

<http://www.eludamos.org>

The Role of Fantasy in Videogames: A Reappraisal

Liam Murray, John Maher

Eludamos. Journal for Computer Game Culture. 2011; 5 (1), pp. 45-57

The Role of Fantasy in Videogames: A Reappraisal

LIAM MURRAY AND JOHN MAHER

One of the most difficult tasks people can perform, however much others may despise it, is the invention of good games. (C.G. Jung 1936)

The majority of videogames as they are currently constituted seem to display a mechanistic repetitiveness in conception, development and production. A creative shallowness in games, a lack of innovation and a tendency to clone successful titles, are in part attributable to the hegemonic control exerted by game producers. This situation persists despite intense frustration from the creative talent within the industry: 'design documents are worked out by the marketing department; effectively as an artist or programmer you do as you are told' (*Interview with an artist*, cited in Wade 2007, p.687). This article approaches Fantasy as an underlying structuring element capable of energising the creative evolution of videogames. Fantasy is interpreted as persisting throughout all game forms and not confined to its own recognisable genre.

A Deeper Problem

We plan to argue, that commercial interests inhibiting creativity in videogame production may be interpreted as symptoms of a more subtle, but no less, vital problem which performs an obstructive function in diverse spheres of productive and creative activities. The focus here is on how this under appreciation affects the evolution of videogames. Our motivation stems from a belief that videogames have the potential to mould and shape social norms out of all proportion to the significant impacts they have had already on society. These impacts are and will continue to be both positive and negative. If Crawford's (1984) prediction of videogames as a powerful new art form is to be realized it arguably may require a more critical appreciation of certain elements of games creation which would seem, at this point to be misunderstood. Similar views are also expressed by Tavinor (2009) in his insightful study of art and videogames. Videogames and by extension, games studies, are not in the dock. They can be legitimately regarded as products of a technologically driven society whose values are moulded by bourgeois, materialist and consumerist ideologies. Although videogames can be influenced by the norms of the wider society, we will try to demonstrate that they have the potential to adopt counter cultural positionalities. The problem addressed below relates to a drying up of inspiration and creativity in the wider society.

Possibilities exist for the production of ludically rich games that successfully embed the creative principles underpinning the fantasies contained in mythological narratives. The mythological and subsequently the psychological should take precedence over any other form of analysis on the basis that, as Jung, the major

architect of modern analytical psychology argues, every thought generated—sane, insane, artistic, inane, literary, critical or intellectual—finds its point of origin within the human psyche (1978). Hillman (1984) sees psychology as the modern counterpart of myth. This is a trenchant idea, nevertheless it risks creating the impression that mythology is bound into the past. Myth making is as alive and active in modern culture as it has ever been. Therefore motifs, images and symbols that recur in anthropology, psychology, folktales and the visual arts have a creative contribution to make in one of the most recently emergent technologies. There is no justification for the assumption that inspiration or illumination might be forthcoming from the past alone. We are urging an appreciation that Fantasy's 'arresting strangeness'; the antipathy directed towards it by the everyday mind—as Tolkien (2008, p.48) so acutely observed—acts as a blind which conceals its ubiquitous and ever-present nature

In Swinfen's (1984, p.184) study on the place of Fantasy in literature, she contends that 'some critics and academics condemn the whole genre with a passion that seems less than objectively critical.' This lack of capacity for objective criticism is also of interest when considering the design, production and study of videogames. Lack of appreciation for the significance and potential of Fantasy has consequences for the design of compelling videogames. We take the view that psychological and mythological studies have shown that human wisdom i.e. the ability to make appropriate life choices, is transmissible via customs, ritual, dreams and art forms. This evolutionary knowledge is pre-technological but not necessarily pre-rational. We will contend that this knowledge is rational in its best sense even as it attracts the antipathy of a certain form of rationalism. Lest the valorisation of Fantasy should raise the ire of diehard ludologists it will be shown that far from weakening the ludic nature of gaming it is the playful (and playfilled) nature of games that reap the greatest rewards from a deeper appreciation of Fantasy. We are not interested in the narratology vs. ludology argument. A deeper insight into the creative potential of Fantasy is an approach that makes games better, i.e., more emotional, more meaningful and consequently more engaging. In videogames those who worship at the altar of simulation might remind themselves that humans have always been proficient simulators ever since the evolution of the pre-frontal cortex. Those who endorse the pre-eminence of narrative, on the other hand, might do well to consider that narrative—as we interpret it—may be no more than a transmission system for the simulatory activities of the human brain.

