2019-n°1

Chloé Aubry, Cora Krömer, Brigitte Ouvry-Vial (dir.), *Reading & Gaming*

« *Evolution of Reading: The Case of 'Dungeons & Dragons', a fantasy tabletop role-playing game* »

Francesca Orestano (University of Milan, Italy)

Résumé
L'article interroge le concept d'évolution appliqué aux compétences de lecture et à l'histoire du livre. D'une enquête sur la littérature hybride, les textes visuels et l'intermédialité, il passe à l'analyse des schémas caractérisant la littérature interactive (livres dont vous êtes le héros), les aventures solitaires et les jeux de rôle. L'exemple concret est un célèbre jeu des années soixante-dix *Donjons & Dragons*. Le livre des règles de D&D est analysé en prêtant attention aux aspects qui soutiennent l'activité ludique mais aussi aux éléments littéraires ancrés dans le jeu. Les deux suggèrent une relation mutuelle complexe et le potentiel narratif du jeu.

Mots-clés
Livres, littérature hybride, verbal et visuel, littérature interactive, livre dont vous êtes le héros, jeu de rôle solitaire d'aventures, *Donjons & Dragons (Dungeons & Dragons)*

Abstract
The article questions the concept of evolution in relation to the ability of reading, and the history of books. From a survey of cross-over literature, visual texts, and intermediality, it moves into analyzing the patterns that characterize branching-path books, solitaire adventures, and role-playing games. The case in point is a famous game of the Seventies, *Dungeons & Dragons*. The Rule Book of *Dungeons & Dragons* is analyzed, paying attention to the features that support the gaming activity, but also to the literary elements embedded in the game. Both suggest a complex mutual relationship and the narrative potential attached to gaming.

Keywords
Books, crossover literature, verbal and visual, branching-path books, role-playing solitaire adventures, *Dungeons & Dragons*

Evolution of the book?

Within the historico-philosophical boundaries that define the evolution of the book, as well as the parallel evolution of reading and of the reader, the value of the word "evolution" is not entirely established, nor granted[1]. Conventionally, readers seem to grow, to evolve, from the young consumers of the illustrated pages of the first ABCs, into older and more skilled book users, who can decode words ordered in columns and chapters in grammars and primers, and appreciate stories told with pictures *and* words. John Amos Comenius's 1658 *Orbis Sensualium Pictus*, with its inviting caption "*Veni, puer*!" manifestly welcomed a child into an illustrated universe, where images took precedence over the written text.

Comenius, *Orbis Sensualium Pictus*[2]

Today however the concept of "evolution" of the book, if we take the Darwinian outlook and consider the written text reader as the victorious species – but is it really so, and not in fact the reverse? The stronger species being the one unencumbered with literacy? – today such

---

[1] SUAREZ M.F., WOUDHUYSEN H.R. (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to the Book*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, provides full historical information on books and their varieties.
[2] Source : Wikimedia Commons [en ligne] <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/4/48/Comenius_Orbis.jpg/440px-Comenius_Orbis.jpg>, accessed 28th January 2018.

concept is less clear, more ambiguous, and questionable. Do we have to imagine the literate reader as an endangered species? Within a global multicultural horizon, does the concept of the evolution of reading apply at all? Literacy as we know has its uses, and abuses. These notes aim at offering a few remarks on the subject, taking into consideration illustrated books as well as more recent gamebooks that foster ulterior activities connected with the act of reading.

Despite the fact that publishers seem keen on offering books directed to readerships finely divided and subdivided according to age slots, the addressee of a story is not necessarily a person relegated to a definite age group. In fact the category of crossover literature weakens, blurs, endangers and explodes all canonical critical distinctions[3]. While Alice's statement in 1865 "What is the use of a book without pictures …?"[4] was evidently pronounced by a child and for a child, today's artist Shaun Tan with *The Arrival* (2008) offers to readers of all ages a poignant wordless masterpiece, representing a collective experience of sadness and loss, war and destruction, and a family's migration into a foreign universe.

