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SECTION i: KEY

TTG - Table Top Game

RPG - Roleplay Game / Roleplaying Game

TTRPG - Table Top Roleplay Game

D&D - Dungeons and Dragons

FPC - Foundation of Paranatural Control

FPCF:E - FPC Files: Emery (theis project title)

TEU - The Emery Universe (world in which my project lives)

NPC - Non-player Character

PNCA - Pacific Northwest College of Art

UV - Ultra Violet light

nm - Nanometer

NFC - Near Feild Communication

PDF - Portable Document Format

LGBTQIA2S+ - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Two spirit

As I sit in the open doorway to the backyard with my blanket swathed around me, I can hear a commotion in the kitchen far behind me. My mom is looking for more candles to place around the house since the storm I'm watching knocked the power out. Growing up in California, we experienced rolling blackouts regularly, especially in the summer. But a storm knocking out the power was rare. Big storms like these didn't happen often; nights like this were special. I cherished them. I pull my blanket tighter around me as lightning flashes across the sky and wait in anticipation for the thunder that would inevitably follow. As the deep, resonant tone rumbles through the air I close my eyes to enjoy the sound. Behind me, my mom and sister have set down a somewhat dusty box, and three mugs of cocoa, one for each of us. They call me, I waste no time in opening the box, and laying out the Monopoly board. I excitedly ask if I can play banker, knowing that I alone will get access to every little game piece. I was about a year older when I started hopping the back fence to my neighbor's house to play Cranium.

As I grew, my interest in board games evolved from tabletop card games like Yu-Gi-Oh or Pokémon, to tabletop roleplaying games like Dungeons and Dragons and Monster of the Week. The instrumental shift in attitudes toward queer players began in 2014 when D&D brought on Jeremy Crawford as the Lead Rules Designer for the 5th edition ruleset. I began playing in 2016, two full years after 5e had been released. It is thanks to him, a gay man, that D&D and the TTRPG community have begun the shift into becoming a queer playground. As someone who joined the community of D&D relatively recently, I don't have access to what the community was like before the instrumental shift towards positive LGBTQIA2S+ content; but, before this D&D was

largely seen as a cisgender, heterosexual, man's game. A veritable boy's club, where anyone who wasn't a cis/het man was *other* and unwelcome. Roleplay has been instrumental to self-discovery and understanding for many, and the queer community is certainly one where roleplay is encouraged. As a gay, transgender man I have spent most of my life knowing that I was *other.* I didn't fit into the cisgender, heterosexual binary and I didn't see any characters who were like me that weren't written off as jokes, or swiftly killed after their sexuality or gender identity was revealed.

We live in a world with the active agenda of silencing or outright erasing queer people from any and all narratives. Only in the last few years have the visibility of queer and trans people increased, even though queer and trans folks have been around since the beginning of time. It is only through flooding media with positive, affirming support for queer and trans individuals that we can begin to make a true difference. I believe it is our responsibility as artists, creators, and academics with access to change the canon to propel our way of thinking forward, to push us towards the future we all want to see; a more inclusive, diverse, and equitable one.

SECTION 2: FPC FILES: EMERY

FPC Files: Emery is a two to four-player board game focused on cooperation, coordination, and sharing of resources in a queer 90's horror setting. *FPC Files: Emery*'s main objective is stopping a death-worshiping cult, The Chosen of Vexarius, before they can summon their planet-eating god. Players will assume the roles of townspeople working desperately to save each other, their town, and the world. Players are encouraged to step into the role of the character they have selected to play, to think as they might, to

act as they might act. Players will complete one of four unique objectives by moving through the world, fighting enemies, and gathering tools, weapons, and allies before the death meter total reaches 100.

FPCF:E is a fresh take on the cooperative horror TTG experience, with an all queer cast, and is the starting point for introducing my creative world The Emery Universe. TEU is an expansive project, years in the making, with a plethora of characters, storylines, fictional businesses, and world events. FPCF:E sets the groundwork for future creative endeavors that take place within TEU. FPCF:E also introduces The Foundation of Paranatural Control, a fictional government organization that I've created that focuses on containing, housing, and studying **para**normal and super**natural** (*paranatural*) entities.