We advocate the adoption, among game developers, of a *poetics of Fantasy* as a critical practice which will help to endow their creations with greater depth and richness. This notion may be problematical to an exclusively rational mindset but we hope that we can encourage designers to look again at Fantasy as a source of renewed creativity.

Much academic writing is hallmarked by the tentative, the partial and the qualified. This is good practice to a large extent and it will be followed here to a greater degree because Fantasy seems to display a set of indefinable, yet dynamically powerful, characteristics that refuse categorisation. We will conclude this article by drawing an analogy between the vagueness of Fantasy and the seeming certitude of scientific practice. Assured and self confirmed in our notions of the real, we wait for Fantasy to be given meaning by our monolithic interpretations of reality. The consequences are

that we become comfortable with our own mundane view of what we take to be real which then restricts our capacity for creative and original thinking.

What is Fantasy?

The answer to the above question could easily be ‘What do you want it to be?’ It is one of those one-size-fits-all terms which is subject to indiscriminate usage. Fantasy tends to collocate with terms such as mere, pure, idle and just. The dismissive qualities inherent to this view are in contrast with the reliable solidity of reality (MacMillan 2002). Fantasy is commonly seen as an escape tactic from the demands of reality. Others have argued that Fantasy can be employed as a means of evaluating the demands of the real world (Swinfen 1984). The marginalised quality with which Fantasy is linked is of significant interest for this analysis. Fantasy’s association with imagination, leads to an area where Fantasy has a certain status i.e. to the realm of mythology, of mythological studies and ultimately to the disciplines of Analytical and Depth Psychology. Fantasy ‘stimulates creativity which develops what is not (yet) and it acts as the psyche’s balancing mechanism offering the person a self help tool to achieve emotional equilibrium’ (Wick 1984, p.193). By this definition, fantasy can be seen as having a simulatory function testing various scenarios before they emerge in the world as the activity recognisable as play. ‘In all the wild imaginings of mythology a fanciful spirit is playing on the borderline between jest and spirit. Now in myth and ritual the great instinctive forces of civilized life have their origin: All are rooted in the primeval soil of play’ (Huizinga 1970, p.82). Play is imbricated with the myth making processes of Fantasy. Fantasy is the ‘fanciful spirit’ of play (p.83). Both play and Fantasy are situated in an archetypal dimension of the human unconscious which now needs to be briefly explored.

Archetypal Psychology

Freud conceived of the Unconscious as personal, full of memory and repression while his contemporary and once co-researcher, Jung, theorised a deeper archetypal layer in the unconscious mind in which all of humanity participates (Jung 1956). An approach to archetypes requires an imaginative, almost metaphorical style of discourse that regards archetypes as ‘the deepest patterns of psychic functioning ... sober operational definitions in the language of science or logic are no less metaphorical than an image which presents the archetypes as root ideas, psychic organs, figures of myth, typical tales of existence, or dominant fantasies that govern consciousness’ (Hillman 1991, p.23). Before proceeding it might serve to reflect on the term *psychic*. Many will attribute a disreputable meaning to the word and rightly so in the sense that it is often linked with people who claim dubious and unproven abilities to converse with the dead, find lost objects, etc. Freud’s co-worker and former collaborator concluded that the unconscious is structured in two parts, an upper layer, the Personal Unconscious and a deeper layer, the Collective Unconscious. This deeper layer is ubiquitous in art forms (regardless of quality) and mythology (Jung 1963). The Platonic concept of forms or dispositions pre-existing conscious thought assisted Jung in the formation of the archetype, although Kant and, particularly, Schopenhauer may have had greater influence (Jarret 1981). The