Actually our civilization seems to stand upon an old kind of epistemic dilemma when images and words are contrasted: the idea that to read the word, the scripture, means to be above and beyond the simple mechanism of visual perception is culturally ingrained in the Western mind, whenever the cultures of the book – "*scripta manent*"! – are cast against cultures without letters and without books. Poets loved to bypass such gap: the Horatian concept of "*ut pictura poesis*" became, in Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Laokoon oder über die Grenzen der Mahlerey und Poesie* (1766), a clever contrastive analysis of the capabilities of each art, examining images as consistent within one given space, and writing as unfolding in time. This distinction, however, would become increasingly clouded and inapplicable during the century of mass visual culture that witnessed the evolution of the techniques of the observer[5], as argued in *Strange Sisters: Literature and Aesthetics in the Nineteenth Century*[6]. The last century has been marked by an ongoing debate between philosophers set on the primacy of the word against

---

[3] The ground-breaking statement by KNOEPFLMACHER U.C., MYERS M., "Cross-Writing and the Reconceptualizing of Children's Literary Studies", *Children's Literature*, vol. 25, 1997, p. vii-xvii, would be followed by FALCONER R., *The Crossover Novel: Contemporary Children's Literature and Culture*, New York, Routledge, 1999, and the entry by BECKETT S.L., "Crossover Literature", NEL P., PAUL L. (eds.), *Keywords for Children's Literature*, New York, New York University Press, 2011, p. 58-61.

[4] CARROLL L., *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass*, ed. P. HUNT, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009.

[5] CRARY J., *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge (MA), MIT Press, 1993.

[6] ORESTANO F., FRIGERIO F. (eds.), *Strange Sisters: Literature and Aesthetics in the Nineteenth* Century, Oxford, Peter Lang, 2009.

supporters of the primacy of perception[7]. Jean-François Lyotard with his intriguing statement *Discours, figure* (1971) offered a kind of philosophical solution in view of the confusingly crowded epistemic horizon of postmodernity. In 1993 the debate still seemed encapsulated in Martin Jay's *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-century French Thought* (1993), and Michael Levin's *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision* (1993). They explored two sides of the same dilemma. Out of that context, the critical trend of visual studies would give powerful impulse to the school of the supporters of the primacy of vision. Children's literature then would enter the critical scenario, and set a remarkable emphasis on the value of picture books, not only with scholarly research into their history, but by paying great attention to recent products, culturally and aesthetically fashioned to reach the widest possible audience. As stated by William Moebius,

> As a keyword, "picturebook" is a loaded gun, especially once it has gone from being an artifact of childhood (evoked by the French locution *album de jeunesse*, as something of a memory book long out of print) to a staple of print culture, mass marketing, and official scrutiny, a sustainable commodity ratified by national media and local teachers and librarians as well as parents[8].

Thus, if we imagine our visual perception in terms of an epistemic strategy adopted when the operations of the intellect are not yet fully developed, and eventually discarded when the ability to read the text takes over, then we have indeed to question the concept of evolution applied not only to the young reader, but to our community at large. Such concept actually collides against the accepted reality of crossover literature and crossover graphic novels, and the growing popularity of books for readers of all ages with plenty of illustrations[9].

And if from assessing crossover fiction and graphic novels we move into intermediality, are we bent on a new descent of man? And what if from the act of reading we "descend" to gaming?

Illustrations, conventionally considered as genetically antecedent and ancillary to the written text, do not just cover their own meaningful space of signification, but actually overflow onto the written page as well as into other media. The wealth of sense they encapsulate and convey also generates spin-off products, such as cards, games, figurines, models, gadgets and

---

[7] From L. WITTGENSTEIN with *Tractatus Logicus-Philosophicus* (1922), we move to the outstanding contributions to the debate by MITCHELL W.J.T., *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1986, and especially ID., *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1994.

[8] MOEBIUS W., "Picture Books", P. NEL, L. PAUL (eds.), *Keywords for Children's Literature*, *op. cit.*, p. 170; NIKOLAJEVA M., SCOTT C., *How Picture Books Work*, New York, Routledge, 2000.

