic theory, which suggests that traditional games exist as unique combinations of disparate ludic elements, or ludemes, capable of traveling between games and engendering new games and game variants.

The paper begins by providing a brief overview of previous attempts at reconstructing the Vedic dice game as a single monolithic structure. It continues by exemplifying the manifold ways in which the idea rather than the reality of the game was received into later textual, visual, and ludic traditions. It concludes by examining available evidence for the survival of key ludemes from Vedic into medieval, early modern, and modern dice-play in South Asia.

Micael Sousa, University of Coimbra: “Rolling, flipping, and writing in modern board games: practical application to game design and teaching”

In our age of complexity, dominated by digitalization, board games are far from obsolete. Thousands of new games are published every year. Some are associated with very successful funding campaigns and business models. It is predicted that the board game industry will be worth 30 billion dollars by 2030, with growth rates of approximately 20% per year. This

popularity is associated with new design features, reimplementing game systems from older games and introducing innovative game mechanisms, components, and narratives. Among these more modern games are the writing games (e.g., Roll and Write; Flip and Write; etc.), where players activate a physical game component and track the decisions and game state on sheets of paper. Despite being minimalistic and cheap to produce, these games can deliver profound and meaningful playful experiences. Writing games are simple and practical ways to approach game prototyping for complex systems, those using more physical components or existing in digital platforms. This adaptability is why they gain added value in the context of game design teaching.

We propose to present a summary of the recent development of these writing games, discussing some of the paradigmatic and popular games. Then explore the development process of a Dungeon Crawler game, made for the back of a business card, just demanding a pen and a D6 dice to play. We end with the playtesting of this game, used during game design classes at different universities as an example of minimalist game design that allowed students to develop their games in minutes. Besides this, the game was also played by elementary school students who played the game and made illustrations to make it more representative of their preferences. This case study provides information about the development, playtest, and application of minimalist writing games in real teaching situations. We argue that mastering the basics of pen-and-paper game design can support the design process of analogue or digital games for entertainment or other game-based projects like gamification and serious games.

Alfonso Atala, Universidad Autónoma de Puebla: “Revisiting the path from Pachisi to Poleana: opening debates about cultural diffusion of board games”

During the XVI Board Games Studies Colloquium (2013) a brief ethnographic study about the Poleana board game played in the Mexican penitentiary system was presented. The study showed a wide variety of legends and stories about how the game was invented by inmates. Nevertheless, strong evidence pointed towards Poleana being a cultural adaptation of the Pollyanna board game. Somewhere and somehow this Pollyanna game was introduced to the penitentiary system in Mexico. The concept of diffusion was first introduced in Anthropology by Edward B. Tylor (1832-1917) and later formalized by Elliot Smith (1871-1937). This principle in anthropology states that all human activities and objects can be historically traced and empirically studied to consider individual and social application. This principle also conveys the belief that variations in the activities and objects studied, comply with particular social symbols. Two objectives are intended. First, present new data of the practice of the board game Poleana by the inmate population and penitentiary police from the Federal Prison of San Miguel in the city of Puebla, México. Second, show how Poleana is a good example to open debates around the cultural diffusion of board games.

Aswini Gawli: “Documentation of Ancient Board Games from Rock Cut Caves of Maharashtra, their Cultural Continuity and Possibility of Relative Dating”

The work to be presented contains a corpus of etched board games collected systematically from all horizontal surfaces in major rock cut cave complexes present within the state of Maharashtra, India.

Based on this compilation the team has made an attempt to understand the continuity of these games in present cultural context and how some games, despite showing a rich archaeological presence, have become culturally extinct from the state of Maharashtra. The team has also come across an anomaly of etched board games found in context of a cave complex that was inaccessible to humans for a large duration (possibly, sometime) post its abandonment due to the unstable geological nature of the location. Presence of games in such location can help date (at least that set of games) in relation to the cave itself.

Singh Gyaneshwar, Ramsons Kala Pratishtana: “God Comes to Play: Lord Venkateshwara plays the board game – Pagaday, with his devotee”

