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# Revisiting Gabriel Knight

## Troubled Hero and Unknowing Servant of the King of Kings

Connie Veugen

### Abstract

Although the protagonist of the Gabriel Knight game series (1993, 1995, 1999) is a modern hero, Gabriel's journey contains elements we also find in other Hero myths. Furthermore, the series contains many religious elements, supernatural motifs, as well as a more than superficial link with the story of the Messiah. Using Wendy Doniger's theory of the micromyth as a point of departure, this article will take a closer look at these aspects of the games, as well as at how they are interlinked. The release of the remastered version of the first game also gives room to a ponder whether a new generation of players will comprehend such aspects.

### Keywords

Gabriel Knight, Hero myth, religion, supernatural

## 1 Introduction

In 1993, the game *Gabriel Knights. Sins of the Father* was released to critical acclaim both from the adventure game community, as well as from the game critics. *Sins of the Father* was not the first adventure game to target an adult audience, but it was the first one to show that adventure games could hold their own in comparison to books and films. Mostly set in New Orleans and featuring a troubled hero who not only has to deal with his own nightmares but who also has to atone for the mistakes of one of his forebears, this game was a far cry from the dungeons and fairy tales encountered in the game genre until then. This was *Angel Heart* (1987) in a game format.

*Sins of the Father* (GK1) is the first game in a series that also includes *Gabriel Knight. The Beast Within* (GK2, 1995) and *Gabriel Knight. Blood of the Sacred, Blood of the Damned* (GK3,

1999)<sup>1</sup>. The protagonist of the games, Gabriel Knight, is a down on his luck author of occult murder mysteries and the owner of an unsuccessful bookshop in New Orleans. In every game in the series, Gabriel investigates a case involving the supernatural: voodoo, werewolves and vampirism, respectively. On October 15<sup>th</sup> 2014, a remake of *Sins of the Fathers* was released, bringing the game to a new generation of players. Outwardly, the game has had a complete makeover. The original 256 colour 2D graphics have been replaced by high-resolution images and the original soundtrack has been completely remastered, using new voice actors and updating the music for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century audience. ‘Inwardly’ the game is still the same. It basically uses the same script, as its original author, designer, and director Jane Jensen lead the remake. The original fans of the game as well as critics, on the whole, have greeted this remake favourably. The fans enjoy the fact that they can indulge in nostalgia replaying one of their all-time favourite games. Many fans, as well as Jane Jensen, also hope that a new generation of players will rekindle the game series.

Whether new players will appreciate the games on a similar level as the previous generation remains to be seen. On the surface, the supernatural themes – voodoo in *GK1* werewolves in *GK2*, and vampires in *GK3* – would likely appeal to an audience that indulges abundantly in the same themes in modern popular media, such as the television series *The Original* (2013 – present) which includes all three and is also set in New Orleans, like *Sins of the Fathers*. However, these supernatural themes are but one level in the *Gabriel Knight* games. One level of three that all centre on religion, as will be argued. First, there is the already mentioned supernatural ‘evil’ represented by the main antagonist of each game: voodoo queen Tetelo in the first game, werewolf Baron Friedrich von Glower in the second game, and head vampire Excelsior Montreaux in the final game. Then there is Gabriel himself who embodies a particular subset of the Hero archetype. Lastly, we have Gabriel as the last descendant in a long line of *Schattenjäger* (‘Shadow Hunters’), literally a line of ‘Knights’ whose task it is to fight the supernatural. In the last game *Gabriel Knight, Blood of the Sacred, Blood of the Damned* we, the player, finally find out where Gabriel’s vocation as *Schattenjäger* originated. A revelation that not only brings the three games together, but also the three levels. In this article, building on Wendy Doniger’s theory of the micromyth and on a close reading of the games, I will explore these three levels, starting by exploring Gabriel as a particular instance of the Hero archetype.

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1 It should be noted that, apart from the name of the protagonist, the titles are connected because they all link to Bible verses or passages that refer to the flaws of humanity. As we will see this is a significant element in Gabriel’s story.

## 2 Gabriel Knight the Hero-King

The archetype of the Hero has been researched and described abundantly, especially in Western society in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Psychoanalyst Carl Jung was one of the first to recognize that stories, legends and myths from different cultures and times contained common elements and common character types. One of these common character types or archetypes, as he termed them, is the Hero<sup>2</sup>. Arguably, the most well-known comparative study into the Hero is Joseph Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949). However, Campbell focusses on the communalities in the journey/quest every Hero has to undertake, not on common elements that distinguish the character type. In her book *The Implied Spider: Politics & Theology in Myth* (1998) Wendy Doniger looks at recurring elements in myths from different timeframes and different cultures. As she points out, her theory is not limited to classical myths alone:

I do not wish, for instance, to limit myths to stories involving supernatural beings (though many myths do), and though there are important differences among myths and epics, legends, history, and films, in many ways I think these texts function similarly and should be studied together. I certainly would not limit myths to written texts, let alone ancient written texts; they may be written or oral, ancient or contemporary. (Doniger 1998, 1)

These common elements are a fundamental part of the myth, legend or story that cannot be left out:

We often feel that various tellings of a much-retold myth are the same, at least in the sense that they do not disappoint us by omitting what we regard as essential parts of the myth, without which it would lose at the very least some of its charm, and at the most its meaning. When we say that two myths from two different cultures are 'the same' we mean that there are certain plots that come up again and again, revealing a set of human concerns that transcend any cultural barriers, experiences that we might call cross-cultural or transcultural. (, 53)

A scholar can use this fact to construct what Doniger calls the micromyth:

It is an imaginary text, a scholarly construct that contains the basic elements from which all the possible variants could be created, a theoretical construct that will enable us to look at all the variants

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2 Others who looked into these common patterns and character types were fellow psychoanalyst Otto Rank in *Der Mythos von der Geburt der Helden* (1909), Russian formalist Vladimir Propp in *Морфология сказки* (*The Morphology of the Folk Tale*, 1928), independent scholar Lord Raglan in *The Hero, a Study in Tradition, Myth and Drama* (1936) and French comparative philologist Georges Dumézil in *Mythe et Épopée II, Types épiques indo-européens: un héros, un sorcier, un roi* (1971).

at once and ask questions of all of them simultaneously. It minimizes, though it cannot entirely exclude, the expression of any point of view. (ibid., 88)

The micromyth cannot only be used to compare two myths from different cultures or times, but also to see if a particular myth belongs to the overall set:

[t]he micromyth is the ‘third thing,’ the scholar's own defining interest, which serves now not just as the pivot of two things being compared but as the hub of a wheel to which an infinite number of spokes may be connected (ibid., 88-89).