[9] BECKETT S.L. (ed.), *Transcending Boundaries. Writing for a Dual Audience of Children and Adults*, New York, Garland Publishing, 1999.

toys, music and movies. Such materials, which proliferate from the original verbal source (but the reverse also occurs[10]) invite our critical thought to move away from, and beyond intertextuality, and into the category of intermediality, supported by the practice of remediation[11]. Beyond visual literacy, or literary visualcy[12], we are to encounter the multi-shaped universe where we examine books and games in unison. The aptest definition for such a vastly differentiated space seems that of the "medial constellation constituting a given media product", as defined by Rajewsky, and earlier on by Bolter and Grusin[13].

E. T. Extra Terrestrial: PVC Rubber 1982 toy "ET reading book"[14]

As a last useful parallel, I suggest that we examine Charles de Bovelles's (1479-1567) famous engraving, representing the pyramid of the living according to a humanist view of the world, in order to describe the nature of readers, and the nature of knowledge.

---

[10] But the reverse may also occur: the famous movie *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982), an American science fiction fantasy film co-produced and directed by Steven Spielberg and written by Melissa Mathison, generated the novelization by KOTZWINKLE W., *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial: A Novel*, Sphere, London, 1982, based on Mathison's screenplay, and the sequel *E.T.: The Book of the Green Planet*, London, Sphere, 1985.

[11] BOLTER J.D., GRUSIN, R., *Remediation. Understanding New Media*, Cambridge (MA)/London, MIT Press, 2000.

[12] MITCHELL W. J. T., "Visual Literacy or Literary Visualcy?", in ELKINS, J. (ed.), *Visual Literacy*, New York, Routledge, 2008, p. 11-29.

[13] RAJEWSKY I.O., "Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality", in *Intermédialités. Histoire et théorie des arts, des lettres et des techniques* Numéro 6 (Automne, 2005), p. 52, <http://cri.histart.umontreal.ca/cri/fr/intermedialites/p6/pdfs/p6_rajewsky_text.pdf>, accessed 31th July 2017.

[14] Source : Wikimedia Commons.
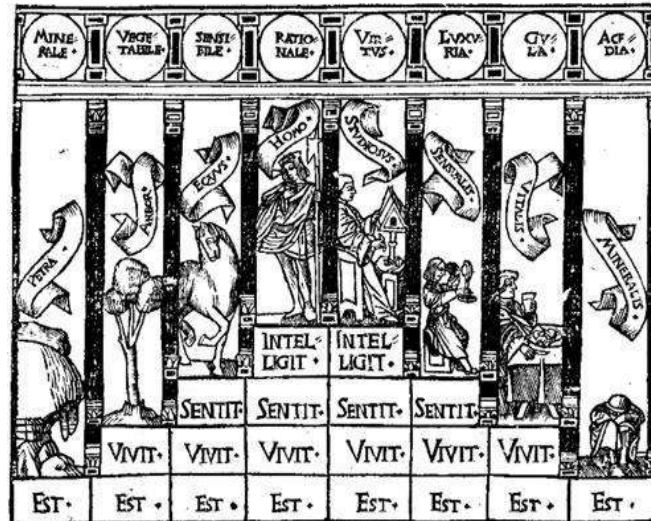
A Humanist View of the World: Charles de Bovelles

This image describes human achievements by using a kind of ladder: from the stone, that merely exists ("est") on the lowest step, we rise to the plant that grows ("vivit"), to the horse that feels ("sentit"), then to man who is endowed with intelligence and virtue ("intelligit"). Man is set at the top of the pyramid. At first, we may infer that unlike the stone, the plant, the horse, each respectively endowed with simple existence, with physical growth and a sensitive nature, the rational man alone can stand on the top rung of the ascending ladder. De Bovelles's humanist ladder seems to give absolute precedence to the rational man, or "homo studiosus" endowed with "virtus": would his books be entirely and exclusively made of words?