Since its establishment in 1921, The Foundation of Paranatural Control has been keeping tabs on all happenings of paranormal or supernatural anomalies in the United States. The FPC has continued its service to the American people in complete secrecy, keeping them safe from extra-dimensional threats of all kinds. Some of the cataloged entities are harmless, and others are potentially world-ending. They are the keepers of all unusual, paranormal, and supernatural secrets, and like any three-letter bureaucratic government organization, they are by no means the *good guys*. The FPC has bases all over the United States, all disguised as innocuous offices, warehouses, and sites of industry among other things. Their early adoption of technology and sometimes unethical use of anomalous creatures, materials, and scientific methods have allowed the FPC to develop technology beyond what would be possible in the 1990s.

I have chosen the 1990s time period because to me it evokes the most nostalgia. I was born in 92, so I caught the tail end of the '90s. My childhood was full of constantly shifting and changing technology. One year for Christmas, I was gifted a Walkman, a chunky, portable CD player with an affinity for skipping, and by the time the next Christmas rolled around, MP3 players were what everyone wanted. To me, I have a deep, albeit foggy connection to these older technologies. To me, clunky, ancient hardware isn't a waste. It's a reminder of how far we have come technologically.

This thesis project not only operates as a board game but as a thematic, narrative capsule of a Pacific Northwest town where extreme paranormal events take place.

SECTION 3: DESCRIPTION OF THE WORK

The final project culminates in a fully developed and built board game that is ready to enter the playtesting phase of production. This is a phase that can take years to complete, and the game that comes out on the other end may bear little resemblance to it now. But that isn't a bad thing; change is good! The main goal of this game is to save the world. But it isn't something that can be done alone. Earlier I gave you the back-of-the-box pitch, but now I would like to go into more detail about the gameplay itself.

FPC Files: Emery is a cooperative, horror board game with an all queer cast in which players must travel around the city of Emery, OR gathering tools, weapons, health items, and allies to complete the objective they have selected to save the world. Along their way, they will encounter enemies: humans, horrors, and anomalies. The humans are the cultists, The Chosen of Vexarius.

The members of this death worshiping cult have pledged their lives, and the lives of all humans to their diety, Vexarius. Their ancient god floats through the cosmos consuming planets and galaxies alike, becoming more bloated and powerful with each one devoured. Vexarius, or PE-0HORIZON as it is classified with the FPC, resembles a swirling black hole, but with a horrific, ever-watchful eye at its center. This isn't the first time the FPC has dealt with PE-0HORIZON. In fact, at one time it was classified as a World-Ending-Event. Now, there have been countermeasures put into place so whenever a fanatical follower of the ancient god gets a little too interested in summoning it, the FPC can react with speed and efficiency. Any, and all death sates Vexarius and pulls it closer to the source of whatever is ending life. The Chosen have decided that now is the time to bring forth their god to fully devour the planet once and for all. At least then humanity can serve a greater purpose as a part of Vexarius.

The other enemies are monsters and are classed into two distinct groups. Horrors, and Anomalies. Horrors are classified by the FPC as entities whose presence is known to disorient, confuse, enrage, or otherwise manipulate a person's mental status. Horrors are not hunters and are not typically responsible for the death of a human, but they are opportunistic predators. Horrors have also been recorded speaking with humans in certain instances. The FPC has concluded through testing and containment that a certain level of sentience is present in horrors. Anomalies are creatures that have yet to be successfully contained by the FPC and are not yet fully understood. This is either due to their elusive nature, ability to manipulate reality, or recent appearance on our plane. They share a similar effect to horrors, looking at them can cause great distress, and sometimes even drive a person mad. Anomalies do, however, classify as hunters and have been shown to

attack humans and animals indiscriminately. Unlike horrors, anomalies have not been shown to harbor sentience, but this claim requires further investigation and research by the FPC.