phenomenon of the archetype is ubiquitous, appearing in disparate scientific enquiries ranging from evolutionary psychology to anthropology, biology and psycholinguistics (Stevens 2006). This states that the human being arrives in the world psychologically equipped with certain unconscious (collective) images and dispositions, which have striking commonalities across cultures separated by time and distance (Jung 1916). Jung considered the archetypes as clusters of psychic energy that express the major themes of living and are 'the unconscious images of the instincts themselves' (Jung 1936). Archetypal motifs are present throughout all of the world's cultures. Comprising the collective experience of what it means to be human, they are a form of distributed memory. Memory seems to be reserved for knowledge that is evolutionarily useful. Fantasy presents itself in the conscious mind in the form of inspiration, dreams, reveries, affects, playfulness and strong characters (Jung 1916).

Characters in Fantasy

The Hero is the most identifiable character in videogames. He (or she), is the character with whom the player (male or female) identifies. Mythologically, there is a three stage movement from Separation to Initiation to Return (Campbell 2007). The heroes of myth and legend were cunning, ruthless, patient, full of guile, master tacticians and strategists, e.g., Ulysses (Bly 2001). We will see those qualities when we come to consider the Fantasy of *Grand Theft Auto* (Rockstar Games 1997).

The classic heroic journey is structured in a mythic pattern beginning in a state akin to innocence and ending in a return to point of origin having survived a series of physical and psychological trials to attain the ultimate reward (Campbell 2007, Rank 1952; De Vries 1963). The ubiquitous shoot-everything-that-moves hero is a product of Western culture, neither standard nor accepted in the wider world (Vogler 1999).

Overuse is a feature of current game design. It is apparent in the repetition of motifs such as subterranean settings, the vocabulary of elves, wizards, goblins, magical swords, etc. In a broad sense, this is part of a trivialization of symbolism evident in modern culture (Postman 1982). The design of subterranean environments in games include the use of muted colours, darkness and prevalent shadows, all intended to create a sense of fear and mystery. The design is so ubiquitous as to be clichéd. Alternatively, an original designer might use this to advantage by threatening the hero in a setting which was previously established as warm, benign and safe. The effect would be to provoke a sense that there is no safe place thereby enhancing the emotional involvement of the player. In terms of physical space, Jenkins has observed that games have taken on a new importance with the disappearance of freely available urban playspaces (Jenkins 2009). In gaming, players occupy an imaginary space where personal and interpersonal skills are readily developed. 'Videogames enabled players to create fantasy worlds for themselves where they were heroic, active, and respected' (Sanford and Madill 2006, p.294). Videogames create a psychological imaginary in which the hero confronts problems, solves riddles, overcomes opponents and experiences a sense of empowerment, heroism and achievement. This is the bright side of computer games. We will now turn to the dark side.

The Devaluation of Fantasy

We would contend that Fantasy is underappreciated in terms of what it has to offer as a source of play and meaningful experience. More than this it has a store of inspiration to offer much of which is commonly and deliberately ignored if not reviled 'Fantasy, of course, starts out with an advantage: arresting strangeness. But that advantage has been turned against it and has contributed to its disrepute. Many people dislike being arrested. They dislike any meddling with the Primary world.' (Tolkien 1954, p.60). This can be viewed as a literary insight into a psychological problem. If we are to enrich our creativity in the design of videogames, this problem requires understanding.

Tolkien picked up on the disdain for Fantasy and the elevation of the imagination. He also rejected it (Tolkien 2008). However, for the sake of what this paper is hoping to achieve in a revised approach to Fantasy, it might be worthwhile pointing to elements in Tolkien's fiction which imply that he was not completely free from the tendency to elevate and fetishize. Consider Tolkien's antinomies in *The Lord of the Rings* (1948). The bucolic ruralism of the Shire is in contrast to the corruption brought by the industry of the invaders. The Orcs are brutish, animalistic cannibals against the ethereal wisdom and grace of the woodland elves. Tolkien is revolted by the Orcs. He wants Orchood 'sealed in precisely the same underworld from which Blake wants it to erupt' (Helms 1974, p.69). Helms should have noted that the hobbits, heroes and victors of the novel, had large hairy feet, a symbolic link to the animalistic and natural dimension of being.