If we consider the other side of the ladder, we find that "homo studiosus" is not only capable of pure abstract reasoning based upon literacy, but he also "vivit" and "sentit". This man is simultaneously "studiosus", "sensualis" and "vitalis". Thus, the profile of our ideal reader includes, in addition to his or her ability to read, the desire to feed upon – to *consume* – at once written texts and picture books like a glutton. He can read the page but also enjoy its physical features like the sensualist, who, in short, masters all these abilities at once, without casting visual perception and the senses against and below his logical skills.

Here I wish to draw a parallel between the rational man and the reader. Such category includes readers who consider the book primarily as a ream of paper, cardboard, and ink. It also includes readers who "feed" upon books, in order to grow up and develop their senses (here children figure at large, as users of books that enhance the experience of touching the fur of an

animal, the scaly coat of a dragon, the silky texture of fish skin). The many metaphors used by writers for book-hungry children suggest this kind of relationship, not yet moving toward the pure abstraction of the act of reading, but still viewed under the species of food and nourishment. Briefly, we may think of Maria Edgeworth's warnings about sweet food in the Preface to *The Parent's Assistant* (1796); of Victorian "cramming"; of Frances Hodgson Burnett's *A Little Princess* (1905), who gobbles up books; and of Sir Leslie Stephen addressing Virginia with a "dearest child, how you gobble!"[15]

The engraving of a sixteenth-century humanist suggests that word and image are to be contrasted and compared, but are not conflicting; that new technologies with screen-based texts exist in continuity with older forms of reading. Page and screen can both activate reading, and foster those multitasking abilities that are needed in order to enjoy a constellation of experiences, simultaneous with the act of reading, and connected with gaming.

Branching-path books

The concept of books as food, and books for the senses, does not prevent, but rather enhances the rise of genres that stimulate the reader activity as a creator of narrative patterns. These genres gradually contribute to the launch of products that while promoting the reader's activity also offer an additional experience, defined as the gamification of reading. My survey presents such developments as if taking place sequentially: in fact, from the late Sixties onwards, new narrative formulas were directly adapted, transformed and marketed into different media, so that the scenario I hope to describe is actually teeming with different simultaneous phenomena.

The so-called branching-path books, that can be considered the ancestors of fiction gamebooks and role-playing games (also called "RPG"), already promoted a new strategy of consumption, still essentially literary, and textual. In the Sixties, branching-path books invited readers to follow narrative tracks out of their own choice, by skipping to pages containing unexpected fictional developments. This chance to redirect the hermeneutic experience occurred at certain given turning points in the plot, where multiple choices were presented, usually with a binary option. Readers would thus determine the development of the story, being

---

[15] ORESTANO F., "The Child as Common Reader: the 'true complexity of reading' and the progress from hell to paradise", in STYLES M., ARIZPE E. (eds.), *Acts of Reading. Teachers, Text and Childhood*, Stoke on Trent, Trentham Books, 2009, p. 97-112.

endowed with active authorial power to direct the story to its ending, whether "successful" or "failure". This act of reading can still be described as a solitary adventure.

The reader thus involved did not necessarily belong to one age group: authors addressed both young and adult readers. In these stories the plot is shaped like a labyrinth: a good or a wrong turn determines the progress and the exit. Plot construction seems to take precedence over the ending: readers are enticed into the pursuit of numerous, virtually endless options that may enrich the plot indefinitely, conferring emphasis on the sheer narrative structure of the story, and on the active role of the reader.

These kinds of stories may be seen as originating in a postmodern universe of literary nature, shaped like a multi-shelf "Library of Babel", according to Jorge Louis Borges, and favouring the open-form literary construction against formulas of the past that appeared to constrict and impoverish authorial creativity. In Borges's short story "Examination of the Work of Herbert Quain" (1941) a fictional author addresses his readers offering nine possible endings; in "The Garden of Forking Paths" (1941) Borges similarly dwells on the dynamics of narrative proliferation. The dawning of branching-path books has also been connected with the literary experimentation that took place at the French literary workshop *Oulipo* where such format was discussed under the name "tree literature." Among the books spawned in such context, I wish to mention Italo Calvino's *Il castello dei destini incrociati* (1969), where a pack of tarot cards designates the nature of the different characters and determines their stories. Also the "librogame" *Tante storie per giocare* (1971) by Gianni Rodari, offers a collection where each story comes with three different endings, and the idea of playing ("giocare") with the book is clearly expressed. Notably, Calvino and Rodari adopted the same strategy for children and for grown-up readers.