India ranks foremost among the truly ancient living civilizations on earth. The sub-continent (as it is popularly referred to) is a land of myths and legends. It boasts of a hoary oral tradition dating to the ‘before common era’. The written texts are also several centuries old. In the past, the vast corpus of knowledge in several spheres was passed on from one generation to the other by means of repeated recitation which led to the knowledge being memorised, analysed and imparted to the learner. Story telling/listening was an important part of the learning process and continues even to this date. The Geographical area of India has different languages, cuisines and practiced customs specific to the area and the same is for legends and myths. In my talk, I am going to examine a legend associated with one of the holiest shrines of India, Tirupati, dedicated to Lord Venkateshwara, also referred as Balaji. The large temple complex is situated on a range of seven hills which has important geologic formations located in the State of Andhra Pradesh in southern India. It is believed that continuous worship to the deity by visiting devotees and pilgrims has been going on over the millennia. The temple, in fact, boasts of one of the largest reserves of gold, silver and cash (held in bank deposits) dropped into huge donation boxes by pious believers. In aeons gone by, a devotee saint named Hathiram Bawaji from the northern part of India and settled in the temple town of Tirupati. Hathiram Bawaji was immersed in the devotional activities connected with the temple all through the day. Impressed by his unconditional surrender to his chosen deity, the myth is that, the Lord Balaji visits the monastery of his devotee every day and spends time with him discussing mundane things and plays a game of dice – Pagaday. This myth has been a part of the oral tradition and in the course of the presentation I will give instances of popular artworks which have captured this story of the God coming down from his heavenly abode to play with his devotee. I will also discuss the importance of this myth with regard to the game.

Dharmendra H.S., Ramsons Kala Pratishtana: “Goddess and her solitary game”

India is a land of mythologies and stories. Whether the myths are about twin brothers, seven sisters, or five seers, we often see them repeated across the subcontinent with slight

variations. The stories are not only repeated in different regions, but also in different religions. For example, the legend of five seers can be found in both Hindu lore and Islam. A similar repeating story is that of a goddess who is not associated with any male god. Such solitary goddesses are often considered wild in nature and powerful enough to slay demons on their own. They usually reside in a temple on the outskirts of a town and watch over both the town and the wilderness surrounding it, thus earning the title of the town/village's guardian deity (kshetrapala). The common myth about a guardian goddess is that she leaves her temple in the dead of night to roam the length and breadth of her land. She returns to her temple at dawn.

Goddess Kaivalya Devi is the guardian deity of the village of Kalale, located about 29 km south of Mysore. She is the patron deity of the Ursu community, who were hereditary courtiers to the royal family of Mysore (in the state of Karnataka, southern India). The goddess is depicted as fierce, holding a conch (shankha), a discus (chakra), a sword, and a trident (trishula) in four hands. She is seated on a pedestal, with her left leg pinning down the villainous Lavanasura who holds a sword and a shield. According to local legend, as night falls, the goddess leaves the temple and goes on a sojourn (sanchara). In a nearby field, she cooks and eats dinner. Just before daybreak, she returns to the temple and plays the solitary game of Aligulimane (Mancala). With the first rays of sunlight, she retires to the sanctum and merges into the idol. The 7x7 pits of the mancala board on the flagstones just outside the sanctum of the temple lend credibility to the legend of the goddess playing the game. I will further discuss the solitary games that can be played on the mancala board and another legend associated with the same game.

Chris van de Riet, Independent researcher: “The Assembly of the Wicked: Notes towards a unified theory of board games”

A twenty-fifth gathering of the best minds on a single topic, in casu board games, begs the question whether an overall theory of the subject matter is arrived at, or at least looming on the horizon. As the signs are unclear, perhaps the occasion calls for a tentative attempt towards this end.

As the great game collectors tend to keep silent on the subject of board game origin, the notes in this ‘Assembly’ article start from the paradigm as established by the famous Dutch historian Johan Huizinga in his 1949 booklet *Homo Ludens*: play precedes culture, gaming equates with religion, and agon (perennial strife) provides the motive. A curious problem here is that Huizinga, a prolific chess player in his day, does not mention board games even once.

Turning to the master of mythology, Joseph Campbell, we find a similar notion that the very roots of culture and religion might give us a lead. Alas, exactly at this point the eloquent exegete of world myth keeps us in the dark by referring to ‘the apprehension of the numinous’. He does supply us though with a most important idea, namely that during the many millennia preceding the great civilisations of India, Sumer, and Egypt (in which board games already had gained remarkable status), the main religious cult was that of a fecund

mother-earth, of the celestial source of this earthly wealth, and of the means to maintain this fruitful order, to wit the periodic killing of the benevolent king... Does this fit the board game puzzle?

As though graced with a peek behind the veil of time, it was the late British mythologist Alan F. Alford who, around the turn of the century, at long last filled in the blank left by 'apprehension of the numinous'. By extending the notion that heavenly bodies falling to earth could be interpreted as keeping up a communication that was shut down when the primeval Unity of Heaven and Earth was undone (see your bedside bible, or Zarathustra, or Stephen Hawking for that matter), he came to a whole new interpretation of the obese and fertile 'Venuses', and thereby of the very roots of culture and religion—as predicted, one might say, by both Huizinga and Campbell. A further extension of the Alford adagium into the realm of board games, as presented by this author at BGSC XIX in Nuremberg, is cited in shorthand.