Moreover, although Doniger does not mention them, the micromyth can also be applied to narrative computer games<sup>3</sup>. Using several Hero myths, legends, stories and films, as well as Campbell's Hero monomyth, and Raglan's and Dumézil's Hero studies, I formulated what I dubbed the Hero-King micromyth (Veugen 2005, Veugen 2011)<sup>4</sup>:

- (m1) The hero (who can be female or male) is separated from her/his parents at an early age; in many Hero-King myths, this is because one or both parents are slain by an enemy.
- (m2) The hero is fostered either in the normal chivalric tradition or because (s)he is an orphan.
- (m3) The hero initially does not know her/his heritage or the destiny (s)he has to fulfil.
- (m4) The hero has certain assets, which make her/him stand out from other people.
- (m5) The hero distinguishes herself/himself by her/his acts and deeds.
- (m6) The hero receives as heirloom an artefact with ‘magical’ properties (in West-European legends this usually is a sword).
- (m7) The hero has a (non-human) guardian.
- (m8) The kingdom suffers because of the absence of the rightful king.
- (m9) To become king the hero must prove that (s)he is the true heir.

A simple inspection of this list shows that many modern day (super) hero tales base their protagonist on this myth, for instance Harry Potter, Katniss Everdeen<sup>5</sup> or Ezio Auditore da Firenze<sup>6</sup>. However, despite this continued popularity, we should not forget that the Hero-King protagonist occurs even in the oldest recorded stories, those of the Sumerian shepherd Dumuzi (ca. 2500 B.C.)

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<sup>3</sup> Games of progression in Juul's terminology (Juul, 2005) or story-structured games as I call them (Veugen, 2011)

<sup>4</sup> Also see these texts for a comparative use of this micromyth both between two myths as well as between versions of one myth in five different media.

<sup>5</sup> *The Hunger Games* trilogy (2008-2010).

<sup>6</sup> Protagonist of several *Assassin's Creed* games. His ‘transformation’ from Hero to King is told in the three main games *Assassin's Creed II* (2009), *Assassin's Creed Brotherhood* (2010) and *Assassin's Creed Revelations* (2011).

and the Indo-European hero Gilgamesh (ca. 2000 B.C.). The myth can also be found in the hero tales from mediaeval literature, for instance those of Charlemagne, Arthur or Siegfried.

As will be argued Gabriel Knight is a Hero-King. His name already tells us that he is not an ordinary man. His first name alludes to the Archangel Gabriel, God's messenger. This is acknowledged in the games themselves, in *GK2* von Glower, after hearing Gabriel's name, actually remarks: 'Gabriel, like the Angel', and in a Tarot reading in *GK2*, the name is identified as 'a name of power'. Finally, in *GK3*, Gabriel himself, upon seeing a tapestry depicting the Angel, says that the Angel looks like him. His last name Knight is a literal translation of his original German family name Ritter, defender of the weak and oppressed. Just as other Hero-Kings Gabriel does not know that he is special (m3), in his case the last descendant of a long line of Schattenjäger, shadow hunters, chosen by God to fight evil.

When we first encounter him in *Sins of the Fathers*, he is a failed pulp crime writer and owner of a bookshop called St. George located on Bourbon Street New Orleans. He was able to buy the shop with money he inherited from his mother Margaret Templeton, and it seems that this inheritance is what keeps the shop running because none of the rare books in the shop sell. Gabriel is plagued by nightmares that become more and more articulate throughout the game. He is in his early thirties, and was raised by his grandmother Rebecca Wright as he lost his parents in a car crash when he was eight (m1 and m2).<sup>7</sup> It gradually becomes clear that Gabriel is not the only family member to suffer from the nightmares, his grandfather Harrison as well as his father Philip suffered from them as well. Harrison was the first Ritter to come to the United States at the age of twenty-one. As it later becomes clear, he came to America to escape the Ritter family curse. This is also the reason he changed his name from Heinz Ritter to Harrison Knight. Part of the curse are the recurring nightmares, but all male family members suffer from what they refer to as bad luck (m8). Harrison is a poet but he has to take on other jobs, which he cannot hold on to for long according to Gabriel's grandmother. Harrison meets Rebecca at a church revival and they instantly fall in love. Philip is their only son. Harrison dies at thirty-six after being hit by a streetcar. Like Gabriel, Philip is eight years old when this happens. Philip himself is an unsuccessful painter. Therefore, the family has to live on his wife Margaret's money. The car crash in which Gabriel's parents die was allegedly caused by 'a deer in the road – or a wild cat' that startled Philip and made him swerve. Like his father, Philip is in his mid-thirties when he dies.

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7 There are some differences in story line between the game narrative and the book written by Jensen (1997). In the book Gabriel is 33, but in the third game his passport suggests that he is born in 1963, which would make him 30 in the first game. In the book, the grandmother is called Esther, in the game Rebecca. In the book, Gabriel is one year old when his parents die, in the game eight. And in the book Harrison dies from a heart attack, in the game it is a car accident.



As a character, Gabriel does not seem to have many redeeming qualities. He is a macho and a womanizer (in his own eyes these are assets).<sup>8</sup> His life's motto is *carpe diem*; seize the day, living from one day to the next.<sup>9</sup> As we will see later on, growing morally is an important, perhaps the most important criterion for him to become a true *Schattenjäger*. In the course of the games, we also see his strong points: Gabriel is fiercely loyal to his family and friends. Furthermore, he does not shy away from difficult tasks and once he is committed to a case, he will see it through even though he might suffer himself. This is where we see his courage and honesty (m4 and m5).