Branching-path books acquired a remarkable popularity in the 1970s. The successful series entitled *Choose Your Own Adventure* (CYOA) started in 1979 and went on until 1998 with 185 titles, acquiring popularity and a global readership when translated into more than 25 languages. Other similar series would soon appear: TSR published *Endless Quest*, 36 stories based on role-playing games, between 1982 and 1987. Ballantine published the *Find Your Fate* series, where readers were invited to enter the world of Indiana Jones or James Bond. Thus the move from page to screen easily reverted from screen to page. Mainly written for young readers, these branching-path books also catered to an adult audience with stories that offered business simulation and erotica. The success of the formula was also determined by its educational potential, which became evident when in 2011 McGraw-Hill Education began releasing

adaptations of the original *Choose Your Own Adventure* titles as graded readers. Branching-path stories became popular in the classroom, either to stimulate the learning of foreign languages or generally to facilitate a personal creative approach to the written text.

The production of branching-path books would diminish in the early nineties, with the decreasing popularity of printed books: it would rise again within digital-technology based interactive fiction[16].

Role-playing solitaire adventures

Solitaire adventures are a parallel development of the branching-path book, combining the branching-plot formula novel with the rules of a role-playing game. The game can be played without a "gamemaster" but requires the purchase of a manual containing its rules. The reader / player is engaged in a solitary act of reading, conferring on him or her the kind of augmented alternative authority deriving from the game. Reading is now synonymous with adventure.

The first role-playing game solitaire adventures were published in 1976, when the *Tunnels and Trolls* system supported the first role-playing game. Several solo modules were released for other games – famously, "The Solo Dungeon" adventure for *Dungeons & Dragons*[17].

Solitaire role-playing adventures experienced a boom in the Eighties. Some companies released lines of solitaire adventures for their own games. Examples of games with prolific solitaire lines, besides *Dungeons & Dragons*, were *Das Schwarze Auge*, *DC Heroes*, and *Call of Cthulhu*. Like other gamebooks also based on printed media, solitaire adventures would meet with a substantial decrease during the Nineties; the replacement of the book, based upon and fostering the act of reading, would occur with the digital empowerment of the reader, and the concurring "acts of agency" consistent with the gamification of fiction.

---

[16] TRESCA M.J., *The Evolution of Fantasy Role-Playing Games*, Jefferson (NC), McFarland & Company, 2011.

[17] The best account of the history and evolution of gamebooks is provided by the Wikipedia entry "Gamebook», <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gamebook>, accessed 29th July 2017.

Adventure gamebooks

Gradually the game seems to take over the narrative pattern of the book. Adventure gamebooks incorporate elements from the *Choose Your Own Adventure* branching-path books, but also rely upon role-playing solitaire adventures. The shift to modern digital technologies engrafts adventure gamebooks on a screen and eventually in the internet, but also tends to involve more than one solitary player. Gamebooks usually present a story as a series of episodes, or text sections, and the reader / player can move between them. Readers can also create a character as in a role-playing game, and resolve actions using a game-system. Unlike role-playing solitaire adventures, adventure gamebooks include all the rules needed for play in each book. Adventure gamebooks usually do not have numbered pages, but rather numbered sections of text: the linear narrative structure of the book being replaced by a modular structure that can be assembled in clusters, according to the decisions taken by the player[18]. Gamebooks are often written in the second person: a rhetoric device summoning the reader into the game and inviting the reader to share the character's point of view while directly entering the fictional universe. "You wander... you walk... you meet" is the typical example.