Next, the over-ancient concept of the re-establishment of the lost Unity of Heaven and Earth is seen to link in with a number of deadly sports and games as evidenced, to name just a prominent example, by the re-assessment of the Knossos labyrinth, the underworld home of the Minotaur; this after Prof. Hans Georg Wunderlich. The last and most salient part—but already the 500 word limit for this abstract is nigh.

Samantha Hammond, Independent researcher: "A Perfectly Elegant Political Solution: Board Games, Contemporary Fantasy, and the Political Unknown"

Myths and legends are explanatory models: communal stories and patterns that help make sense of the world around us. They mediate our relationship to the unknown—to the vast natural world, to the movement of fate, to life and death--by putting names and shapes to such unsettling forces, rendering the world more legible and thus less frightening. In this paper, I argue that, in contemporary Western society, this explanatory power belongs also to the fantasy genre, the repository of modern myth--and I unpack the central, but undertheorised, role of the board game in shaping contemporary fantasy's relationship with myths, legends, and the unknown.

Board games influence the structure of myriad forms of storytelling, perhaps none more so than fantasy literature. Board game imagery undergirds the fantasy genre, with references to moves, countermoves, players, pawns, gambits, endgames, and map tables covered in tiny armies littering the pages of fantasy novels from Martin's *A Game of Thrones* to Eddings' *Pawn of Prophecy*. In particular, this imagery attends explorations of politics in fantasy literature, employed to describe political strategy and plays for power. I argue that such board game imagery shapes the scope of fantasy's political imagination, creating a dominant model of politics and power. Games take systems and slices of the world and order them, rendering them solvable through human practicality; as C. Thi Nguyen writes, "It is much easier to point out a perfectly elegant chess move than a perfectly elegant political solution." By invoking board game imagery to describe politics and power, fantasy authors

therefore invoke associations of legibility, schematisation, and strategy, constructing a model of political change that figures the world as rational and rewritable.

By exploring the dominant fantasy model of political change outlined above, I chart the influence of the board game on a shifting human relationship to the unknown, the indefinable, and the magical--a shift revealed as the myths and legends of old are transmuted into contemporary fantasy literature. Drawing as a case study on Seth Dickinson's *The Masquerade*, a recent fantasy series replete with board game imagery and richly described imagined board games, I argue that board game imagery can limit the scope of fantasy's political imagination, restricting it to 'rational' or 'realistic' change. However, such imagery can also be thematised, used to raise questions of agency and interrogate the very processes of imaginative scaffolding that create restrictive visions of political change. Through my study of the complex role of board games in shaping fantasy literature's political economy, I hope to invite further research into the interplay of board games and other forms of storytelling--and the way such interplay can mediate the question of how to relate to the unknown seeded in our earliest myths and legends.

Elke Rogersdotter, Uppsala University: "Once upon a time, when famine prevailed... Juxtaposing creation myths with urban myths regarding games and gaming"

From the myths that circulate around games, we can deduce the meaning of games and gaming, and thus something about the principles of our worldview. Conversely, we can expect that this type of myth-making has influenced prevailing perceptions of games and gaming in past environments, as well as thereby also the conditions for the actual research on these kinds of material expressions. These types of myths or taken-for-granted 'truths' can be found in both popular science and academic forums. They can be sorted according to different themes, from ideas concerning the origin and earliest history of gaming to such issues as the relationship between the gaming world and other, non-game-related societal and cultural aspects. They can be summarized in terms of tools, with the help of which we are able to frame, arrange, and control the game/gaming – the games are domesticated, so to speak. We can call this type of myth 'urban myths'. However, there is also a significantly older layer of myths that in various ways touch on the phenomenon of games and gaming, which include everything from creation myths to different etiological and anthropomorphic myths. The following paper intends to use a selection of such myths in order to identify and problematize these taken-for-granted truths precisely in terms of 'urban myths'. The selection derives from both creation- and anthropomorphic myth-making, as well as from the world of fiction, with examples drawn from, among other areas, India and Scandinavia, ancient Lydia and late Europe, as well as North America. The approach enables a shift in perspective, from ideas about games as a way of shaping, abstracting, and overviewing the world (games as secondary) to games as part of our being-in-the-world (games as primary), whereby the often complex and multifaceted involvement of games/gaming in human life and historical events is allowed to emerge.