Like other Hero-Kings, Gabriel has a non-human guardian (m7), the Virgin Mary. This is not very obvious in the first game, even though we see quite a few references to the Madonna. In the remastered *20<sup>th</sup> Century Anniversary Edition*, the connection with the Virgin is a little more explicit, for instance Gabriel owning a small Virgin statue himself, even though it was a present from his grandmother<sup>10</sup>. This suggests that Jane Jensen wanted to make Gabriel's connection with the Virgin more obvious. In the second game, *The Beast Within*, the connection is apparent. This game takes place in Bavaria. One of the locations Gabriel visits early in the game is the Marienplatz, Munich's central square. Here he comes across a statue of the Virgin. When the player clicks on the statue Gabriel mutters: 'She almost seems to be watching me'. In the game Gabriel's assistant, Grace, also prays for Gabriel's health at the shrine of Our Lady of Altötting, which in German is called the *Gnadenkapelle*<sup>11</sup>. Praying to the Madonna is part of an elaborate puzzle; still the game makes it clear that Grace's prayers for Gabriel are heartfelt. In the final game, due to the subject matter, the Virgin is less visible.

In modern versions of the Hero-King myth, the guardian does not necessarily have to possess special powers (as Wotan did in the Siegfried Saga or Merlin in the Arthur legends). Apart from the Madonna, there is another woman who constantly watches over Gabriel, his assistant Grace

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8 Gabriel is portrayed as the typical romance novel male lead. A man women love to hate, but who also has a kind of animal magnetism that women find irresistible, cf. Red Butler in *Gone with the Wind* (1963). In the remastered version, Gabriel does seem to recognize that these are not assets but flaws as he confesses them to a priest in St. Louis Cathedral, especially having impure thoughts of women and having slept with more than forty. The priest advises him to seek professional help on which Gabriel replies that he has done so on a regular basis.

9 In the book, it is suggested that he does this because he does not expect to grow old as both his father and his grandfather died in their thirties.

10 There is a statue to the Virgin in the Ritter chapel in Schloss Ritter in the first game, but this can also just be a reference to the fact that the Ritters were Catholic. One of the characters Madame Cazaunoux, a devout Catholic, calls on the Virgin Mary for assistance even when her malady is Voodoo related. She also has a large picture of the Madonna hanging in her sitting room. The small Virgin statue Gabriel owns in the remastered version is in a cabinet in his bookstore. When the player clicks on it, Gabriel remarks: 'That's from Gran. She likes to think it means that someone's watching over me'. There is also a statue of a coloured Madonna with a coloured Christ child in the Voodoo museum.

11 The Chapel of Grace dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

Nakimura. Grace is the brain to Gabriel's brawn<sup>12</sup>. Again, her name is an indication that she is more than just an assistant. In all three games, Grace actually saves Gabriel's life.

This brings us back to the Ritter curse, and *Sins of the Fathers*. This well-known and often used Biblical phrase refers to Gabriel's 17<sup>th</sup> century ancestor Gunter Ritter. In the graphic novel that accompanied the original release of the game<sup>13</sup>, Gunter has come to Carolina by request of its Mayor Crodwell. The town has been plagued by mysterious deaths and the Mayor suspects witchcraft. In the course of his investigations, Gunter encounters the Mayor's black slave woman Eliza and falls in love with her. Although Gunter as well as Eliza, or Tetelo<sup>14</sup> as she is really called, know that they cannot be together, Tetelo strongly believes that they were brought together by faith to fulfil some, as yet to be revealed, purpose. Several weeks later, urged on by the Mayor, Gunter sets a trap for the witch and her coven. As intended, Gunter is captured. While fighting with the witch he seeks protection from the Ritter talisman and calls on God to help him. This is when he realizes that the witch is Tetelo. At that moment his men arrive and Gunter lets Tetelo escape. He finds her in her cabin where she reveals that she is the daughter of a powerful African shaman, a Bokur. Her father was asked by the gods to sacrifice his daughter, but he tried to outwit faith by binding Tetelo's soul to another girl. The gods would not be cheated, the village was overrun by slavers and those who were not killed were transported to the West Indies, including Tetelo. The recent victims of the slaves are all members of this original transportation crew. Gunter is appalled by her story and leaves. Tetelo calls on the ghost of her father, to free her from her obligation to the tribe, but he refuses her. Desperate and disorientated she lets herself be captured by the townspeople. Together with her coven, she is to be burned at the stake. She appeals to Gunter to help her, but confronted by the Mayor and the angry townspeople he cowards away. Gunter's ultimate betrayal forces Tetelo to call upon the Loa<sup>15</sup> of her ancestors, but her powers are not strong enough. This is when Gunter's conscience sets in and he offers her the power of the talisman. The combined powers unleash a great storm killing many of the townspeople. The rest are slaughtered by the slaves. Tetelo confronts Gunter for the last time. She cannot forgive him the betrayal of their love. Now in possession of the Ritter talisman she has become her father's true daughter: a powerful Voodoo Queen. In a letter<sup>16</sup>, Gunter confesses his weakness and the loss of the talisman to his father:

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12 The relationship between Gabriel and Grace can best be compared to the female-male partnerships typical of TV series of the 1980s, such as *Remington Steele* (1982-1987) and *Moonlighting* (1985-1989).

13 In the remastered version, the graphic novel is digitally included in the game. Interestingly, the player is advised not to read the novel before Day 6 (in the game) to avoid spoilers. In the original version, the graphic novel was a small booklet and there were no instructions on when to read it. It can be assumed that many of the players read the booklet before playing the game.

14 According to the *Sins of the Fathers Design Bible* (Jensen, 1992) the African name means 'filled with fire'.

15 In Voodoo (or Voudoun) Loa are gods.

16 In the game, the letter is the last entry in Gunter's diary.

Dear Father,

I offer these final words as apology for the harm done to our sacred office. The woman I wrote of, Tetelo, was the witch I sought. I have committed terrible crimes. I loved this witch, then betrayed her, and then used our sacred family power to free her and aid her in destroying this colony.

