LUDIC LITERACIES

MAPPING THE LINKS BETWEEN THE LITERACIES AT PLAY IN THE DALN

WALKTHROUGH

By Ben McCorkle (OSU Marion) and Jamie Bono (University of Pittsburgh)

****

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

****

INTRODUCTION

This walkthrough is meant to accompany "Ludic Literacies: Mapping the Links Between the Literacies at Play in the DALN." This interactive Prezi is one of several curated exhibits featured in the collection STORIES THAT SPEAK TO US. The game walkthrough (along with its close cousin the game FAQ) is a common paratextual genre in gaming culture: it's usually written without compensation and distributed freely to the gaming community; offers an exhaustive compilation of cheats, secrets, or preferred strategies; is oftentimes revised multiple times; and usually takes the form of a bare-bones TXT file replete with old-school ASCII artwork. As Mia Consalvo describes the genre in her book CHEATING: GAINING ADVANTAGE IN VIDEOGAMES, these paratexts have evolved from inside the subculture of gamers rather than from top-down forces such as game developers, publishers, or distributors. She explains that "even as some individuals are creating guides for free, there are certain norms that game players have accepted for what constitutes a successful walkthrough or FAQ. 'Free' guide writers know those conventions and learn to emulate them, usually even more successfully than commercial publishers do" (179). Additionally, Consalvo describes these paratexts as part of the underground economy of gaming culture, a way for their authors to gain esteem and respect from their peers, especially if they are meticulously crafted. She writes, "Most general FAQs are quite long, and when printed can run from dozens to hundreds of pages of text. Writers are spending countless hours producing such documents, all for no pay. What they do obtain, if the guide is good enough, is gaming capital and recognition" (178-179). In the interest of garnering our own

capital, we have therefore decided to extend the gaming conceit into this accessible companion text (which is a software-readable PDF) by designing it much like the kind of walkthrough you would likely find in the tangled wilderness of online gaming sites, discussion forums, and bulletin boards. This paratext, we feel, nicely complements the 8-bit aesthetic we have tried to establish in the exhibit itself.

****

SPECIFICATIONS / SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:

"Ludic Literacies" was built using the Prezi authoring environment. As such, it is compatible with many modern hardware configurations and all standard operating systems. Should you be experiencing this text within a web browser, the Prezi site recommends the following:

"The Prezi.com website supports all major modern browsers (Internet Explorer 7 and above, Firefox 3 and above, Chrome, Safari, Opera) but for the best experience we recommend using the most standards compliant browsers available (Firefox 3.6+, Chrome 4+, Safari 4+, Opera 10+)."

If you are experiencing this text as a stand-alone download, you can download and install the Prezi desktop application by visiting the following URL: http://prezi.com/desktop/. In order to play Prezis using the desktop application, your system should be capable of running the most recent version of Adobe AIR. For a Windows-based computer, minimum requirements include a Pentium III processor, Windows XP operating system, and 512MB of RAM; for Apple computers, minimum requirements include an Intel-based processor, Mac OS 10.4.9, and 512MB of RAM; Linux systems should have at least a Pentium III processor, Ubuntu 9.10/Fedora Core 12/openSUSE 11.2 OS, and 1GB of RAM.

More detailed specifications can be found at the following URL: http://www.adobe.com/products/air/systemreqs/.

For reasons of enhanced accessibility, the video clips embedded in this piece are streamed from YouTube. In order to view the videos—and to be able to follow any hyperlinks embedded within the Prezi as well—you should have an Internet connection capable of streaming YouTube videos. Additionally, should you be interested in viewing the videos in Full-screen mode or with Closed

Captioning options, we have set up a YouTube Channel at:
http://www.youtube.com/ludicliteraciesDALN.