Alessandro Pace, University of Fribourg: “Playing in Pompeii: research on the play culture of the ancient city”

Pompeii is one of the best known and best studied archaeological sites in the world. For this reason, the lack of an in-depth investigation on its play culture is a particularly serious shortcoming. The latest research perspectives have shown the centrality of play as a fundamental tool for understanding the cultural and social structures of the past. This work, building on the research instances developed within the ERC Locus Ludi project led by Véronique Dasen, aims to fill this glaring gap in Pompeian studies. For the first time the issue has been approached holistically, not limiting itself to single classes of material or single contexts as has been done so far, and involving all available data: archival, archaeological, iconographic, literary, epigraphic and numismatic.

The careful analysis of the primary data has allowed us to gain a new perspective on the play culture present in the city, debunking many commonplaces recurrent in the bibliography and the result of partial readings of the available information, such as the exclusive recurrence of gambling (alea) in the city's taverns (cauponae).

Although Pompeii's material culture is largely impervious to our attempts to read the data in terms of gender, status and biological age, what emerges is the endemic diffusion of game in the city, practised in the most diverse places, but according to much simpler dynamics and quite different from those projected by the literary sources, in which references to intellectually more demanding playful activities abound, such as ludus XII scripta or ludus latruncularum. Exactly as is the case today where the learned playful references in literature are matched by a different and less committed approach to play, often practised distractedly by everyone on their smartphones. But therein lies the magic and fascination of Pompeii, of making us feel so close to a reality that at the same time is so distant.

Gabriella Carbone, Liceo classico A. Diaz (Naples): “Allusions to gaming practices in the Cento de Alea”

In my eventual lecture I would like to introduce the Colloquium's audience to a particular poetic text, largely unknown and disregarded by scholars, called Cento De Alea.

I think that the word Alea is not a random choice and should be considered as a clear reference to the game of tabula.

This interpretation could be supported also by the comparison of the Cento de Alea with other compositions dated to the same period included in the Anthologia Latina.

Georgi Markov, National Museum of Natural History at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences: “Messing about with tables boards”

Tabla (tables) is quite popular in Bulgaria and is usually played as a series of three games, ‘prava’ tabla (i.e. “straight tables”), tapa (“stopper”) and gylbara until 7 points are reached. Similar but not quite identical to games played in neighbouring countries, their rules are provided, with a brief description of other less popular variants. A hybrid game, safir,

combining elements from *tabla* and historical western European games such as *Jacquet*, *Toccatagli* and *Puff* is introduced.

Mary Flanagan, Dartmouth College: “The Myth of Innocent Play: Colonialism and Boardgames”

In recent years the community has begun to unpack what were once considered “innocent” playthings, revealing a darker side of board game history. Colonial rationales, nationalistic mindsets, and white supremacy have passed through the design of games unnoticed by many players. Using games as different as *The Noble Game of Elephant & Castle*, *Reise um die Erde*, *Die Kolonisten* and more, we will shed light on how colonial myths are at play in representation, theme, mechanics, and game goals.

Board games have long held socio-cultural importance, and only in recent years has the community begun to unpack what was once considered neutral or “innocent” playthings. Games through the ages, from chess and backgammon to contemporary Eurogames, have served as sites for flirtation, fantasy, and fun. They have also helped player’s strategic thinking or reinforced cultural facts. Yet increasingly, board games, broadly speaking, are studied with more scrutiny. Our innocent playthings reveal a darker side of play where a tendency towards colonial rationales, nationalistic fervor, and white supremacy have passed through the design of games that until recently have been unnoticed by many who play games.

Our present research digs deeper into board games created since the industrial revolution to the present, discovering how board games can be considered sites of enculturation. We argue that board games have long acted as a form of enculturation—the process by which people learn the traditional dynamics, behaviors, language, and values of a given culture and assimilate norms, worldviews, practices, and beliefs. We argue that it is an ancient worldwide practice to incorporate games into the way enculturation occurs, and that such a process is still occurring today. Take, for example, *gyān caupar* (also called *gyānbazi*), a game from the Indian subcontinent, whose exemplars mostly date from the late 17th or early 18th Century. Leading scholars in the field such as Irving Finkel, Andrew Topsfield, and Jakob Schmidt-Madsen have demonstrated how the game boards and mechanics closely match the cosmological spiritual quests developed by different religious groups from India, Persia, and Nepal. These origins were intended to teach thinking about karma and moral lessons, though Schmidt-Madsen notes that these uses have fallen away. Like this ancient game, we have studied the ways in which board games across Europe and North America have served ideological interests and aligned with cultural forces. We are interested in how board games changed during the rise of colonialism and 19th-20th Century nationalist movements, particularly in games with more literal (rather than abstract) themes and more representational (incorporating images). While focusing on themes and images is a good way to begin to appreciate the aims and social contexts of a variety of mass-produced games, it is the complexity in the games, their very mechanics and what the mechanics symbolize, that we must turn to for additional significance. Using games as different as William Darton’s