'Some games procedural representations serve mostly to create an entertainment perspective, a fantastic situation that transports players to another world' (Bogost 2008, p.119). There is little expectancy here that the Fantasy dimension of gaming could ever achieve more than entertainment. Any sober review of the present state of Fantasy games would do little to persuade otherwise. Valorising the potential in games for raising social consciousness through critique and satire is certainly valid (*Ibid.*). On the other hand, it is difficult to comprehend how the 'entertainment perspective' could be excised from any form of videogame and expect it to continue to be a videogame.

Complementary to the Hero, one of the prevalent Jungian archetypes in videogames is the Shadow. The Shadow is the opponent with which the Hero has to contend. Often the struggle takes the form of a violent conflict leading to the defeat of either the Hero or the Shadow. This figure represents all the content which the conscious mind seeks to bar from consciousness (Jung 1978). In *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Rowling 1997), Voldemort is Harry's chief nemesis and Shadow. For Harry (and the viewer/player), Voldemort has knowledge which Harry does not consciously know because it is hidden 'in the dark, un-lived and repressed side of the ego complex' (Von Franz 1987). In First Person Shooter games, the interaction with the Shadow is basic; kill or be killed. In the confrontation with the Shadow, players abandon conventional thinking to immerse themselves in violent fantasies. Awareness of a capacity for cruelty and transgression is part of the experience: 'It's like a feeling of power but it's sadistic ... You really enjoy it, like killing someone, blasting them in the head ... maybe it's cause you can't do it, it's such a forbidden thing, but like they make it so real and powerful, like in a game you can have the

ability to smoke people continuously' (Sanford and Madill 2006). The player is aware of violent and sadistic tendencies occurring on the level of Fantasy, where it is psychologically safe to give them expression. The encounter with a personal knowledge of one's less admirable capacities is a means to inner growth: 'One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious' (Jung 1967). According to Jung, the threatening nature of the Shadow is a function of conscious repression and a refusal on the part of the conscious mind to acknowledge that there are appetites, desires, lusts and ambitions held in the unconscious seeking expression and release. The player engages with a consciously unacceptable dimension of experience while immersed in the Fantasy of gameplay.

This has parallels with the psychologically protective functions of fairy tales on the minds of very young children. When a child is corrected he or she can experience powerfully narcissistic rage toward the figure of authority, usually the mother. Yet, it would be psychologically damaging for the child to harbour powerfully negative feelings against the person on whom it is dependent for love and comfort. Folktales resolve the dilemma with the figure of the wicked stepmother who supplants the good mother and marries the father. The child now has a suitable target for its rage and is free from the guilt of negative feelings towards the love object (Bettelheim 1976). Folktales are containers of psychological wisdom that predate the development of writing by tens of thousands of years

The Scurrilous Nature of Fantasy

Much has been made of violence in videogames, particularly by the media. The *Grand Theft Auto* (*GTA*) series of games has attracted critical attention for extreme violence. Nevertheless the games are highly successful and have a devoted following. Therefore, is violence the secret of success for *GTA*? The media landscape is saturated with depictions of violence. What might explain the success of *GTA*? Immersivity is certainly an obvious factor. The performance of transgressive acts in a Fantasy environment has already been discussed. Is there more? Consider the look of *GTA*. The characters controlled by the player (and non-playing characters) have a certain appearance. They are heavy featured, dangerous, coarse in their looks and behaviour. There is a strong suggestion of marginalisation, the *lowborn* about the characters. The player's behaviour is deliberately and consciously scurrilous, i.e., transgressive. This *scurrility* is a key feature of unconscious Fantasy. When a player takes on *GTA*, they come in contact with the Shadow. Depending on the intensity of immersion, they become the Shadow. In everyday reality, media outlets broadcast real time missile attacks where people die in a technologically sanitised depiction of death. It is not the fact of violence that is objectionable but its depiction. Society seems to object more to violence than to killing. Anything can be shown but it must not risk offending the scopical sensibilities of the viewer. Bourgeois society pretends to react against the depictions of violence in *GTA*, but is in fact, reacting to the implied criticism of its own lethal capacities.