The supplemental "Walkthrough" text, which provides an accessible, machine-readable version of the "Ludic Literacies" chapter, is an Adobe PDF file. The Adobe Reader is available as a free download from Adobe (link and system requirements are available at http://get.adobe.com/reader/). Because some text is represented in all capital letters, persons using screen-reader software such as JAWS may wish to change the reader's system settings to announce capitalization accordingly.

****

Panel Two: You start off your adventure in an empty white room with a gray, gridlike floor. Text reads, "The Lobby. Welcome."

DIRECTIONS: For the best experience of this level, please use the left and right arrow keys on your keyboard, or click the forward/back buttons in the Prezi navigation window in order to move through the designated pathway. If text is too small, you can click on it to zoom in. If you get lost, try hitting the back button or left arrow key to return to a familiar section. This presentation is best viewed in fullscreen mode.

****

Panel Three: You are in the same room as before, but you see two characters representing the co-authors, our museum-docents-cum-heroes for this adventure (Ben McCorkle is depicted as a green alien in a suit while Jamie Bono is depicted as a Caucasian human figure with black hair, jeans, and a leather jacket). The characters speak.

Ben: Welcome! For this curated exhibit, we've collected a handful of DALN narratives that deal with the topic of games. For us, that topic includes not only digital forms of gaming like the kinds played on computers, video game consoles, and even on the Web, it also occasionally delves into more traditional, analog forms of play such as tabletop role-playing games, board games, and sports.

Jamie: In part, we wanted to gain some insight into how our self-identified

gamers talk about their ludic literacy—the history, community, and learning practices tied up in their gaming lives—but we also wanted to see how (or if) they connected these insights to other spheres of literacy in their lives: alphabetic-based, school, workplace, and social literacies, among them.

✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶

Panel Four: You see the two main characters standing in the same wireframe room, speaking.

Jamie: As we thought about the kind of exhibit we wanted to curate for this collection, we wanted to focus on some key topics: how our gamers would construct representations of self (both inside and outside of gaming environments), how they'd describe their interactions in non-gaming literacy spheres, and whether or not they'd identify explicit connections between gaming and other literacy practices. This last point served as both an opportunity to gauge our subjects' initial personal conceptions of gaming as an integrated part of literacy development and as an heuristic device meant to foster the exploration of potentially under-examined ties among their gaming, scholastic, or workplace lives.

Ben: Of course, there are many other points of entry into the topic of gaming and how it impacts literacy more broadly, among them the role of kinesthetics or embodiment in acquiring literacy skills or the comparative degree of identification/dissociation between playing character-driven games and reading fiction. Ultimately, however, we took our cue from the gamers themselves and pursued topics and issues that seemed most important to our interviewees.

✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶✶

Panel Five: Ben and Jamie stand looking at a couple of mysterious quotations hovering overhead and comment on them.

Quotation One: "[H]umans learn, think, and solve problems by reflecting on their previous experiences in the world. That is, humans have experiences, store those experiences, and make connections and associations among them."—James Paul Gee, WHAT VIDEO GAMES HAVE TO TEACH US ABOUT LEARNING AND LITERACY (71)

Quotation Two: "Martin's experiences with gaming do not necessarily suggest that gaming is good, but his experiences with gaming do point to the necessity of actually finding out how gaming relates to other activities and literacies with which someone is involved."—Deanna McGauhey-Summers and Russell Summers, "Gaming, Agency, and Imagination: Locating Gaming Within a Larger Constellation of Literacies" (131)

Ben: This project builds on the work of gaming scholars such as James Paul Gee, as well as Deanna McGaughey-Summers and Russell Summers, who remind us that gaming literacy is not developed in isolation. Rather, it informs and is informed by a complex network of ideas, skills, practices, and communities, what Summers and McGaughey-Summers call a "larger constellation of literacies."

Jamie: In other words, games teach us how to navigate systems, how to understand and exploit their mechanics, and how to circumvent them. Games also teach us that it is okay to fail, to struggle, and to think in novel ways—all lessons that potentially relate to how learners develop broader literacy practices.