The Noble Game of Elephant and Castle (1822), Ravensburger's Reise um die Erde: Ein humoristisches geographisches Gesellschaftsspiel (1884, reprinted 1983); Die Kolonisten 1910/1911, Jeu des échanges: France—colonies (, 1943) and Klaus Teuber's Settlers of Catan (1995) we will shed light on how enculturation operates in board games through representation, theme, mechanics, player positioning, and game goals. What does it mean to invite players to play out colonialist fantasies in lavishly crafted cultural artifacts and then use them as centerpieces to gather around for companionship at board game cafes, meetups, and conventions? By bringing in the history and materiality of this activity through critical readings of these games, we hope to offer a new perspective on the myths and legends being simulated and re-enacted in board games.

Lei Tianyue, Renmin University of China: “The Genealogy of Chinese Shengguan tu: The Transformations of Culture and Space on the Game Board after the Qing Dynasty”

Shengguan tu 陞官圖 [Promoting Officials or Table of Bureaucratic Promotion] is an antiquated board game in Chinese history, dating back as far as the Han Dynasty. It was gradually integrated into the Chinese bureaucracy during the Tang and Song dynasties. With the solid space of power on the board, the longevity of the game is a microcosm of the Chinese ancient bureaucracy and imperial examination system. Although it was called by different names and may be created by multiple creators, exist in multiple versions, and exist in formative stages for varying periods, the Power-space, constructed by the 'official promotion chart' since Han Dynasty, has been the sole theme of the Shengguan tu for a long period time. When it came to Ming-Qing Dynasties, the Shengguan tu board game began to show a trend of multi-way developments, with power space, geographical space, role space, divination and indoctrination space emerging, which could be seen as a multi-prism reflecting prosperous social life and ideology. Such a loosening paved the way for the coming modernization and globalization of ideas in the early twentieth century for this game. Putting the new wine into old bottles was what the Shengguan tu game board experienced for Chinese modernization in the late Qing and early Republican period. The 'new knowledge' and 'global ideas' were deliberately infused with the new form of the board game, intended to educate and inspire the nation. Huanqiu Lansheng Tu 環球攬勝圖 [The World Touring Game], a new form of Shengguan tu, was a representation of new-accepting the spatial knowledge and spatial perceptions that were already being gradually acquired and expanded by Chinese Elites.

The new Territorial-space and Role-space were a reflection of the common pursuit of becoming a member of the 'world' and 'modernity' of the time. In this process, the old Power-space was heavily criticized by the intelligentsia for its entanglement with the past, which was, of course, accompanied by a rejection of the old system and the old society. On this condition, a new Cultural-space was also formed as a result of the desire for republicanism, which filled the old indoctrination space of the time. The transmutation of the gaming space and the regeneration of information led to a heated discursive debate.

Shengguan tu could be seen as the public opinion arena of cross swords for Chinese modern design in the first half of the twentieth century.

Marten Walinga, World championship Frisian Draughts Foundation: “Draughts, myths and legends in 19th century Friesland”

Every game has its myths and its legends. In the Dutch province of Fryslân/Frisia, certain draughts players were already legendary during their lifetime. In this presentation, I will investigate how their legendary status could come about and how it was connected to other legends in other games and sports, for example skate racing (pure physical) and keatsen/Frisian handball.

It will turn out that innkeepers played a crucial role in creating and maintaining the legendary status of certain players. However, the players of Frisian draughts emancipated themselves from this ‘mythical’ period by creating their own organisation.

Nevertheless, the ‘mythical period’ is quite well documented and turns out to form the cradle of Frisian draughts as it is played nowadays. In addition, certain legendary players left us a legacy, consisting of game fragments and silver prizes, that forms conclusive proof that, contrary to modern popular belief, the game of Frisian Draughts had an absolute monopoly as a mind sport in 19th-century Fryslân/Frisia.

Walter Crist, Maastricht University: “Tackling the Myths of Ancient Play: Reflections from the Digital Ludeme Project”

For as long as people have written about the games of antiquity, they have speculated on the rules for how they were played. As time has passed and more data has been collected about games from around the world, these speculations have gradually become a better reflection of their ancient reality. Nevertheless, some myths have persisted based on commonly-cited statements and assumptions. While it is impossible to know for sure how any given ancient game was played, we are better able to understand and categorize many of these games.