Arguably the biggest threat to the players, Beloved Han, is also a member of the Chosen of Vexarius, but he works a little differently. The Chosen believe death by Han's blade is akin to rising to sainthood; so much so that when Han was instructed to kill his own father by the cult elder, the man wept tears of joy that turned to blood. Han's father told the boy that he would be honored to be slain by his blessed hand. Now, after years of this behavior, Han has become bloodthirsty and unhinged, Han will take the life of anyone, for any reason. Han is only shuffled into the decks after a certain level of death has been reached. This is what adjusts the difficulty of the game. By adding in Han earlier, players run the risk of encountering him without having weapons to arm themselves with. Adding Han in later gives the players the opportunity to collect some helpful items and allies before they run into him.

SECTION 4: RESEARCH & PLACE IN CANON

Horror is not new to TTG or TTRPG. One of the biggest influences on gameplay for this board game is *Arkham Horror* which was released originally in 1989. FPCF:E is influenced and enriched by the New Weird genre with examples such as *X-Files*, *SCP,* and *The Cthulhu Mythos*. New Weird pushes at the boundaries of horror and explores them in unique, sometimes uncomfortable ways. I want to take the excitement of the unknown, the fascination with the strange and unseen, and the tingling sensation of a good horror story that I love so dearly and distill it into a playable, interactable

experience. Functionally blending my love and unique way of storytelling, worldbuilding, problem-solving, and tactile interaction will carve out a spot for this type of game in the canon.

The *X-Files* has had a marked, lasting impact on my interests as well as my creative practice: both written and visual. I credit most of my interest in the paranormal and supernatural to my early introduction to this show and grappling with the idea of lonely sentience in the universe. FPCF:E and TEU borrow themes from the FBI, CIA, and other omnipresent, shady, three-letter government organizations. Walking the line between harmless conspiracy theories, to large-reaching government control, the FPC and TEU operate in a world where paranormal and supernatural occurrences are not only possible, they are part of daily life.

The *Call of Cthulhu* games, *Arkham Horror,* and *Elder Sign* have been instrumental in the creation of the rules for FPCF:E. These somewhat infamous board games are known in the TTG community for their complicated playstyle and long playtimes. But, despite how hair-tearing the titles can be, it is undeniable how much fun these games are to play. The fun in *Call of Cthulhu* is present, but it can be spread out over the long playtime, which can make it feel tedious and long-winded at times. Because of this, I wanted to challenge myself to distill the essence of the *Call of Cthulhu* games into something more easily digestible to the average game player.

The visuals are influenced by the style of comic books and graphic novels, reminiscent of the works of Junji Ito. This intensity of line and high contrast will help contribute to players' experience of high-stakes, supernatural horror. FPCF:E is a challenging game of cooperation and teamwork, and just as in real-life no one person can

save the world alone. Other line-based artists like Tomer Hanuka and Yuko Shimizu have also been instrumental in my development as an illustrator, and their works are something I draw inspiration from daily.

SECTION 5: EXAMINATION OF MOTIVATION & PERSONAL RELEVANCY

I could spin you the narrative of a confused little queer kid growing up in an ignorant environment, where I had zero representation. I could tell you all the ways I was bullied, harassed, and threatened for presenting my gender in a way that didn't fit into Western society's restrictive categories of man or woman. I could tell you how I was excluded from my peers growing up, and before I was even ten years old had my sexuality questioned. I could tell you all of this in excruciating detail, but suffice to say that I grew up knowing that I was *other* than my peers. However, I am fortunate to have been a queer youth growing up in the California Bay Area. For me, this meant I had access to an immediately less hostile environment than many young LGBT+ identifying people in other states. Almost predictably, San Francisco was one of my favorite places to visit. The joy and safety I felt when in those queer spaces, surrounded by other queer people cannot be overstated. There was a sort of peace in knowing that there *were* gay elders, that it was possible to be gay and grow old. In a world that is constantly trying to hinder or outright eliminate queer and trans people, knowing the comfort of a space like that was a glimmering beacon of hope.