The talisman is gone – Tetelo took it. I can but pray for thy forgiveness, for thy swift recovery of the talisman, and that my punishment in Hell will be long and bitter.

Thy undeserving son,

Gunt(h)er

The loss of the talisman marks the beginning of the Ritter curse, and unbeknownst to him, it is up to Gabriel to retrieve the talisman and break the curse (m3). It turns out that Gabriel still has one living male relative: his great-uncle Wolfgang Ritter. He too has been plagued by the Ritter curse. His only son died at a very young age and like his brother, nephew and great-nephew Wolfgang has been troubled by financial difficulties throughout his life (m8). Wolfgang contacts Gabriel to warn him that he is in danger, but Gabriel is not convinced so Wolfgang sends him Gunter's journal. The journal ties in with the Voodoo murders that Gabriel started to look into in *Sins of the Fathers* and with the images from his nightmares. In search of the truth, Gabriel secretly attends a Voodoo ritual. The Voodoo priestess is possessed by the Loa of Tetelo, who instantly recognizes Gabriel as a descendant of Gunter. Gabriel barely escapes with his life, and realizes that he has to recapture the talisman. He travels to Germany, but his great-uncle has already left for Tetelo's homeland in Africa to search for her remains and to find the talisman. What immediately strikes Gabriel when he has arrived in the Schloss is the terrible state of disrepair the building is in. The Ritter housekeeper Gerde tells Gabriel that since the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the family's luck has turned. From that time on, the Schloss, as well as the village of Rittersberg, have been deteriorating (m8).

In the Schloss, Gabriel has to undergo the initiation ritual of the Schattenjäger, which takes place in the Ritter chapel in front of a large stained-glass window depicting Saint George and the Dragon. Gerde likens this ritual to the ordination priests undergo. She also sees the Schattenjäger as a kind of priestly order, although not as strict. In the second game the emphasis of the Schattenjäger as priestly order is emphasized several times<sup>17</sup>, as well as the fact that they 'work' for God<sup>18</sup>. Now that Gabriel is initiated as Schattenjäger, he has to undergo the final test (m9). He travels to Africa, where he finds his great-uncle in Tetelo's burial mount. Now that they finally meet in person, Wolfgang says: 'You will make a wonderful Schattenjäger ... It is quite a long path, my boy. I,

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17 For instance, the woman who does the Tarot reading, Meryl Smith, talks about them as soldiers of God.

18 Similar to Gunter, Gabriel's ancestors Victor and Christian in their diaries thank God for helping them.

myself, have still the last of my three ‘quests’ to meet.’ (m9). Taking a more careful look at these words, they reveal that a) Gabriel is not a Schattenjäger yet and b) it will take three quests to ‘become King’, in other words, he will only become a true Schattenjäger at the end of the third game.<sup>19</sup> The first quest is the first game, regaining the talisman and defeating Tetelo. To get to the talisman a human heart is needed. Recognizing that his time as Schattenjäger is over, Wolfgang sacrifices himself so that Gabriel may retrieve the talisman (m6). Back in New Orleans Gabriel learns that his hometown has been hit badly by severe storms, that crime rates have increased enormously in the past three days and that fifty people have suffered from food poisoning (m8). To save his ‘kingdom’ and prove that he is a true Schattenjäger, he confronts Tetelo and destroys her and the coven’s idol, thus breaking the curse (m9).

### 3 Fighting evil in the name of the good

In *Sins of the Father*, two plots are interwoven. On the one hand, we have Gabriel’s quest to break the Ritter curse and fulfil his destiny, on the other hand, we have the modern day story of the Voodoo murders, which Gabriel investigates for his new crime novel. He is assisted by Grace, who does his research. While investigating the murders, Gabriel encounters Malia Gedde, a beautiful black woman who heads Gedde Enterprises<sup>20</sup>. Although Malia is totally out of his league, they are attracted to each other and start a passionate love affair. For the player who has read the graphic novel it is evident that history repeats itself. Therefore, it is no surprise to find that Malia is the present Voodoo priestess and a descendant of Tetelo. However, Malia does not know the evil she wreaks once she is possessed by Tetelo’s Loa. Nor does she know that her company is used as a legitimate front for illegal operations, especially the trafficking of drugs.

At the Voodoo ritual, there is a short moment of recognition between Malia and Gabriel, before Tetelo takes over. This of course echoes the moment when Gunter recognizes Tetelo as the witch/Voodoo priestess in the graphic novel, and just as Tetelo initially tries to save her love Gunter, Malia tries to save Gabriel. To bring about the final confrontation Tetelo has abducted Grace and demands that Gabriel hands over the talisman for her safe release. To rescue Grace, Gabriel infiltrates the hidden headquarters of the Voodoo cartel. In an added scene in the remastered version, while searching the premises, Gabriel witnesses Malia summoning Tetelo to beg her to be

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19 This reading of Wolfgang’s words may seem farfetched, but we will come across more instances where events in one game already hint at or foreshadow parts of one or both of the other games.

20 Again the name is significant, Malia, from mal – evil. Gedde is Danish for pike. It also is reminiscent of Getty, suggesting enormous wealth and influence. Malia’s family are very rich and Malia herself is interested in the fine Arts. Amongst other works of art, she owns Michelangelo’s *Rebellious Slave*.

set free from her duties. She can no longer go through with it. She loves Gabriel. Tetelo refuses her: ‘He will! As Gunter betrayed me. Blinded by the light, he will despise your darkness!’ This is, of course, a more explicit reference to the fact that Gabriel and Malia’s story repeats Gunter and Tetelo’s, making it clear that Gabriel has to atone for Gunter’s sins.