The Warlock of Firetop Mountain was published in 1982, the first of the Fighting Fantasy series of gamebooks, that would eventually count over 60 titles, and several spin-offs. The success of the formula caused a publishing boom in the United States and in Europe: series like *Fighting Fantasy*, *Lone Wolf*, and *The Way of the Tiger* were translated into several languages, and achieved global popularity.

Gamebooks contain strong visual elements, and include many illustrations. This feature suggests a diminishing emphasis on the verbal text and an increasing emphasis on visual literacy. The reader identifies with an iconic character, a hero or a villain, with his or her costume, with the historical period the costume suggests, and with a strange, adventurous, and dramatic background. This visual background, as well as the iconic characters chosen often belong to the area of ancient myth, to antiquity, to exotic geographies, inevitably infused with literary patterns, references and allusions. The Middle Ages feature grandly, with their mixture of gothic romance and fantasy. Actually, the popularity of the fantasy formula in fiction does not diminish in gamebooks, but becomes an essential feature, fashioned in order to suggest at once estrangement and identification. Fantasy promotes such response dynamics, when the threshold

---

[18] *Ibid.*

between realism and a fantastic scenario is there to beckon the reader / player and entice his or her curiosity into a sequel of adventures.

Dungeons & Dragons

Among the gamebooks resulting from the kind of evolution sketched in the previous paragraphs, *Dungeons & Dragons* figures foremost, as immensely popular and as a very fitting instance of the process we define as "gamification" of the book.

Dungeons & Dragons (abbreviated as *D&D*) is a fantasy tabletop role-playing game (RPG) originally designed by Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson, and first published in 1974 by Tactical Studies Rules, Inc. (TSR). Wizards of the Coast (now a subsidiary of Hasbro) first published the game in 1997. Its publication marks the acknowledged beginning of modern role-playing games[19].

Some early role-playing games before *Dungeons & Dragons* included miniatures and a map to facilitate the game and the combat: these items figure again among the features of *Dungeons & Dragons*. Another remarkable feature of *Dungeons & Dragons* is that unlike solitaire adventures the game involves a minimum number of four players; each player impersonates a specific character, such as for instance Fighter, Cleric, Magic-User, Thief, Dwarf, Elf, Halfling[20]. The Dungeon Master serves as the game's referee and storyteller; he or she assigns specific roles to the players; and determines the nature of the setting and plays in the role of the inhabitants. The characters engage in a task, fight battles and gather "experience points" as well as weapons, treasure and knowledge. *Dungeons & Dragons* is played indoors with the participants seated around a tabletop.

---

[19] The images from *Dungeons & Dragons* Rule Book are reproduced in this essay by kind permission of Wizards of the Coast, granted to the Author and to the Editors of *Publije, Revue de Critique Littéraire.*
[20] Brown T., *Dungeons & Dragons Rule Book*, Cambridge, Random House and TSR, 1991, with illustrations by T. Dykstra, provides a fully detailed list of characters, p. 4- 11.

Dungeons & Dragons, players and map[21]

Player characters (PCs) engage in tasks and campaigns: the Dungeon Master (DM) directing their action according to the rules; they meet on the way non-player characters (NPCs) often belonging to the category of monsters, of which the Manual gives a full list. They can be mythical creatures, such as basilisks, cyclops, dragons, ghouls, gnomes, golems, hydras, kobolds, manticores, minotaurs, medusas, ogres, specters, vampires; dangerous animals such as bats, crocodiles, giant centipedes, giant leeches, mules, snakes, wolves; dangerous substances such as gelatinous cubes, gray ooze, ochre jelly. The cover of the Rule Book entices the players with a mythical creature, a red dragon.