At school, the theatre became a space of empathy and queerness. Breaking down old plays, and reading into the queer subtext was *part* of the process. And from there, I began questioning the place gender has in our everyday lives, specifically when learning

French. Romance languages use grammatical gender in the construction of speech. It is literally built into the way many people think and communicate. This makes unraveling and restructuring the tightly woven literary and linguistic blockade of gender and its place in society hugely difficult. In her thesis, *Gender, Identity, and Table Top Games,* Rhiannon Patricia ONeal broaches this very topic early on. "Beyond all argument, however, sociolinguists remain in agreement that at the heart of the matter, language itself is key to understanding and unlocking some of the mystery around identity and gender construction."[1]

My queer horror isn't grand sacrifices. It isn't queerbaiting. It isn't upon consumers of it to read the subtext for traces of queerness. My queer horror is simply: there are queer people experiencing horror in the same sort of no-strings-attached way that cisgender, heterosexual characters are frequently allowed without question. Their queerness is not what drives them to be a part of this game, scenario, or world; their orientation isn't a matter of plot, it's a matter of fact. These should read as characters that are queer, but their whole character isn't being the *femme, butch,* or *fag.* My desire is to create characters whose entire personality isn't based on their sexuality, orientation, or presentation, but it is undoubtedly a part of who they are. They are quick-witted, adaptable, loyal, powerful, resourceful, enthusiastic, *people (who happen to be queer).* They are so much more than their place in the heteronormative, cis-gentric binary. If there is one thing I want to avoid in this and all my future works it's *homonormative* stereotypes. So, while I want to make it clear this game is about, (and admittedly designed for) queer people, these characters are anything but stereotypes. That said, I know I am not perfect and that something that may not read as a stereotype to me could

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[1] ONeal, Rhiannon Patricia, "Gender, Identity and Tabletop Roleplay Games" (2011).Theses. Paper 760.

read that way to another. It is for that reason that I have begun creating a community of other queer gamers to have a space for enlightening critique and construction of my characters.

I have engaged with TTG and TTRPG nearly every day for the past six years. Between listening to live-play podcasts, planning and running my sessions, and the creation of this thesis project it has become such a huge part of my life that it's hard to imagine a time when I was without it. The D&D books on my shelf are so bursting with incredible (if sometimes clumsily worded) LGBT+ content that I simply don't remember a time when D&D wasn't the queer playground it is today. Role-play has been an integral part of self-discovery and self-acceptance in many queer people's coming out. And if gender is a performance, as Butler has suggested, it makes sense that people questioning aspects of themselves might want to do a few dry runs of the *act* before they premiere it.[2] Someone like me. Once I understood character creation, I began the process of creating a character. And like most first-time players of games with 'customization', I began to craft what I wanted to be. My first character, Sefran, was a male elf. He was a reserved spellcaster, which let me explore a character without putting myself too far out there. Then, the characters I created became more open (a bard), and more trusting (cleric). Having these avatars of pieces of myself let me explore, let me experiment, and let me *play*.

If I may be candid, this research is partially selfish. As a gay, transgender man who used TTGs and RPGs to explore my own gender identity, I wanted to know if there were others out there who did the same and what their thinking was. Certainly, I know

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[2] Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 519–31. https://doi.org/10.2307/3207893.

my reasons. But I can't assume that because it was true for me, it's true for other non-cis

people. Hoping for interaction and response to my questions, I created a Google Form. I

created a series of questions that explored roleplay, queer identity, and the community

surrounding TTG. After receiving approval from the moderator, I posted this

questionnaire on the online Discord server for the local game store Mox Boarding House.

I also posted the link to the questionnaire in numerous online groups that I am a part of,

all with communities of queer gamers. All of the questionnaire respondents were queer,

as requested by the disclosure at the beginning of the survey. All of these responses were

anonymous; there were no prank responses, which was a welcome sight. 70% on the dot

were introduced to TTRPGs and TTGs through Dungeons and Dragons. Of the

respondents, 75% felt that TTG and TTRPG were safe spaces for queer-identifying

people. When prompted to explain why they felt that way, most respondents said that

they feel the space is becoming more accepting, or that "nerds are generally empathetic"[3].