The question can be asked as to whether the developers of *GTA* had such an artistic or critical project in mind when they created *GTA*. The answer, surely, is almost certainly not. This might lead to a rebuttal of the critical justification on the premise

that if a criticism is not consciously conceived, developed and executed then it is not a viable criticism. Such a notion can be seen as modernist and elitist.

Useful elements in Fantasy dynamics

The most apparent characteristic of successful videogames is that they are difficult. Videogame producers tend to treat difficulty as a feature novel to games. Historically, culture has put a high value on difficulty and complexity and this is reflected in legend and folktale, from the labours of Hercules (Kerenyi 1988) to the little girl in Rumpelstiltskin ordered to weave gold from straw in the course of one night (Grimm and Grimm 2009). Unlike the heroes of legend, the gamer never quite seems to complete the task/quest with comparable Herculean finality. The game concludes (if there is a discernible conclusion) without resonance, drama or catharsis, above all without emotional closure. Is it lack of design/technical capacity that causes this or is it because in an *upgrade culture* it is essential to have a consumer remain in hope of finding in the new version what he or she failed to find in the older? The lack of technical capacity is an issue which is fading as a consideration, if it has not already done so. The experience which the player sought and failed or only partially succeeded in finding was the Fantasy. Paradoxically, had the player found a completely satisfying experience in the game the result would be to desire a new experience of the same. This might explain why there are games, e.g., *GTA* and the *Final Fantasy* (Square Enix 1987) series, which base their appeal on satisfying the Fantasy cravings of the player and there are games which frustrate those same cravings. An example of the latter would be *World of Warcraft* (Blizzard Entertainment 2004), which despite its technical merits does not possess the sophistication of either *GTA* or *Final Fantasy*. In fairness to *World of Warcraft*, there are strong Fantasy elements operating in the game. One example is the creation and deployment of composite characters. All the standard characters of Fantasy are deployed: dwarves, goblins, dragons, elves, gnomes etc. Also, there are characters with mixed attributes (night elves, half elves, etc.), which allow the psychological opportunity to blend attributes thereby creating more psychologically interesting characters.

'The film need not be well made but it must provide resources consumers can use in constructing their own fantasies' (Jenkins 2006, p.97). Interestingly, should one substitute 'game' for 'film' then the statement remains as equally true and relevant to the videogame medium. The process of symbol formation, regardless of chosen medium, is as active with modern motifs as with older elements. Take levelling as an example. It is a common activity shared by a wide variety of games as a means of progressing through various stages. The level is a marker of progression. If the player dies she can return to the last level she saved and resume. Levelling is also a powerfully symbolic movement fraught with psychological resonance. Descending from upper to underworld is an adventure full of excitement and dread. A levelling movement upwards promises emergence into the light and defeat of enemies, who almost invariably cannot come above ground, i.e., into the light of consciousness.

Fantasy will remain popular. No genre connects more directly to our imagination than Fantasy. All worlds are possible. It's our challenge to make sure they're believable too. (Sheldon 2004, p.351)

The foregoing is accurate and well-intended but it misses the point. It displays the utilitarian view of Fantasy that we have argued is ultimately self-limiting in terms of the real riches which Fantasy has to offer in the design, production and enjoyment of videogames. Postmodern theory has a contrasting approach to Fantasy even as it fails to mention it specifically:

The Postmodern would be that which in the modern invokes the unrepresentable in presentation itself, that which refuses the consolation of correct forms, refuses the consensus of taste permitting a common experience of nostalgia for the impossible, and inquires into new presentations--not to take pleasure in them, but to better produce the feeling that there is something unrepresentable. (Lyotard 1984)