---

[21] Source : Wikimedia Commons [en ligne]
<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/88/Danddha.JPG>, accessed 28th January 2018.
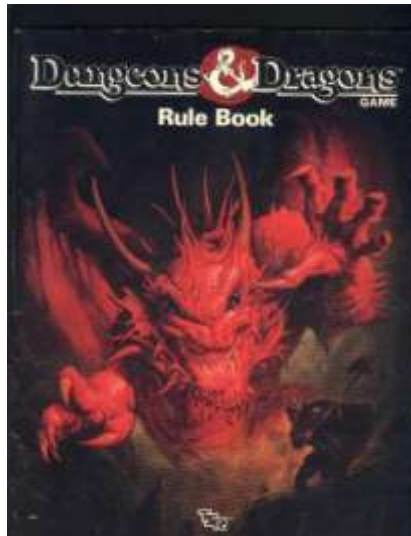
Dungeons & Dragons, Rule Book cover. By kind permission of Wizards of the Coast.

The success of *Dungeons & Dragons* stands upon a clever and rich mixture of elements that belong to the area of fantasy literature and the experience of reading, enhanced into the space where gaming takes place and by the number of the participants. Such experience is indeed nourished by literary elements – relevantly present both in the structure of the game and in its thematic contents. Structurally speaking,

- Players are like characters in a novel: we have heroes and villains, helpers and antagonists;
- The game resembles an epic quest, in which a group experiences strange encounters, challenges and combats;
- The Dungeon Master is defined as a storyteller.

A quote from the Rule Book offers manifold suggestions as to the literary nature of the game:

> Imagine that you and your friends are the heroes of a fantastic and magical world. You make it your business to battle terrible monsters. You explore ancient castles. You recover the lost treasures of forgotten kings. [...] In the game, you pretend to be a character. You might be a proud warrior or a shrewd wizard. You and your friends use the game rules to play out a story. Along the way you may earn fame, treasure and power for your character. [...] But who wins in this game [...]? You win or lose as a team[22].

The Rule Book addresses the player in the second person: inviting him or her into the universe of the story; the solitary adventure is here transformed into a team action. In this

---

[22] *Dungeons & Dragons Rule Book, op. cit.*, p. 4.

universe crowded with characters, human and non-human, and beasts both real and fantastic, the Dungeon Master plays the role of the omniscient author: "The Dungeon Master is a cross between a referee and a story-teller. [...] As the adventures unfold, the Dungeon Master is there to adjust the story. It's like having the adventure writer playing your game"[23].

The responsibility of the story, however, does not only rest upon the Dungeon Master and his or her ability to enforce the rules: the element of chance comes in because a set of dice, variously shaped, is part of the game. Dice with four, six, twelve sides and even twenty-sided dice are provided.

Dungeons & Dragons, dice[24].

Besides these features, regulating what we could name the "functions" of the story – to resort once again to the morphology of the folk-tale devised by Vladimir Propp, defining heroes and antagonists, helpers and magic weapons – the contents of the game also suggest an abundance of literary sources. The Rule Book provides a detailed list of the characters that can play the game, and of their different abilities and weapons that determine their actions and performances.

---

[23] *Ibid.*
[24] Source : Wikimedia Commons [en ligne]
<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/04/Dice_in_DnD_session.jpg>, accessed 28 January 2018.

Dungeons & Dragons, weapons. Rule Book, p. 13. By kind permission of Wizards of the Coast.

Aardy R. DeVarque has compiled the exhaustive list of "Literary Sources of *D&D*", remarking that "The D&D game is an amalgamation of many literary sources, from recent fantasy fiction to ancient mythology"[25]. He remarks that the list is simply overwhelming, the number of influences, derivations and borrowings being uncountable. My point, however, rests on his remark, that the literary elements of the *Dungeons & Dragons* game work best if the players acquire "knowledge of their original context"[26]. The long list of literary models includes Edgar Rice Burroughs, Lord Dunsany, Robert E. Howard, Fritz Lieber, H. P. Lovecraft, J. R. R. Tolkien, Jack Vance, and many others. Fantasy is of course one of the most inspiring genres; gothic fiction is almost mandatory; but also comic books, science fiction and horror movies are, according to DeVarque, a big influence.

---

[25] DeVarque A.R., "Literary Sources of D&D", <http://www.hahnlibrary.net/rpgs/sources.html>, accessed 31th July 2017.
[26] *Ibid.*

Gothic and fantasy in *Dungeons & Dragons* Rule Book, p. 22 and p. 28.
By kind permission of Wizards of the Coast.