One response stood out to me, though. For how much we've grown in the TTG

community, it's easy to lose sight of the places that haven't seen progress and acceptance.

I feel like this anonymous responder has a very realistic view of the TTG community.

> As much progress has been made in the overall community, I still feel like
> the spaces which are safe for us are more uncommon than common. It's
> much better than it used to be, and I don't find it too horribly difficult to
> find those spaces, but I wouldn't feel safe going to a random RPG group
> without masking first and testing the waters.[4]

However, as intriguing as the responses were, and as much fascinating insight into

people's introduction and experiences with TTG and TTRPGS, the responses were

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[3]https://forms.gle/Ayf1xBQto3B1gJnL6
[4]https://forms.gle/Ayf1xBQto3B1gJnL6

limited and my sample size was too small to draw any real conclusions. Instead of seeing this as a failed research experiment, I am choosing to see this as an indicator that further research in this line of questioning. I feel there is an entire facet of queer identity that has yet to be explored. However nuanced and difficult the work may be, it is the hard work that must be done to ensure future generations all around the world are free and supported to be whoever they want.

SECTION 6: INCEPTION, CREATION, AND PROCESS

INCEPTION

The idea for this world has been percolating in my head for the last six years. Between pieces of improvisational creative writing, a comic book script, countless pieces of art, and now the distillation of all of that into my thesis, TEU has been my passion project almost exclusively for the entirety of my time at PNCA. Every piece of art I create can, or does exist in TEU, which has allowed me to flesh out this world in ways I simply wouldn't have been capable of in the short time of this BFA thesis project. In my freshman year, I created two small video projects that exist in TEU, and feature the FPC specifically. In my sophomore year, I created a faux-D&D rulebook with creatures that are now featured in FPC:E. By my junior year, I had decided on my thesis direction and continued to create work that existed exclusively inside TEU.

During my junior year, I ran a session of *Monster of the Week*, a TTRPG inspired by the monster-of-the-week media format popular in the early aughts with titles like *Buffy: The Vampire Slayer,* and *The X-Files*. I recorded, arranged, and edited the audio from one of our sessions into an hour-long, listenable, podcast-like format. A book

creation project in my junior Design & Image class pushed my worldbuilding and creation of tactile, interactable materials to new heights. Each 'book' was to be composed of a seven-letter word; I chose: MONSTER. Then, for each letter, I either created or researched a cryptid or monster. I chose the Mothman, an Onryo, a Night Hag, Shadow People, a Tiangou, an Each-Uisge, and a Raven Mocker. I then created seven separate folders mocking the appearance of top-secret government materials, all containing original short stories and illustrations. These folders established the naming conventions that are present in FPCF:E, as well as established the tonality for the rest of my work, which I have begun calling *lighthearted horror*.

Creating the rulebook was the first step I took in making FPCF:E. Moving forward without any sense of rules felt like trying to build a home on the *idea* of a foundation. I knew that the entire project would be doomed to fail if there wasn't some sense of what the game would be. I began playing board games like *Camp Grizzly, Arkham Horror, Dead of Winter, and TIME Stories* critically, keeping the rulebooks with me at all times and using every opportunity to double-check what the rules said. As I played, though, I began to notice that doing this was tedious at best, and mind-numbingly boring at worst. *Arkham Horror*, one of the biggest influences on FPCF:E, as I mentioned earlier, is infamous in the TTG community because of its long setup and playtime. It takes between thirty to sixty minutes to set up the game, and full games can take anywhere from 120-240 minutes[5]. It also has an Everest-like learning curve which can only be mediated if another player already knows how to play, or if one is able to find a video of someone *else* playing to reference. *TIME Stories* and *Dead of Winter* both have complicated rules, but once a full round has been completed the player is able to better

[5] https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/15987/arkham-horror

understand exactly how the game is played, instead of burying their nose into the rules. The standalone in simplicity is *Camp Grizzly.* Setup is quick, less than ten minutes, and games last around sixty minutes[6]. Despite this simplicity, the game is fun and engaging the entire time. Because the rules flow so smoothly, and the gameplay has so few hiccups, there are few moments where the player is bored or confused. In my experience and years of playing board games, I know that the more complicated a board game's level of entry, the less likely people are to:

    1. Stick out a full game, or

    2. Ever play it again.

    The denial of a board game's purpose is never felt more heavily as it is when a layer of dust has formed on its surface. A game like that has failed its most basic of tasks: to entertain.