During his investigation, Gabriel finds a similar altar to the one in Africa. It soon dawns on him that Grace’s heart is going to be sacrificed. However, to enter the ceremony he must disguise himself. He chooses the mask of a wolf.<sup>21</sup> At the ceremony, Malia is already ‘ridden’ by Tetelo, so Gabriel sees no other option than to fight her using the talisman. He rescues Grace and entrusts the talisman to her so that she may safely leave. Now Gabriel has to confront Tetelo without its protection. Fighting for his life, he appeals to Malia, but she is not strong enough to fight Tetelo. In the course of the fight, the sacrificial altar has opened so that Gabriel can destroy Tetelo’s idol. This causes an earthquake and a big rift into which Malia/Tetelo falls, just being able to grasp the edge. Tetelo taunts Gabriel to abandon Malia, as Gunter did her. However, unlike his ancestor Gabriel chooses to save Malia, even though this means saving Tetelo as well. Recognizing this, Malia chooses her own death, strengthened by the fact that Gabriel would not abandon her.

Apart from the religious elements in Gabriel’s *Schattenjäger* plot, the Voodoo plot also contains links to the Christian faith, especially Roman Catholicism. This is not surprising as New Orleans itself, as well as the specific version of Voodoo (or Voudoun) that is found in the city, have strong links to this religion, as is explained in the game in a university lecture on Voodoo Gabriel attends<sup>22</sup>. Therefore, it is also not surprising that Gabriel both visits places that are linked to Voodoo (the Voodoo museum, the Dixieland drugstore) as well as places that are linked to Roman Catholicism (St Louis Cathedral, Cemetery #1<sup>23</sup>) in New Orleans. Gabriel even poses as a Roman Catholic priest to gather information. *Sins of the Fathers* is not the only game with Roman Catholic places of worship. In *The Beast Within* we have the St George church in Rittersberg, where the crypt of the *Schattenjäger* is situated, the chapel in the Ritter Schloss, the pilgrimage chapel in Altötting,

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21 Obviously, he sees himself as a lone wolf. However, turning into a wolf also foreshadows what will happen in *The Beast Within*.

22 Jane Jensen is known for the fact that she researches her games very thoroughly. In the games, there are always sources of information (books, diaries, experts, and in the last game a computer) where the player has the opportunity to learn such facts as are helpful or even necessary to bring the games to a successful end. In the lecture, professor Hartridge, a university professor of religious studies who specialises in African religions, mentions that all sub-cults of African Voudoun worship a pantheon of spirits. This makes it easy to adapt or mingle with already settled religions: ‘This spirit-worship is what makes Voudoun so easily adaptable. With all those spirits, it’s no problem to add a few more. Say, for example, the Virgin Mary.’ This explains why many traditional citizens of New Orleans, like Madame Cazaunoux in the game, have no problem with being Roman Catholic and at the same time believing in Voodoo. New Orleans’ most famous Voodoo Queen Mary Laveau, who’s tomb plays a major role in the game, was a devout Roman Catholic as well and is buried at New Orleans’ Cemetery #1. The other person with extensive knowledge of Voodoo in the game is Dr. John, the proprietor of the Voodoo museum.

23 The latter, because of popular media texts, now is probably more often linked with the supernatural than as a Roman Catholic cemetery.

and King Ludwig II's chapel in Neuschwanstein. In *Blood of the Sacred*, we have the church of Rennes-le-Château as one of the main locations of investigation.

As already mentioned *The Beast Within* mainly takes place in the south of Germany, in Bavaria, itself a Catholic region. Gabriel now resides in Schloss Ritter. His help is sought by the villagers, especially the innkeeper of the local Gasthof *Zum Goldenen Löwe*, whose nephew's daughter was snatched just meters from their farm. The police have linked the case to similar murders and suspect two wolves that 'escaped' from the zoo in Munich, but the girl's father Tony Huber, suspects that the real culprit is a werewolf. Gabriel takes on the case and moves into the Huber's farm<sup>24</sup>. He soon finds out that the girl is indeed captured by a creature that does have wolf features, but it is much bigger and heavier than a normal wolf. His investigations lead him to an elite hunting club, led by Baron Friedrich von Glower. Gabriel is susceptible to Glower's charisma and hedonistic lifestyle. Von Glower's 'back to nature' and 'being led by your natural instincts and needs' philosophy appeal to him. Von Glower himself also takes a special interest in Gabriel. Still, through his investigations, Gabriel is able to link the recent murders to one of the members of the hunting club, von Zell, but while on a hunting expedition, he is bitten by von Zell in wolf form and even though Glower forces him to shoot the wolf, Gabriel will become a werewolf unless the Alpha wolf is killed.

Parallel to Gabriel's investigations Grace is also involved in the case. At the beginning of the game, she is visited by two Americans, the Smiths, who claim to be demonologists and have come to visit the Schattenjäger. Meryl Smith is a clairvoyant and she warns Grace about the 'Black Wolf'. When laying Tarot cards for Grace she also predicts the struggle Gabriel has to face between good and evil<sup>25</sup>, foreshadowing his transition to a werewolf. Grace's dreams and the Black Wolf lead her to King Ludwig II of Bavaria. She discovers that Ludwig was also bitten by a werewolf, and that Ludwig was fighting the transition as well. Ludwig's assailant was his, until then, best friend Louis. While attending one of Wagner's operas, Ludwig discovers that the music almost makes him turn into wolf form. So together with Wagner, he plans a new opera and a special lighting arrangement to make Louis turn to have him arrested. However, before the plan can be set in motion, Wagner dies and Ludwig is committed to an asylum. Afraid that he might turn into a werewolf and actually kill someone, Ludwig commits suicide<sup>26</sup>.

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24 On the farm, we also see elements linked to the Catholic faith, such as a crucifix and the letters IHS (Jesus Christos) with a cross above the H on a glass pane (the emblem of the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits). When Gabriel examines the crucifix, he remarks that the Hubers must be Roman Catholic.

25 The card that she draws for Gabriel's present situation is Death, a transition card: 'dying to one thing and being born to another'. Next, she draws the two of Wands indicating that the struggle has two possible outcomes: turning to good or turning to evil. As Gabriel's companion card, she draws the High Priestess. This is not Grace's card but someone trying to communicate with Gabriel, someone who represents deep wisdom. This card probably refers to his non-human guardian, the Virgin Mary, although it is not explicitly stated in the game.