To conclude, we seem to have moved full circle: from branching-path books and solitaire adventures, from adventure gamebooks and role-playing games, we derive elements that transform the reader into a player, the page into a map, or a screen; the act of reading becomes, within the structure of the game, an act of symbolic agency. But the universe that such media contain, activate and explore, does not only stimulate the gaming activity of a group of players. Such games, *Dungeons & Dragons* being the case in point, involve each player in a creative quest, fostered by the Dungeon Master and assisted by chance. And such quest, also defined as a symbolic quest for identity, tends eventually to order all experience into a narrative pattern, that inevitably builds a life-narrative, totally new and personal yet also generated along old models, within fantastic old stories contained in old books.

Dungeons & Dragons, Rule Book: a book of spells, p. 31.
By kind permission of Wizards of the Coast.

Bibliography

Primary Texts

BROWN T., *Dungeons & Dragons Rule Book*, with illustrations by T. DYKSTRA, Cambridge, Random House and TSR, 1991.
CARROLL L., *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass*, ed. P. HUNT, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009.
KOTZWINKLE W., *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial: A Novel*, London, Sphere, 1982.
KOTZWINKLE W., *E.T.: The Book of the Green Planet*, London, Sphere, 1985.

Secondary Texts

BECKETT S.L. (ed.), *Transcending Boundaries. Writing for a Dual Audience of Children and Adults*, New York Garland Publishing, 1999.
BECKETT S.L., "Crossover Literature", NEL P., PAUL L. (eds.), *Keywords for Children's Literature*, New York, New York University Press, 2011, p. 58-61.
BOLTER J.D., GRUSIN R., *Remediation. Understanding New Media*, Cambridge (MA)/London, MIT Press, 2000.
CRARY J., *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge (MA), MIT Press, 1993.
DEVARQUE A.R., "Literary Sources of D&D", <http://www.hahnlibrary.net/rpgs/sources.html>, accessed 31th July 2017.
FALCONER R., *The Crossover Novel: Contemporary Children's Literature and Culture*, New York, Routledge, 1999,
Wikipedia entry: "Gamebook", <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gamebook>, accessed 29th July 2017.
KNOEPFLMACHER U.C., MYERS, M., "Cross-Writing and the Reconceptualizing of Children's Literary Studies", *Children's Literature*, vol. 25, 1997, p. vii-xvi.
MITCHELL W.J.T., *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1986.
MITCHELL W.J.T., *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1994.
MITCHELL W. J. T., "Visual Literacy or Literary Visualcy?", ELKINS J. (ed.), *Visual Literacy*, New York, Routledge, 2008, p. 11-29.
MOEBIUS W., "Picture Books", P. NEL, L. PAUL (eds.), *Keywords for Children's Literature*, New York, New York University Press, 2011, p. 169-173.
NIKOLAJEVA M., SCOTT C, *How Picture Books Work*, New York, Routledge, 2000.
ORESTANO F., "The Child as Common Reader: the 'true complexity of reading' and the progress from hell to paradise", STYLES M., ARIZPE E. (eds.), *Acts of Reading. Teachers, Text and Childhood*, Stoke on Trent, Trentham Books, 2009, p. 97-112.
ORESTANO F., FRIGERIO F. (eds.), *Strange Sisters: Literature and Aesthetics in the Nineteenth*, Oxford, Century, Peter Lang, 2009.
RAJEWSKY I.O., "Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality", *Intermédialités. Histoire et théorie des arts, des lettres et des techniques* Numéro 6 (Automne, 2005), p. 43–64, <http://cri.histart.umontreal.ca/cri/fr/intermedialites/p6/pdfs/p6_rajewsky_text.pdf>, accessed 31th July 2017.
SUAREZ M.F., WOUDHUYSEN H.R. (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to the Book*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010.
TRESCA M.J., *The Evolution of Fantasy Role-Playing Games*, Jefferson (NC), McFarland & Company, 2011.