CREATION & PROCESS

    I have spoken about my connection to *X-Files* numerous times throughout this paper. *X-Files* lives in the realm of science fiction, yes. But it also lives in a realm of fiction that has come to be known as New Weird. New Weird seeks to twist and push at traditional horror, and science fiction narratives. It pushes viewers into uncomfortable, sometimes unfathomable spaces.

    Drawing on my love of the genre of New Weird, I began the conception of a world that combined my favorite elements of my favorite stories. It was from this that TEU was created, and along with it the FPC. The creation of the playable characters for FPCF:E was a lengthy, multifaceted process. I spent time both building backstory and

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[6] https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/143096/camp-grizzly/stats

creating future narratives; an answer to *why* these characters are working as a team. Aiden and Alder got their roots from a *Monster of the Week* TTRPG session I ran with a small group of people. Alyssa and Kimberly existed as names and archetypes of NPCs in TEU. Their designs were influenced by both queer fashions, as well as late 90s themes. FPCF:E takes place in the summer of 1998, in the fictional Pacific Northwest tourist destination The Township of Emery, or Emery for short. My character design takes into consideration both the time period and the fashion of the region. Alyssa draws much of her design and attributes, and personality from a character that I created in my SP21 Character Design class, named Aella Biron. They both have distinctive features and long dark hair; they are also both highly intelligent, adaptable, and strong. Beloved Han was also conceived in the same class, and his design has remained relatively similar, only with adjustments to his clothing and facial features. The main villain of FPCF:E, Vexarius, was also born in this class. Vexarius' design has remained relatively similar and is meant to resemble the Lovecraftian God, Azathoth.

The process of creation for FPCF:E is multidisciplinary, including digital painting and inking, collage, as well as traditional watercolor, acrylic paint and ink, and pencil. The main software used for the creation of this body of work is Procreate, which I run on my iPad Pro. Adobe Photoshop, InDesign, Illustrator, and Clip Studio Paint compose the list of software that was also used for the digital compilation and creation of my pieces. I gathered my textures from scanning in my own designs and then, using Adobe Photoshop, compiled them and edited their shape and opacity to create an interesting texture for the edges, accents, and backgrounds of the cards. Other textures were created by blending, adding, and subtracting brushes in Procreate. The glitch effect that traces

through the entirety of the project is achieved through Procreate. I used a combination of different glitch types including artifacting, signal, and divergence to achieve the final look. The combination of these methods allows me to create a unique, previously unseen aesthetic in the TTRPG world.

The tactile elements of FPCF:E are of equal importance to the images themselves. A board game is a wholly interactive experience and requires a physical connection to the board and the pieces. For the box, I took a black illustration board and drew out the shape of the desired width and length. I scored, cut, snapped, and taped the box together myself, then wrapped it with gaffer tape to give it a clean look. The gaffer tape does stick slightly, so opening the box at this point in its development is a little more complicated than I would like, but will be remedied in future versions. For the wrap of the box, I printed the images on the 406 production printer on campus at Pacific Northwest College of Art, then used Best-Test paper cement and a soft-edge scraper to push the paper-cement around under the print to ensure full contact and adhesion.

The board and character card printing was outsourced to an online merchant, Boardgamesmaker.com, which gave them a sleek, professional look that I will seek to replicate in further development and creation of the game. The board is made of a 2mm 100% recycled chipboard wrapped in 128gsm art paper, then sealed with a gloss laminate. It measures 20x24 inches and is cut quad-fold to fold down to 12x10 inches. The character cards, also printed by BGS.com, are printed on FSC-certified professional standard cardstock. The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is a nonprofit organization that works to ensure that future generations *have* forests; the FSC sets standards for responsible growing practices and land management. The final piece sourced by

BGS.com is the Fight Dice, which is integral to the play of the game. It is a 19mm six-sided (d6) plastic dice. In this instance, it operates as a two-sided (d2) dice. D2s are uncommon, and the designs that exist are clumsy and awkwardly shaped; typically if a d2 is required in a game a coin will fill in for it. I didn't want another coin after I had decided that the First-Player Token would be circular, so I went for the option of custom dice, both to mitigate awkward pieces, and to avoid irregular shape language.