Postmodernism refutes the previous distinction between Fantasy and reality. Fantasy is rescued from its marginality and given a role of central importance in delineating the incoherence at the core of any attempt to make definitive statements about reality (Lyotard 1984). Fantasy is not mentioned specifically by Lyotard yet the idea of the unrepresentable conveys the same sense of difficulty with normative approximations of reality. The term illuminative conveys the sense of otherness, marginality, shamefulness that modernism has ascribed to Fantasy. Modernist metaphysics are challenged by postmodernism's prioritisation of Fantasy which functions as an agent of fragmentation and undecidability.

We sought to provide a critical defence of a certain feature of videogames which could be under threat from those who oppose videogames for their objectionable qualities. This feature we have named *scurrility*. This term is evocative of that which is demeaned, impoverished, hidden, secret and guilty. If we are looking for somewhere to lay the blame for the antipathy towards Fantasy we might look to the romantics and not the rationalists. This might seem paradoxical given the lengths taken to expose the weakness of the rationalist position. The weakness of the romantic position is their elevation of imagination and denigration of Fantasy; specifically Coleridge who dismisses Fantasy as mechanical gimmickry inferior to the creative powers of the human imagination (Coleridge 1920). This view sees Fantasy as a trivial distraction fit for the instruction of children and the ignorant. It remains to the Irish poet, W.B. Yeats, to provide an alternative with the insight that, while imagination is a thing of the heart, as the romantics declared, the heart itself is a 'foul rag and bone shop' into which the impoverished poet must descend in order to find true inspiration. The poet is drawn away from the highbrow, cultured and elevated to search among ruins and foulness for the wealth of inspiration.

Modern science is beginning to urge a reappraisal of our normative view of the Universe and our place in it (Kafatos and Nadeau 1990). Scientists are not given to Fantasy, yet they follow the truth wherever it leads even when it leads to new visions of reality that exceed the imagination of the most ardent fantasist. As an example of the notion of the *poetics of Fantasy*, we will now propose an allegorical connection between two areas which would not seem to have any relation to each other.

Allegory with the Standard Cosmological Model

The science of Cosmology has a serious problem. The difficulty confronting cosmologists is that there is not enough matter in the Universe to explain how the Universe is behaving. According to Krauss (2006) the deficit is as high as 70%. The tried and tested laws of physics, upon which all of science is founded are being contradicted when it comes to the behaviour of very large objects i.e. galaxies and galactic clusters. All galaxies respond to gravity by revolving around the centre or the galactic core. Problems began to arise when it was observed that stars on the outermost edges of the galactic rim were circling the core at the same speed as those nearest the centre. This should not happen. It violates the basic laws of physics as they are currently understood. In order to explain the anomaly scientists coined a phrase which could have come from the pages of a Fantasy novel--dark matter. Baudrillard has redeployed the term to connote the effects of non-rational forces on media and technological systems (Horrocks 1999). This proposition renders science a service in that it makes allowance for the basic laws of the Universe to continue to operate. Dark matter, however, has no physical presence according to any of the observational and measurement devices known to science. Something is operating on and in the Universe. It profoundly influences the behaviour of everything, yet it is untraceable, immeasurable and invisible (Krauss 2006). Sophisticated experiments are being conducted worldwide to detect it but even if it is found it will only be by virtue of a collision with particles in our dimension. In a complementary sense, Fantasy has profound influences on our behaviour yet it is only detectable by the effects (or affects) it produces in our lives, e.g., inspiration, creativity, moods, obsessions, dreams, reveries etc.

In the course of our discussion of Fantasy we have proposed what appears to be an alternative approach to the critique and design of videogames. There is hardly anything new or controversial in our proposals. In sum, all we recommend is that designers abandon a superficial approach to Fantasy and instead value it for the wealth of creativity it contains. One may well counter with the observation that designers are already doing this and some certainly are. If, as Perry (2009) reports, games are ready to move to a more mature level, then there is to be no avoiding our engagement with Fantasy.