26 In this way, the game gives an explanation for Ludwig's bouts of madness and the strange entries in his dairies

As the player, by then, has already grasped, von Glower is the Black Wolf, Ludwig's downfall. Von Glower's intentions were not malicious, however. In his loneliness as an immortal creature, he was looking for like-minded friends. Ludwig was one of the first, but as he explains to Gabriel in a letter he sends him during Gabriel's transition, his early attempts failed. Those he wanted to turn, either went mad, like Ludwig, or they died. So over the years he became more cautious. With the hunting club, he first used his philosophy 'of tooth and claw' to test possible candidates. Von Zell had seemed the most promising, but recently he had become increasingly more violent, selfish and arrogant, hunting in broad daylight, and no longer killing loners, drawing attention to the club and its members. Von Glower also wanted to turn Gabriel, but von Zell in his eagerness to do away with Gabriel, bit him first. Still, von Glower is convinced that Gabriel will pass the transition: 'But you are different. You're a Ritter. Your Blood is already supernatural. [...] You have an enormous streak of the beast in you and you are innately strong in the Occult.' To show his faith in Gabriel, he even returns the talisman<sup>27</sup>, which Gabriel lost in his encounter with von Zell. In the letter, von Glower argues that being a beast is much better than Gabriel's current life: 'It [being a wolf] is glorious much more so than the priestly life the Schattenjäger offers.' The letter ends as follows:

Don't confuse yourself with ideas of good and evil. Nature shows us that there are no such distinctions. You and I both inherited something of our fathers. Is your legacy any less of a curse or blessing than mine?

Join me.

Your Friederich

The content of the letter links the plot of the second game ('streak of the beast') directly to the first game ('You and I both inherited something of our fathers'). With the letter, von Glower tries to tempt Gabriel to the dark side. This temptation is also part of the Campbell's Hero's quest<sup>28</sup>. It shows that Gabriel's transition to Schattenjäger is not yet complete, but continues in the second game.

In the final part of the game, Grace has located all the parts of the missing Wagner opera. The opera house has also been adapted to the special lighting arrangement. During the performance, von Glower is indeed affected and in a final chase Gabriel, also in wolf form, traps von Glower and kills him. In the game's final scene, Grace confronts Gabriel with his inherently dual nature, but he assures her that his choice was well thought-out: 'I made my choice. I guess when it comes down to

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towards the end of his life. And, of course, his mysterious death.

27 Von Glower is aware of the power of the talisman. One night when Gabriel sleeps over at von Glower's, he comes to Gabriel's room and examines the talisman.

28 Cf. the emperor tempting Luke in *Star Wars* (1977) or Lord Voldemort tempting Harry in the *Harry Potter* series.

where the buck stops I don't want to be like that I don't want to be like that Gracie', showing the gamer that he has set a further step on his path to becoming a real Schattenjäger.

The story of the final game, *Blood of the Sacred, Blood of the Damned*, starts in an accompanying graphic novel. Grace and Gabriel are charged by prince James of Albany, the current Stewart heir, to protect his baby son Charlie from what he refers to as 'Night Visitors', vampire-like creatures. James tells them that these creatures have fed on him when he was a child and the baby has bite-marks as well. Despite their efforts, the baby is kidnapped and the trail leads Gabriel to Rennes-le-Château in France. Searching for the kidnappers gets Gabriel involved in a tour group whose members are all hoping to solve the mystery that allegedly made the priest Abbé Berenger Saunier a very rich man. Gabriel gradually realizes that the mystery and the kidnapping are linked to the 'Sangreal'<sup>29</sup> in which it is claimed that Christ's bloodline survived and that the Stuarts are now the last in the line. It turns out that the baby was kidnapped on order of Excelsior Montreaux, head of the Night Visitors, who believes that the boy's blood holds special powers. Together with Grace, who has also arrived in France, Gabriel has to solve several (geographical) puzzles to find the location of an underground cavern where the treasure, by now identified as the Holy Grail, is located, but where Gabriel has reason to believe the baby is also kept. Grace uncovers the location and Gabriel is able to free the kidnapped boy. In the third game Gabriel's dreams show a Unicorn being chased by the Night Visitors. We also see grapes and grapevines<sup>30</sup>. In a later version of the dream the Unicorn's neck is severed with a ritual dagger, the creatures collect the blood in a chalice and one of them drinks it. His face distorts, and then a beam of light emanates from his forehead, followed by a unicorn horn. When Gabriel apparently wakes up, he sees one of the creatures about to bite Grace, but he cannot intervene because his legs are not working. When he regains power over his legs, the creature is gone and Grace seems to be unharmed. Gabriel, wanting to give Grace the protection of the talisman, gets into bed with her. He puts the talisman on her chest and then kisses her. Subsequently, they spent the night together. The next morning they both feel very awkward and Gabriel decides that it is best to pretend that nothing happened.

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29 The mystery first came into public notice when BBC presenter Henry Lincoln did three documentaries about Rennes-Le-Château and 'the lost treasure' for the BBC Two *Chronicle* series: *The Lost Treasure of Jerusalem* (1972), *The Priest, the Painter and the Devil* (1974) and *The Shadows of the Templars* (1979). During this time, Lincoln met American fiction writer Richard Leigh and New Zealand photojournalist Michael Baigent. The three turned the mystery into the 1982 best-seller *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*, the book that Jane Jensen used as part of her research for the game: 'Da Vinci Code was based on the same research material I used, yes, Holy Blood, Holy Grail and a whole bunch of similar books. I doubt he [Dan Brown] ever played GK3.' (Jensen, 2014).

30 In Medieval Art and literature, the Unicorn is an accepted symbol for Christ. The grapevine is used as a metaphor by Jesus himself. In John 15:1 he says: 'I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.' Montreaux owns a vineyard and when Gabriel questions him about viticulture, he notices that Montreaux's discusses these matters, including wine, in an odd way.