The Color deck cards were sent off to print to an online merchant at the beginning of March. I finished them and sent them off very early in an effort to avoid any shipping issues or complications. Unfortunately, a week before I was set to defend my thesis I received an email that my package was lost. Both the merchant and the USPS didn't have a clue where it was. It was crushing, since the color decks are a major part of the game, and it can't be played without them. I wouldn't say that if I were doing this process over that I would want the cards to be lost again, but having them turn up lost only days before I was set to defend my project did have an unforeseen benefit. I was able to get a taste of what future printing errors might be like. If I plan on mass-producing this game, problems like this will happen, and they will happen on a much larger scale.

But it isn't all nihilism and somber lessons learned. Because this happened last minute I was able to see what I was capable of, and really put my problem-solving skills to the test. I had found out on Wednesday that my cards were lost, and by Friday I had figured out a local printer who could print my cards last minute, Copyman. And while they aren't the industry standard for board games, and there are minor defects in printing I am happy to have them, and from a local printer no less. Working with local printers has been eye-opening to me, and helped me understand what actually goes into printing a

multi-piece project like this one. And even though it has arguably been the source of the most stress for me, the complications and errors allowed me to keep local money local which is a win-win for everyone.

The health and sanity sliders alongside the character cards were sourced from Thingiverse, an online repository of user-created 3d files. The file was modeled by user CreativeMechanics on the site, then uploaded for all people to download and print for free. I am, admittedly an enormous nerd. I love all kinds of technology, and how they can interact and intersect with not only my daily life but my practice as an artist. I am lucky enough to own my own 3D printer, so I was able to make the prints myself. They were printed on an Anycubic Photon Mono, using Anycubic 3D printing UV sensitive resin in the color clear. The printing of the sliders took roughly an hour, and they were allowed to drip for another hour before they were removed from the printing plate. After removal from the printing plate, they were washed in an alcohol bath for roughly five minutes to remove any excess, uncured resin. Once the pieces were cleaned, they were put through an additional curing process, rotating slowly under 405nm UV light for roughly ten minutes. Before the resin fully hardened, I snipped the platforms and supports from the pieces and left them to cure for 24 hours. After letting them fully cure, I dip-dyed them in SigWong alcohol ink in the colors scarlet and sapphire blue. I then left them to dry on an absorbent paper towel, which soaked up any excess alcohol ink. I followed the same method with the death counter after purchasing the custom 3d file from ManticoreArtificer on Etsy. This particular counter was intended for use in any kind of TTG where counting is a requirement, which made it an easy choice for the death counter.

The first player token, which gets passed around between players during gameplay is also tech-driven. I used Neenah Metallic Paper in the color Sapphire Blue 6546, which is a tighter weave than the other sapphire blue paper by Neenah. I used a metal puncher with a 2-inch diameter hole to create the token shape. For the creation of the metal embossed look, I used a Ranger Emboss-It Ink Pad and Ranger Gold Embossing powder. After rubber stamping and using a stick lighter to heat-set the design I placed the paper inside this 45mm plastic housing, and along with it an NFC tag. NFC stands for near-field communication and is a capability most modern smartphones have. This is the same technology that allows for touchless payments among other things. Once your phone is within range of the NFC tag, your smart device will give you a prompt to go to a website. Currently, it links to the page on my website that discusses the game, but I plan for the final first player token to link to a PDF of the game rulebook for easy access. This idea came after a discussion with my mentor about how clunky paper rulebooks can be, and the fact that they would need to be passed around a table during gameplay. This runs the risk of things getting knocked over during handoff, or the rulebook being damaged in such a way that it is no longer usable. The idea of having a PDF copy of the rulebook, easily accessible to all players is something new to the boxed TTG, but is something I hope I can instrument change towards. Having the ability to instantly have a new rulebook is not only accessible, but it also reduces the paper waste worry of re-printing or the potential cost to the player to replace a damaged rulebook.