Over the past five years, the Digital Ludeme Project has married computational techniques with the study of ancient games to further improve the methods, tools, and approaches to the study of the games of the past. The Ludii general game system, which can play any board game and use Artificial Intelligence agents to play and measure gameplay, can be used as a tool for reconstructing games, as well as to examine specific case-studies to discover more information about particular games or groups of games. A major goal of the project has been achieved, and the software is able to automatically propose playable rulesets for games with lost information based on their conceptual similarity and distance in a cultural social network to other games. This programmatic method provides a quantitative method for identifying possibilities on how these games were played.

Other case studies on specific games highlight developments that facilitate the analysis of games using playout experiments. Three examples will be highlighted. First, the application of rules known for Ludus Latrunculorum was applied to known quadrangular boards

contemporary to the Roman Empire, finding that the larger boards were not suitable for these rules because they did not end after 2500 turns, and thus these were unlikely to be the rules that were played on these boards. Next, we performed an examination of the game of 58 Holes, and using ethnographic analogy applied rules for Tab games on the board and compared them to the usually posited race-game rules for this game. It was found that Tab games also can be played equally as well on this board, and indeed that the race game did not play well on all boards because player one wins almost every time. Finally, we discuss the application of playout experiments to a possible game board from Roman Limburg, to try to identify playing rules that reproduce observed use-wear on the artifact.

These applications of computational methods to the archaeological and historical evidence can help to question some of the persistent myths about ancient games, but it is important to be careful not to create further myths. These challenges will also be addressed throughout the paper.

Carla Cardoso, University of Lisbon: “Cardano, the physician and mathematician, in his role as a gambler in the 16th century”

Gerolamo Cardano, 1501-1576, Italy.

Cardano's genius in mathematics, particularly his contributions to the field of algebra, is now recognised. However, in his own words, Cardano considered himself a physician, with mathematics as a secondary occupation.

Cardano was, all his life, a fan of gambling, and was even assumed to be addicted to it. At the same time, his involvement in astrological studies and dream interpretation earned him the reputation of a superstitious charlatan, a myth that has endured for four centuries.

Since the middle of the 20th century, with the detailed study of his works, namely of the analysis of *Liber de Ludo Aleae* (The Book on Games of Chance), there has been a growing acceptance that the probabilistic developments found in his work let us view Cardano as the first mathematician studying probability. Among descriptions, comments and reasoning about chess, dice, backgammon or cards, it is possible to identify the birth of the Theory of Probability.

Fatih Parlak, Cappadocia University: “La Fortuna, Crisis and Board Games in Early Modern Period”

According to evidence, chance-based board games gained increasing popularity in early modern Europe. As opposed to the traditional games that had been played since the Middle Ages (chess, backgammon, checkers, etc.), one of the main characteristics of board games that were invented in the early modern period is that they were based only on chance. With their highly reduced sophistication, these games did not require the players to decide on any strategy, except requiring them to roll the dice. Then the players moved their counters on a spiral track or landed on a space that bears the dice combination that the player had rolled. Although unsophisticated in their mechanisms, these chance-based board games became popular so much so that they were produced in many forms and themes (Seville 2008).

The dissemination and popularity of chance-based board games in the early modern period is directly linked with the printing technology (Kelly 2011). Produced in big amounts in a very quick fashion and rather inexpensive, printing helped game playing become a widespread pastime not only among the elite but also for the rest of the society including children. The printing technology also helped spread of gambling.

The quick spread of chance-based games in early modern Europe suggests a phenomenal transition in the society that simultaneously became reliant on luck and fortune. Studies have explored this phenomenon in fields such as art and literature (Vogt 2017). The focus of these studies has been on the use of Fortuna (the goddess of luck) images in visual arts, the change of meaning of concepts of fortune and misfortune that became increasingly money-related, and the demise of Fortuna images with the invention of probability calculation that had been premised on better predictions in gambling.

Anthropological studies on games, on the other hand, point at some factors that shed light on the underlying reasons of such transitions. Accordingly, “games of chance appear to flourish in the presence of environmental, individual, and social uncertainty regardless of the relative complexity of the cultures in which they occur” (Sutton-Smith & Roberts 1971). This finding is relevant in drawing a rightful connection between social uncertainty in the early modern period and players’ changing preferences of what kind of games they wanted to play.

This interdisciplinary research firstly investigates the factors that contributed to the transformation of ‘player preferences’ that shifted from skill-based games in the Middle Ages to unsophisticated chance-based games in the early modern period. In the light of anthropological studies on games, this research examines the ‘pressure points’ on early modern players in four clusters: Environmental factors, Religio/Political factors, Medical factors, and Economic factors. These pressure points, I propose, played an important role in creating the state of precariousness ubiquitously found in the early modern period, which, then, shifted the player preferences. Some of these factors were broadly investigated and discussed by scholars as the ‘General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century’ (Parker & Smith 1978), ‘Little Ice Age’ (Mann 2002), and ‘Climate of Rebellion’ (White 2011).