#### 4 Servant to the King of Kings

Gabriel's initiation as Schattenjäger takes place in front of a stained glass window depicting St. George fighting with the Dragon. This is no coincidence. St. George is the Patron Saint of the Ritter family. Like St. George, the Ritters fight against (supernatural) evil. The church in Rittersberg, where the family crypt is located is also called St. George, as is Gabriel's bookstore. When visiting the Ludwig II museum in the second game, Grace discovers that Ludwig was the grand master of the knights of St. George, an aristocratic society dedicated to acts of chivalry. In the remastered version of *Sins of the Fathers* Gabriel owns a small statue of a dragon. When the player clicks on it, Gabriel remarks: 'I always had a thing for St. George, the one that slew a dragon.' In addition, when Gabriel talks to the Saint in the stained glass window he remarks: 'I named my shop after you. You've always fascinated me, I never knew why until now'. Furthermore, for the Schattenjäger ritual, Gabriel has to repeat the following lines:

St. George, patron of the light,  
 who hunts the shadows of the night...  
 upon my blood I call thee now,  
 purify me, for I avow...  
 to set my feet upon thy road,  
 the sword I take up for my own.

When he has finished the ritual, it seems as if nothing has happened. However, that night in his dream the dragon steps out of the stained glass window. The dragon is huge and quite menacing. The following dialogue ensues:

Dragon: Your soul smells Gabriel Knight. You seek to be Schattenjäger?  
 Gabriel: I do.  
 Dragon: You must first burn away the past. How much sin do you have to burn?  
 Dragon: You have used people all your life. Never committed to anything. Turn back now and I will forget that you asked for this.  
 Gabriel: No!  
 Dragon: There are only two things that redeem you. First, that you have Ritter blood in your veins. Second, that three women have loved you purely<sup>31</sup>.  
 Dragon: You asked to start on the path; so you shall... But you will not be Schattenjäger until you have **earned** it!

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31 His grandmother, Malia, and Grace (Jensen, 2014)

Gabriel: How?

Dragon: I can not show you the path. But I will tell you that you will have to let go of the greater part of yourself, Gabriel Knight.

Gabriel: Yes, no problem.

Dragon: Yes... Now, you asked for purification. You shall have it!

Gabriel: Oh, No!

The dragon torches Gabriel with his fiery breath. A glass sword appears in Gabriel's hand, and he stabs the dragon. But the dragon turns into a distorted version of Gabriel, who laughs maniacally, withers, and turns into the dragon's pupil. In the final images, we see a key appear. This is the key to the Schattenjäger library, a library that can only be entered by Schattenjäger<sup>32</sup>. This brings us to the dragon and snake imagery. As Grace explains in the first game, dragons and snakes are linked:

Hmmm. Did you know that medieval legends about dragons and giant worms are actually based on snakes? You know, dragons, devils, sea monsters—they've always been associated with snakes.

Especially in the first game, dragons and snakes abound. There are dragons/snakes in Gabriel's dreams, in his father's painting and sketches, in a poem written by his grandfather, on a banner in the Ritter library<sup>33</sup>, and a dragon/snake is part of one of the most challenging puzzles in the game. Gabriel's shop even has a statue of a dragon gargoyle. Moreover, as one of the pieces of evidence of the crime is a snake scale and snakes are an important element in Voodoo, the game also features some 'live' snakes Gabriel has to examine. In the remastered version of the game, the small dragon statue, already mentioned, has been added, as well as a shield or plaque with a dragonhead atop the landing of the staircase in Schloss Ritter.

Another animal that recurs in the first and the second game is the lion. We find it in Schloss Ritter as a statue at the foot of the stairs, as a head hanging on the landing (were the dragon is, in the remastered version) above the door to the Ritter library (in the second game it has moved above the headboard of Gabriel's bed), in the Ritter library<sup>34</sup>, on the doors of the St. George church, etc. Even the local hotel in Rittersberg is called *Zum Goldenen Löwe*. In the remastered version of *Sins of the Fathers*, the connection between the Ritters and lions is made more explicit. There is now quite a large painting of a Lion hanging at the head of Gabriel's bed. According to Gabriel, it is called 'Let Sleeping Lions Lie' [sic], he bought it at a garage sale. Then he admits that he has always had a thing for lions. Later when he calls his great-uncle Wolfgang, Wolfgang says that the Ritter family

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32 This is contradicted in the second game because Grace can also use the library.

33 In the remastered version, the banner is replaced by one bearing a cross and several small symbols resembling fleurs-de-lis.

34 In the remastered version it has gone. It is replaced by a puzzle involving a shield with as its emblem the talisman.

is associated with the image of the lion. Interestingly Damballah, the Voudoun snake god, is one of the primary Loa of the Geddés. In addition, in the first game in the corners of the game's menu we see the sculpted heads of a lion and a snake.

The combination of the lion and the snake is depicted on the Schattenjäger talisman in the form of a lion fighting a serpent. Even to a non-religious person, this struggle is understood as a struggle between good and evil. In religious imagery, the snake often represents the devil, whereas the lion refers to the lion of Judea, Christ. Both interpretations were confirmed by Jane Jensen when I asked her (Jensen, 2014). The talisman is believed to be as old as the Schattenjäger. As Wolfgang explains to Gabriel, its power should always be used for good, not for evil; for defence, not for offence. When asked why this should be so, Wolfgang simply replies that it is the Schattenjäger's duty. When Gabriel asks about the when and how of the Schattenjäger, Wolfgang answers that no one is sure when the vocation started or how. They have records going back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but nothing beyond that. There are rumours but as they are talking over the phone there is no time to delve deeper.

Before going into the origins of the Schattenjäger, it is necessary to reveal more of the story of the third game. One of the members of the tour group is a man called Emilio Baza, apparently a Middle-Eastern tourist. Emilio reveals to Grace that he once was part of a group called the Magi, a group tasked with protecting the bloodline descendants of Jesus from the Night Visitors. The creatures were originally also Magi but now want the blood for their own ends (cf. the Unicorn in Gabriel's dream). Emilio reveals that he has come to Rennes-Le-Château because of the secret. Later Emilio reveals a darker truth. Originally, he was just a devoted member to the Messiah, but on the day Christ was crucified, Emilio took some of his blood and drank it. Despite immediately regretting his action, he was consequently forced to walk the earth in anonymity, earning him the name of 'Wandering Jew'.