※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※

Panel Six: Ben and Jamie continue talking.

Jamie: In addition to the gaming literacy scholars we've just mentioned, we also draw upon the works of others as a way of connecting conversations about gaming with the study of crafting narratives of the self. On one hand, thinkers like Ian Bogost, Miroslaw Filiciak, and Mark Lamoureux raise important questions about the construction and negotiation of identity in gaming space, the role of mythology in game aesthetics, or how gamers develop procedural approaches to gaming.

Ben: On the other hand, a whole body of scholarship on autobiography, memoir, and personal narratives, referenced in other sections of this collection, offer us valuable ways of considering the political, psychological, and rhetorical dimensions to how people tell stories about themselves.

※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※※

Panel Seven: Ben is standing below an equation hovering overhead, commenting.

Equation: (Autobiography + Game Studies) / Composition = ?

Ben: Obviously, scholarship in game studies offers unique perspectives, terminologies, and conceptual frameworks that the world of composition studies may not have developed; the converse holds true as well. Insight into the appeal of gaming, the specific strategies employed to solve problems with games, or how game designs function within certain discernible generic conventions are of benefit to a field that's just starting to rethink what composed texts look like, how we interact with these texts, how we create them, and how we teach others to do the same.

✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱

Panel Eight: Ben and Jamie stand talking in the lobby.

Jamie: We have tried as much as possible to stay true to the conceit of the curated exhibit in our design (not to mention also giving more than a few nods to the visual grammar of gaming). We see a gallery as a "physical" space composed to potentiate interaction with its viewers. We have attempted, in a sense, to create what Mikhail Bakhtin might call a "carnivalesque" space, one wherein a heteroglossic mixture of interview clips, pull quotes, commentary, and asides work together to create a dialog with the viewer based upon emergent connections teased out by us, our gaming subjects, scholars, and the

viewer him/herself.

Ben: For compositionists, we feel our showcase of these interviews complicates traditional methodologies of interpretation by allowing our participants, who are sharing with us a specific technical literacy, to have more of a voice in the process. As scholars, we see ourselves standing on a threshold of understanding for what it means to be literate; this exhibit presents an opportunity for us to position the interviewees as teachers of a sort. Much like the Bakhtinian approach to teaching writing that Kay Halasek advocates for in A PEDAGOGY OF POSSIBILITY, this exhibit "is a performative, answerable, and addressed act, and as such it relies on [the curator and the curated] for its success" (192).

✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳

Panel Nine: Ben and Jamie stand below a screenshot of the Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives (DALN), hovering overhead. They speak.

Jamie: Because the DALN is an expanding repository of user-submitted narratives, we thought we'd use this project as an opportunity to solicit new submissions for the archive. Specifically, we sat with half a dozen professional colleagues, co-workers, and former students, video cameras in hand, and asked them to talk with us about their gaming lives, their general literacy background, and the possible connections they might draw between gaming and non-gaming literacies.

Ben: We should add that the DALN has a healthy number of narratives that touch on games and gaming in addition to these we've focused on in this exhibit. We've only scratched the surface of the rich concepts and themes tying all of them together. We hope other scholars will take up the call!

✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳

Panel Ten: You encounter an extremely large blue tangle of words oriented in various directions; the main characters climb in and out of the various letters of the words, commenting at different moments.

Sub-Panel A:
Jamie: After conducting the interviews with all participants, the two of us sat down and watched the videos, taking detailed notes. All together, 60+ pages of notes reflected commonplaces where we saw connections between the interviewees' descriptions of their individual backgrounds, family histories, and jobs and the stories they told about learning, playing, reading, writing, and other parts of their lives. We also generated a Wordle cloud based on the videos' transcripts to help visualize common terms used by the gamers.