SECTION 7: NEXT STEPS AND THE WAY FORWARD

Through the process of creation, I have had multiple parties express their interest and desire to play the game. This is incredibly encouraging! Knowing that people are interested in the game when it is still very much in a larval state is all any creator could ask for, and I am eager to get to the point where my game can be purchased by horror fans and board game fans alike. But, FPCF:E is by no means finished and has just entered into the playtesting phase of its lifespan Now, the game is planned to live in the realm of cooperative, multiplayer board games like the ones I mentioned before. It will live alongside them in both community and audience: the nerds who are into horror but want something a little different.

This game also has opportunities for expansion in the way of card packs that include new characters, allies, monsters, and objectives while retaining the same board. This will allow for replayability and expandability in ways that comparative media can't. Currently, a board game off the shelf will have a pretty limited lifespan. Think about games like Clue or Monopoly; they get stale after a while, even with chance and dice-rolling. With the model I have in mind for FPC Files: Emery, players will be able to purchase new *expansion packs* that include new characters, new items, weapons, tools, and monsters. After extensive playtesting, I plan to fund the game on Kickstarter, or another crowd fundraising platform. During the playtesting phase of its creation, I will also be running a Discord server where anyone who is interested in following the game or joining a growing community of queer gamers is welcome. From there, depending on the success and demand, I would be thrilled for the game to exist in a physical game store, on the shelf next to other horror games, or other LGBT content. Local Game Stores like

Mox and Guardian Games would be obvious choices, but I could also see the game living in certain areas of Powells' or even in big-box retailers like Target.

SECTION 8: CONCLUSION

FPCF:E is a project that is years in the making; it was my job this semester to start creating the visual language for TEU, and set my project up for successful future growth. During the sixteen weeks of my thesis project, I visualized a complete board game and brought it to fruition. After my oral defense, I was able to host the first playtesting session. The game *works.* Like any art piece, there are things that can, and will, be improved over time. Overall, I consider what I've accomplished this semester a massive success, and that the next steps forward for me are clearer than they have ever been. Even still, I know I have a long way to go and since FPCF:E is just now beginning the playtesting phase, FPCF:E won't be sealed up in plastic and on a shelf any time soon. It could take years before the rules are in a place where they work without hiccups. It could be years before I have the funding to make this game a full reality. But that's okay. As someone who came back to college later in my life, who is about to turn 30, I know things are just getting started.

The end of my time at PNCA has been massively important to my growth not only as an artist and academic but also as a human. During my time at this institution I have been challenged mentally and emotionally, and as my thesis mentor and I joked, forged in fire. I have learned hundreds of new ways of thinking, spent thousands of hours studying, researching, and executing my projects, I have tempered my nerves, and created lifelong connections and friendships. Aside from tuning my craft in illustration, I was

encouraged by the faculty to explore my creative practice which allowed me to grow in ways I don't think would have occurred otherwise.

It is through this experimentation that I was able to connect the world of queer culture to the world of tabletop gaming. This intersection of topics is a fascinating one and one that I think warrants future, more in-depth research. Though I was able to find a recent thesis on a single session of Dungeons and Dragons that the author played[7], and mentioned the theories by the scholars I mentioned earlier, the body of this research is limited at best. Queer perspective is one that has a minute presence in academia, with published works only being widely circulated beginning in the 1990s. Clearly, this is a fledgling field of study and one that not only merits research but deserves it. As I move forward and take the first few unsteady beats of my wings away from this school and forward as a professional I know that the potential is endless, and I see no reason that I shouldn't be among those who will help grow and evolve the understanding of the academic canon to include the queer experience.

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[7] ONeal, Rhiannon Patricia, "Gender, Identity and Tabletop Roleplay Games" (2011).Theses. Paper 760.