In the course of this paper, we have highlighted what we believe is the need for a set of alternatives for the critique, enjoyment and production of games. They are motivated by a keen desire to see more creative depth in videogames. They are energised by the expectation that the single most powerful media form to appear on the cultural landscape, as yet, is capable of change at a paradigmatic level. Given that technical limits apply in terms of what games can achieve, we have argued that there is greater scope for the use of creative Fantasy even with the technology presently to hand.

Fantasy is misused when designers lift symbols and devices out of their original context and use them unwittingly. Poorly understood motifs and devices, thus deployed, produce games that are creatively shallow. In a sense it is clear that there is no actual *use* for Fantasy. Fantasy refuses definition and categorisation, without which there is no viability for utilitarian projects. Fantasy requires something other than definition; it requires relationship. A relationship with what is hidden, dark and

mysterious is a difficult concept akin to the plight of cosmological physicists required to posit the existence of substances, energies and dynamics which cannot be verified by observation and experimentation.

Conclusion

We have focused on the arresting strangeness of certain types of videogames, but would assert that this is a quality universal in videogames. Crawford's vision for videogames is profound. Games can become the art form of the 21st century, as cinema was for the 20th. Yet, because of their interactive and immersive qualities, they will exceed cinema in what they offer to individuals and society.

It is time to move away from a narrow paradigm based on pleasure and ego gratification to understand that games have a serious contribution to make in the project of simultaneously renewing and preserving society. We would add that it is also time to begin a re-engagement with Fantasy as a means of understanding that videogames can be profoundly serious even as they are playful. A study of videogames at the present time might be frustrating for those passionate about their future potential as a tool of social recreation, creativity and change. It is akin to using a Ferrari to deliver pizza. In our view, videogames studies have an advantage relative to other media forms in that the field of games studies has been established before its subject has attained maturity. It is timely and beneficial to be in a position to place a guiding hand (even if it is not the only hand) on the direction games might take in the future. In the course of this article, we have, at times, adopted a playful stance towards the subject matter. At the risk of trifling with academic seriousness, the underlying purpose was substantial. Our intent was to trace the link between Fantasy, play and creativity; hence, the use of allegory and a call for a *poetics of Fantasy*.

The unique nature and potential of videogames make them the most dynamically convergent media form that has yet emerged. Games that are constructed, produced and consumed unreflectively, however, can only contribute to ever increasing levels of psychological alienation and cultural toxicity with all that entails for the future of society. The goal should be to develop more meaning driven games which will exploit the deeper potential of Fantasy and play. Designers of games must reset their creative bearings for a journey that will take them into a broader expanse of human experience where different forms of intelligence operate above and beyond the exclusively rational. As Jung (Van der Post, 1977 p.41), has pointed out, this is a 'most difficult task', yet necessary to the creation of 'good games'.

Games Cited

Square Enix (1987-2010) *Final Fantasy* series, 1-XIV Square Enix (NES).

Rockstar Games (1997-2009) *Grand Theft Auto*; *Grand Theft Auto 2*, *Grand Theft Auto III*, *Grand Theft Auto IV*, *Rockstar Games (PC)*.

Blizzard Entertainment (2004-2010) *World of Warcraft; The Burning Crusade, Wrath of the Lich King; Cataclysm*, Blizzard Entertainment (PC).

References

Bettelheim, B. (1976) *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. New York: Random House.

Bogost, I. (2008) The Rhetoric of Fiction. In Salen, K. (ed.) *The Ecology of Games*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, pp.117-139.

Coleridge, S.T. (1920) *Biographia Literaria*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crawford, C. (1984) *The Art of Computer Game Design: Reflections of a Master Game Designer*. New York: Osborne/McGraw Hill

De Vries, J. (1963) *Heroic Song and Heroic Legend*. London: Oxford University Press.