Ben: Although Wordle lacks the ability to perform deep analysis of a text by looking at semantic connections between terms, it's a fantastic tool for visualizing the key terms of a lengthy text. Wordle weights words by how often they appear in a block of text, such as our transcripts, and presents them based on their weighted values. As we expected, terms like "games," "gaming," "writing," and "reading" appeared frequently in our interviews, dominating the other terms shown in the Wordle. What we found more interesting, however, were the "second order" terms like "people," "school," and "time."

Sub-Panel B:
Ben: Of course, "games," "writing," and "reading" lie at the center of our investigation; they are the topics that attracted us to this project. The

problem solving and social aspects of gaming and their connections to other literacy practices were topics of conversation that interviewees seemed to feel were most compelling. Although many of the gamers didn't make the connections immediately, when pressed, they all spoke of the importance of transferring skills from one literacy domain to another, usually through social, objective-oriented problem solving. The next several levels tease out these fundamental connections.

Jamie: We focus our curatorial efforts on these less frequent, but more important, second-order key terms and what they tell us about the connections interviewees themselves synthesized during their interviews. As we see it, these terms mark cognitive gateways into gamers' thinking about the links between playing WORLD OF WARCRAFT, learning the guitar, and writing poetry, for instance.

Sub-Panel C:
Ben: The next several levels demonstrate these connections more closely as we highlight the moments when the interviews turned to discussions of social, professional, and familial communities. We found that all of our interviewees saw themselves as both literacy sponsors and people who had benefitted from the sponsorship of others. They move as fluidly through the positions of teacher, doer, and learner as they do between in-game and out-of-game communities and loyalties. Though six interviews is a small sample, we begin to see a blurring of distinctions within categories like "identity," "community," and "role," categories which are frequently addressed in terms of fairly distinct taxonomies.

Jamie: In that sense, this exhibit resists taxonomic distinctions like "gamer" by highlighting how accurately the terms applied to "traditional" literacy practices also apply to gaming. In the next levels, we will examine this blurring by further interrogating the borderlands where we feel the most significant aspects of the participants' conversations are located. By doing so, we take a cue from James Paul Gee, whose work on games, literacy, and education has focused similarly on the transference of skills from one domain to another. We push this thinking a step further, however, by pointing out that artificial distinctions between gaming and non-gaming literacy spheres are increasingly irrelevant (or, for one interviewee, "meta-") issues for self-identified "Gamers."

Sub-Panel D:
Ben: At the margins of this visualization, we see terms that are mentioned

less frequently, but are no less important for contextualizing these interviews and the ways in which interviewees, at first, described gaming. These terms, and the conversations that invoke them, reflect a more traditional notion of games as diversions, choices, or preferences. We heard repeatedly that reading and writing were remembered as burdens, while gaming was something participants did to escape everyday drudgery and have fun.

Jamie: We found that, at least for these six gamers, the "fun" aspects of play made gaming no less serious as an activity. Gaming is something the interviewees "like" to do, but they like to do it well. They relish the challenge and find great joy in unpacking problems, narratives, histories, and social communities. They are adept readers of protocol and procedure because, perhaps, they are acutely aware of the systems that make their worlds "work" (whether those systems make up a game world, the real world, or some "meta" level in between) and the exploits within these systems that make the difference between success and failure.

Sub-Panel E:
Ben: While you navigate the collection, we encourage you to take note of the overlapping terrain between your readings of this assemblage and ours. This material is meant to help orient us to the emerging importance of games and gaming within literacy studies. We hope that you return to these materials repeatedly, if only to reorient yourself to some of the terms of the discussion, as you continue your own scholarship. Think of it as the "home version" of our exhibit in the DALN collection.

✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳

Panel Eleven: Ben and Jamie stand before a wall of screenshots featuring the interviewees, along with links to their full interviews in the DALN.

Jamie: Although our exhibit includes edited excerpts of these six narratives, you can see each interview in its entirety by following the links to my left.

Ben: There, you'll also be able to see the metadata associated with each entry, including full text-based transcripts, licensing information, and related details.