Liliana Silva, University of Messina: “Numeri e Pedine Project: teaching myth of mathematics by board games”

Ancient myth of mathematics meets modern myth of teaching in “Numeri e Pedine” (Numbers and Pawns), a collection of research experiences on the process of teaching/learning mathematics in primary and lower secondary school through the use of boardgames. The general aim of the project is research on mathematics education and its assessment in a playful context while the specific objectives concern the dissemination of the materials developed within such research through professional training courses involving the researchers and teachers throughout Italy and the study of how to make this process systematic, with particular reference to the use of board games as educational and assessment tools.

Considering the importance of student's voices, the "Numeri e Pedine" project also focuses on gathering their views, even in the early grades. First, it is interesting to consider the role of play as a tool for exercising self-assessment and self-regulative skills without perceiving any workload. This supports them in the development of error tolerance, and thus becomes the object maturation a necessary skill according to a lifelong learning perspective. This appears particularly significant in the context of mathematics. To promote such a view, it is important to train teachers in the use of board games as useful means in the process of working on errors, starting from their own experience and supporting them self-assessment of their own goals. The design and implementation of training courses is a subject of research. It seems important to work on the development of a community of practice/play that works on the possibility of practicing feedback and work on self-assessment and errors, in order not only to share experiences of working in the classroom, but also to reframe the work done. Motivation - along with emotions - therefore becomes an essential element for self-assessment to contribute to the development of self-regulatory attitudes, just as fundamental is the creation of a classroom community that allows one to build a "place" where one has the opportunity to make mistakes. A further research direction is thus given by the role of the affective sphere in learning mathematics in a playful or ludiform context. The contribution will present the role of self-assessment within the project "Numeri e Pedine", based on a community of inquiry formed, in the last two years, by researchers and primary mathematics teachers from Italy. After a short introduction about the features of the boardgames chosen for this mathematics education project, we analyze the importance of self-assessment models when using board games. Both the enhancement of children's mathematical learning and of teachers' daily practices are considered viable. Finally, we propose possible research pathways that could be integrated in the project in its next developments in future years and that will allow better research of the mathematical (and non-mathematical) competencies that are developed by children. Errors are considered as tools for learning and enhancement when purposely exploited.

Samuel Francblu, L'Assoce- Concentré de Culture: "Myths and promises of narrative gaming. How can we analyze the emergence of procedural narrative in board games?"

In the board game sector, designers have been trying for the last ten years (Chouffot, 2019) to build instances of regulation of diegetic elements which are purely 'analogue' (in the sense given by Wake, 2019), such as "non-player characters" . They also create various narrative procedures that allow the generation of fictional universes, and, through automated mechanisms, the creation of a new plot for each game.

Numerous blogs, articles and videos from this "community of practice" (Brody, 2015) try to characterise these games that allow "living stories": the narrative question preoccupies the sector (Francblu, 2022).

Is a new way of telling stories being sought through the modern board game? What notions used in narratology can be mobilised to analyse the narrative question in the board game? Is the ability of the board game to generate narratives a myth rather than anything else?

Should it be read as an expression of a generalised appetite for "storytelling" in the sense critically addressed by C. Salmon (2007) or by A. Fouillet (2022)? Or is there, ultimately, a specificity of the 'analogue' procedural narrative?

The 'hybrid game', or the importation of digital devices into board game material, has been dealt with elsewhere (Chouffot, *ibid.*); as has the digitalisation of classic board games (e.g., Bustros, 2009, or Bard, 2019). It is therefore more a question of understanding the perspectives opened up by the application to 'analogue' games of mechanisms inspired by digital know-how.

This paper will report on a research that articulates a field survey on the subject of uses with a semio-communication-inspired analysis of automated narrative procedures implemented in a large corpus of modern board games, ultimately proposing three lines of thought: Firstly, it will analyse different forms of board games with regard to the notions commonly used in the field of narratology. Different perspectives will then be opened, by mobilising an experimental model to think about the articulation of narrative, story, and storytelling in an interactive context. This theoretical framework will allow us to think about the creative possibilities but also the limits of the current forms of 'analogue' procedural narration.

On the other hand, if contemporary design responds to the social context of board game practices (Francblu, 2020), to what need can the narrative procedures provide an answer? How do these systems modify the place of the game in the cultural space? We will try to evaluate whether the automation mechanisms facilitate access to play as a leisure practice.