Dovey, J. and Kennedy, H.W. (2006) *Game Cultures: Computer Games as New Media*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Fron, J., Fullerton, T., Morie, J.F., and Pearce, C. (2007) The Hegemony of Play. *Proceedings DiGRA: Situated Play*. Available at: <http://www.digra.org/dl/db/07312.31224.pdf> [Accessed: 23 October 2009].

Grimm, J. and Grimm, W. (1998) *The Complete Fairy Tales*. London: Wordsworth.

Helms, R. (1974) *Myth, Magic and Meaning in Tolkien's World*. London: Granada.

Hillman, J. (1984) *The Dream and the Underworld*. New York: Harper Perennial.

Hillman, J. (1991) *A Blue Fire*. New York, Harper perennial.

Horrocks, C. (1999) *Baudrillard and the Millennium*. New York: Icon Books.

Huizinga, J. (1970) *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*. London: Paladin.

Jarret, J. (1981) Schopenhauer and Jung. *Journal of Archetype and Culture*, pp.193-204.

Jenkins, H. (2006) *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press.

Jenkins, H. (1998) *Complete Freedom of Movement; Video Games as Gendered Play Spaces*. Available at: <http://web.mit.edu/cms/people/henry3/complete.html> [Accessed: 11 September 2009].

- Jung, C. G. (1916) *The Structure of the Unconscious*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Jung, C. G. (1936) *The Concept of the Collective Unconscious*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. Collected Works 9. Par 91.
- Jung, C. G. (1956) *Foreword*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Jung, C. G. (1963) *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Jung, C. G. (1967) *Alchemical Studies*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Jung, C. G. (1978) *The Shadow. Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*. New York: Princeton University Press.
- Kast, V. (2006) Anima/Animus. In Papadopolous, R. K. (ed.) *The Handbook of Jungian Psychology*. New York: Routledge.
- Kafatos, M. Nadeau, R. (1990) *The Conscious Universe*. New York: Springer Verlag.
- Kerenyi, K. (1988) *Gods of the Greeks*. New York: Willliam Berkert.
- Krauss. L.M. (2006) *Hiding in the Mirror*. New York: Penguin.
- Lyotard, J.F. (1984) *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, Theory and History of Literature*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- MacMillan. (2002) *MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*. Oxford: MacMillan Education.
- Perry, D. (2009) Will Videogames Become Better than Life? TED Talks. Available at: www.ted.com [Accessed 1 January 2009].
- Postman, N. (1982) *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Rank, O. (1952) *The Myth and Birth of the Hero: A Study in Tradition Myth and Drama*. London: Methuen and Company.
- Rowling, J. K. (1997) *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. New York: Arthur E. Levine.
- Sanford, K. and Madill, L. (2006) Resistance Through Video Game Play: It's a Boy Thing. *Canadian Journal of Education*, Vol 29 (1), pp.287-306.
- Sheldon, L. (2004) *Character Development and Storytelling for Games*. Boston, Thomson
- Stevens, A. (2006) The Archetypes. In Papadopolous, R. K. (ed.) *The Handbook of Jungian Psychology*. Hove: Routledge, pp.74-93.

-
- Swinfen, A. (1984) *In Defence of Fantasy*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Tavinor, G. (2009) *The Art of Videogames*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. (2008) *Tolkien On Fairy Tales*. London: Haper Collins.
- Tolkien, J. R. R. (1954) *The Lord of The Rings*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Van der Post, L. (1977) *Jung and the Story of Our Time* (New York:Vintage Books.
- Vogler, C. (1999) *The Writer's journey*. London: Pan Books.
- Von Franz, M. L. (1987) *Shadow and Evil in Fairytale*. Dallas: Spring Publications Inc.
- Wade, A. (2007) *The State of the Art: Western Modes of Videogame Production. Proceedings DiGRA: Situated Play*. Available at:
<http://www.digra.org/dl/db/07311.58175.pdf>.
- Wick, E. (1984) *Encyclopaedia of Psychology*, Vol.2. Chichester: John Wiley.
- Yeats, W.B. (2001) The Circus Animals Desertion. In Kinsella, T. (ed.) *The New Oxford Book of Irish Verse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.