When Gabriel is in the underground chamber, before being able to free baby James he has to fight a gruesome creature that Montreaux has summoned. This creature is Asmodeus, the demon of lust, sometimes also referred to as a king of demons or one of the seven princes of Hell. In the game, Asmodeus appears in numerous images, seemingly taking the place of the dragon/snake in the earlier games. The most notable is the statue of Asmodeus in the church of St. Mary Magdalene<sup>35</sup>. In game terms, Asmodeus is of course the ultimate end-boss and he is indeed quite difficult to defeat. In comparison, Montreaux is easy; he just perishes in the same fight. When Gabriel is fighting Asmodeus, he is standing on a large stone tomb. After Asmodeus is defeated, Gabriel notices the tomb and opens it. A bright light emanates from his forehead, and then we see a

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35 The sculpture in the game is an exact copy of the real one in the church. The same goes for the rest of the churches interior.

clouded sky. A raven flies into the picture, lands and starts picking away flesh from an unknown source. The camera tilts, moves, and we see the edge of a wooden beam, followed by a hand. The screen flashes and we see the face of Christ on the Cross, quickly followed by a shot of Gabriel's face, but it is different, he is wearing a roman helmet. From what ensues, it becomes clear that Gabriel's ancestor was one of the Roman soldiers who nailed Jesus to the Cross. He now repents his deed and asks Christ for forgiveness:

Soldier: Can you forgive me? I did not know... may the Gods have mercy, I did not know.<sup>36</sup>

Christ: You are already forgiven.

Soldier: Please, is there anything I can do? For...for your family, perhaps?

Four beams of light emanate from behind Jesus and the music (a chorus) swells.

The beams dim and the chorus falls.

Christ: Yes, I will need a service from one of your descendants. If you will allow it? Will you be a servant for the light?<sup>37</sup>

Soldier: Yes, anything.

Christ: Then raise the end of your sword to my lips.

The sword floats upwards and Jesus kisses it. The handle turns to gold.

Christ: Carry the gold with you; it will protect you from evil. Now go in peace and love God.

The cross tilts and floats into the now golden clouds. With a flash, Gabriel is back in the reality of the underground chamber. He is dazed, but also awed and humbled. Emilio appears. He takes the shrouded body from the tomb and carries it away into a tunnel of bright light.

Not only, does this scene reveal the origins of the Schattenjäger and the gold out of which the talisman would later be forged, it also shows Gabriel's final transformation. At last, he has let go of the greater part of himself, committed to a cause, and does not put himself first. This is not only shown in his willingness to risk his own life to save baby James, it is even more clearly shown in his changed attitude towards Grace. He is now willing to admit that he loves her. Therefore, when he returns to the hotel, Gabriel runs to their room<sup>38</sup> to tell Grace how he feels, even spurning the female tour guide he had been trying to get involved with throughout the game. Unfortunately, he finds that Grace has gone. The fact that Gabriel now actually has changed morally confirms that he

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36 This, of course, echoes Luke 34: 'Jesus said, "Father, forgive them [the Roman soldiers], for they do not know what they are doing."'

37 Cf. Tetelo's words to Malia in the remastered version 'Blinded by the light, he will despise your darkness.'

38 Because of a shortage of hotel rooms, Gabriel and Grace have had to share. But Gabriel has been sleeping on the couch whenever they are both in the room at night, apart from the one time.

has earned the title of Schattenjäger. In the last scene, shown after the end-titles, we see the walls of the vineyard where the Unicorn was trapped crumble and the animal runs towards its freedom.

## 5 Conclusions

Gabriel is a true Hero-King, but as in many more modern tellings of the myth, his tale has a twist. His kingdom is not a literal realm, but the right to become the new Schattenjäger, hunter of the supernatural. The dragon he had to slay was his own defective nature as a human being, his own flawed morality, foreshadowed in the scene with St. George's dragon and hinted at by the titles of the games. However, the cost Gabriel has to pay seems high. It is not usual that a Hero-King myth ends without a resolution, not even the modern ones. Of course, Gabriel has proven that he is worthy of being a Schattenjäger; he has earned the title. Still the game ends on a low for him personally. When he has finally changed, the one person he loves, the one person he is willing to commit to, has left. Grace did not wait for Gabriel. After the eventful night and Gabriel's handling of it, she is ready to choose her own path. Emilio is with her in the room, when Gabriel has gone to rescue the baby. Grace is waiting anxiously for news. Emilio, who appears to have a telepathic link to what is happening in the chamber, reassures her that Gabriel is well. When Emilio leaves, he says to Grace: 'Remember, when one path to your destiny is blocked, another will appear.' After he has left, Grace looks at a photo of a friend, a Tibetan Lama, who has invited her to come and spend some extended time at his monastery.<sup>39</sup> Apparently, she has already chosen her new path. Intriguingly, Emilio also says something else to Grace: 'Goodbye, dear one. You must take very good care of yourself now.'

Having examined the games on all three levels, this leaves the question whether or not a new generation of players will understand and accept the religious themes in the game. In view of the fact that some of the elements have been made more explicit in the remastered edition, it seems that Jane Jensen also has her doubts about that. In addition, even when made more explicit, it still is difficult to predict which religious references this new generation will understand. One final question that some may have is why Jane Jensen chose to approach the religious aspects in the particular way she does in the games? Fortunately, she recently answered this question herself:

I think it's ingrained in me both by nature and nurture. My family tree has a lot of preachers in it. I guess there's just a part of me that is fascinated by the meta questions--what happens when we die,

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<sup>39</sup> In the second novel, Gabriel is writing a new crime adventure. In it his hero, Blake Backlash finds a mysterious packet in his mail 'postmark: India'.

why does evil exist, etc, just like my ancestors. But instead of that leading me to a religious belief, though, I've always been more interested in philosophy and the paranormal. I grew up as a minister's daughter and so I saw a lot of hypocrisy and bigotry in the church. And that made me question religion itself. It generally doesn't fare too well in my stories. I guess it's a love/hate relationship. Sorry for the weird answer! (Jensen, 2014)

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