Finally, if for Ryan (2007) the dialogue between narratology and ludology "can prove to be an essential step in the re-foundation of the concepts of narrative theory", what impact can the importation of mechanisms inherited from digital narration have on the status of the board game as a cultural product, producer of stories and worlds?

Aylin Pekanik, Cappadocia University: "Construction of Persona Through Personal Mythology in Dungeons & Dragons"

The theory of personal mythology examines the set of beliefs, ideals, goals, and ambitions which make up a person's internalized story. Through personal myth making, individuals can self examine, self critique, and self actualize, interweaving the actual and the idealized self. The concept of personal mythology reaches a completely new dimension within the context of tabletop role playing games; a versatile and spontaneous medium which allows individuals to construct customized and deeply personal avatars, and place them within the framework of stories in order to facilitate a personal experience. Games such as Dungeons & Dragons present the players with a diverse and safe space in which they can either indulge in escapism into perfected worlds or reach catharsis through the simulation of real life difficulties. As the players interact with this world through characters, the construction of these characters reveals intriguing layers through which we may glimpse into the inner psyche of the players. This constructed persona encompasses both the internal workings of a character who is thrust into otherworldly conflicts and physical embodiment where players must utilize their human embodiments to emulate the fantastical aesthetics of an imaginary

race. While the fantastical setting of Dungeons & Dragons facilitates the creation of a legendary mythology, the act of constructing and roleplaying a distinct character separate from reality also creates a personal mythology where the persona maintains an intimate connection with the player even amidst outlandish adventures. This persona may be closely linked to the player's individual personality or a distinctly different persona which requires a level of disassociation. With the invention of multiple characters, the players compartmentalize various facets of their personalities, manifesting each as a fully realized individual with a unique voice. While some players fully engage with the constructed persona within the proper context while others may refuse to fully give into the imaginary space and choose to indulge in metagaming, utilizing information and experiences that the character within the story is not privy to which denotes an internalized isolation of the inner self from the outer self or a denial of the freedom to experiment within the imagined setting. Each player interacts with the gaming space differently as the open ended role playing aspect of Dungeons & Dragons necessitates that the real life experiences and expectations of the players are deeply intertwined with the constructed mythology. As such, analyzing the different approaches to personal myth making reveals the potential of Dungeons & Dragons to facilitate the mythologizing of personas that are both entirely separate and deeply inseparable from the players themselves.

Himadri Agarwal, University of Maryland: "Open D&D: Dungeons & Dragons as Democratic Mythmaking"

In this paper, I will juxtapose the various mythological traditions depicted in Dungeons & Dragons (D&D), with each other, as well as with the form of the game, to argue that rather than simply secularizing myth, playing Dungeons & Dragons is an act of mythmaking in itself. For this purpose, I will put Lévi Strauss' writings on myth in conversation with my experiences playing the 5th edition of Dungeons & Dragons. Levi Strauss, in his *A Savage Mind*, says that "mythical thought is a kind of intellectual bricolage" (Lévi-Strauss, 11) in that myths gain meaning from the ways in which they are put together, rather than having intrinsic value. I will apply these concepts to my own games of Dungeons & Dragons, and explore how character concepts, setting details, and lore combine in different ways, across sessions and campaigns, and contribute to the creation of myth. While Strauss says that myth is both historical and ahistorical, Lars Konzack and Ian Dall, in their chapter "Fantasy and Medievalism in Role-Playing Games" call D&D a "full-scale anachronism." Most Dungeons & Dragons campaigns have a medieval setting, but the anachronistic nature and collaborative form of the game mean that it cannot be assigned a time period. I will put these ideas together to argue that, in tandem with Strauss' ideas, D&D is neither historical nor ahistorical; D&D is myth. Olivia Hasslett writes of roleplaying games that "...these methods of storytelling are quickly evolving into a new genre of literacy, featuring immersive and interactive narration alongside multiple-authorship"; I will consider these aspects of immersive narration, interactivity, and multiple-authorship, along with the orality of the game, to further my argument. When I sit around a table with my friends, rolling dice and

roleplaying my D&D character, I am not simply having a good time; I am also contributing to the creation of a new culture, to the forging of a new mythology. Through this project, I aim to push the boundaries of modern understandings of mythmaking, asserting that myth is not as distant as we often make it out to be; for as long as we keep coming together and telling stories, we will keep creating mythologies; myth is not just the 'way back when', it is also the here and now. As I write this, controversy surrounds the open gaming license of D&D 5e, and it is even more important to remember that games and their players are larger than the capitalistic forces that try to control them. Playing D&D is mythmaking, and like myth, it is for everyone; to restrict its reach is to rob it of meaning.

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