Wall: Heading reads "DALN Narratives." Interviewees and links include the following:

Patrick (http://daln.osu.edu/handle/2374.DALN/1635)

Scott (http://daln.osu.edu/handle/2374.DALN/2095)

Erin (http://daln.osu.edu/handle/2374.DALN/2096)

Rob (http://daln.osu.edu/handle/2374.DALN/1610)

Matt (http://daln.osu.edu/handle/2374.DALN/1617)

Nick (http://daln.osu.edu/handle/2374.DALN/1611)

✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳

Panel Twelve: Ben and Jamie announce your completion of the Lobby section.

Jamie: Great! Now that you've gotten a sense of the context, concepts, and characters making up this exhibit...

Ben: ...it's time for you to LEVEL UP!

✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳

Panel Thirteen: You've left the lobby area of the exhibit and see a panel with the text heading "Ready? Start!" The empty wireframe that made up the lobby section begins to fill in with elements such as boulders, grass, and mushrooms.

DIRECTIONS: As with the Lobby level, use right/left arrow keys or the forward/back buttons in the Prezi navigation window to move through this level. Watch out for warp zones, which will take you into tangentially related content (don't worry—simply hitting the right arrow or forward button will keep you on track).

✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳

LEVEL ONE: SELECT

Panel Fourteen: Now you enter the gamespace proper, which features video clips from our interviewees, as well as commentary contextualizing them. This level reads, "Level 1: Select," and Ben and Jamie enter.

Jamie: Before diving headlong into our analysis, we wanted to give you the opportunity to get to know our collection of gamers in a little more detail.

Ben: The following video montage offers some basic biographical info on each of the six people we interviewed exclusively for this exhibit.

You press the play button on "Dossiers," the video clip adjacent to the panel, and it begins playing.

DOSSIERS VIDEO TRANSCRIPT:
[Music fades in.]

The title screen reads, "In the Summer of 2010, we sat down with six self-described gamers to discuss how gaming and other literacy domains have intersected throughout their lives."

Voice-over montage: (Ben) I thought we would start out by having you talk a little bit about your background in general--where you were born, where you're from, where you grew up, what you do for a living, et cetera. (Jamie) Could you just give us a little bit of background--where you're from, how old you

are, what you're doing now. (Ben) We could start out by having you briefly recount your biography--you know, tell me a little about where you're from, where you grew up, things you've done in your life, and where you are now.

[screen reads "Dossiers" and leads into a series of headshots, accompanied by bulleted lists of pertinent background information. The text on screen reads as follows.]

Scott Reed:

- 31, Born in D.C, moved to Texas, Florida, and Georgia
- Beginning Assistant Professor in English at Georgia Gwinnett College
- Areas of interest include rhetoric/composition, digital media studies, gaming
- Diverse gaming background, from RPGs (FINAL FANTASY) to fighters to MMOs (WORLD OF WARCRAFT)

Erin Price:

- 24, from Pittsburgh (and other East Coast urban settings)
- Currently pursuing Masters degree in Industrial Engineering
- Working as a Geographical Information Systems Analyst at University of Pittsburgh's Center for National Preparedness
- Primarily plays smaller Web-based games such as MONOPOLY TYCOON

Matt Howard:

- early 20s, from Marion, Ohio
- College student currently on hiatus
- Interests range from electronics to history to politics
- Plans to move out west to join ski patrol
- Primarily plays EVE ONLINE (a space-themed MMO)

Patrick Dudas:

- 27, originally from small Western Pennsylvania village
- Pursuing doctorate in Information Sciences
- Hobbies include cycling and urban exploration
- Primarily plays older platform games (SUPER MARIO BROTHERS 3, ZELDA, etc.), but also plays newer console games

Nick Fout:

- 29, originally from rural Ohio
- Former Army Sergeant (Afghanistan)
- Undergraduate student, currently studying Business Administration
- Primarily plays WORLD OF WARCRAFT

Rob Johnson:

- Mid-20s, from suburban North Carolina, currently residing in Marion
- Works night shift at Whirlpool, fabrication assembly line
- Undergraduate studying English, likes creative writing
- Primarily plays WORLD OF WARCRAFT, but also plays a variety of console games

Video ends with a screen featuring the main characters and the text, "A Ludic Literacies/DALN Production." Fade out.
[Music fades out.]

✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳

LEVEL TWO: KNOW THE CODE

Panel Fifteen: Jamie and Ben speak, standing next to another video clip.

Jamie: Gamers, to varying degrees, are part of a distinct discourse community, made even more distinct depending on the specific genres of games they play: first-person shooter, role-playing, platform, etc. Gee calls instances of such cliques "affinity groups": a collection of people who occupy the same semiotic domain, or a "set of practices that recruits one or more modalities (e.g., oral or written language, images, equations, symbols, sounds, gestures, graphs, artifacts, etc.) to communicate distinctive types of meanings" (18). The following clip illustrates several examples of gamers using the lingua franca of their respective affinity groups. The function of such discourse, as we see it, is two-fold. By using specialized terminology, gamers not only signify their membership in a particular group, but they also linguistically demarcate the barrier to entry for those outside of the group. In other words, learning the discursive code enhances players' abilities to play.

Ben: One aspect of this use of gaming jargon that we picked up on was how seemingly casually or un-self-consciously it was interjected into the

interviewees' speech, some more than others. As we see it, this performative strategy—if it is indeed a deliberate strategy—functions in a variety of ways. For one, using gamer slang is a means of establishing the speaker's ethos or rhetorical credibility to a general audience who may or may not be fluent in it. Also, the use of such terminology may be a subtle indicator that our interviewees acknowledge their interviewers as insiders or members of a shared affinity group. Finally, the resistance to code-switching may be an overtly political move, aimed at validating a semiotic domain that has historically been marginalized by mainstream culture.

You press the play button on "Codes," the video clip adjacent to the panel, and it begins playing.

CODES TRANSCRIPT:

[Title screen fades in. Cut to Scott]

Scott: And the other thing about, you know, there's something about WoW is also the social element of the game is so prevalent with the way that there are sort of discourse communities within the game. The game has its own language...

[Music fades in. Cut to title screen with caption: "People in an affinity group can recognize others as more or less 'insiders' to the group. They may not see many people in the group face-to-face, but when they interact with someone on the Internet or read something about the domain, they can recognize certain ways of thinking, writing, valuing, and believing as well as the typical sorts of social practices associated with a given semiotic domain."—James Paul Gee (27)]

Scott (as voiceover): and if you don't know the spoken language of the game, you're not going to get very far, much less if you don't understand the language of the game in terms of the play language, like, playing a certain class obligates you to perform and behave in certain ways, and if you don't perform that way, everyone else will yell at you, and call you names, and kick you out of the party; and you won't get the sword of a thousand truths, you won't get that.

[Cut from caption screen to Rob.]

Rob: When I first started, I liked it when my character, I like talking to a

few people and then once you reach top level, the level cap, the only things you can really do is try to raid. Which is, you go into a dungeon and have a group of 10 to 25 people, and you go and try to take down their boss. And there's a different kind of aspect to that because not every raid is the same, there are different groups of people who raid differently. Do I need to explain terminology?

Ben: No, no! I think that will come through.

[A text crawl begins and runs throughout the series of video clips. It reads "Here are some terms and acronyms you'll encounter in this collection of gamer narratives: WoW (WORLD OF WARCRAFT), FPS (First-Person Shooter, a popular game genre where players "embody" the character and use various weapons against opponents and targets), RPG (Role-Playing Game), MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game, such as WORLD OF WARCRAFT), Platformer (a game genre where character jumps on different-level obstacles, such as SUPER MARIO BROTHERS), Grind (completing a task repetitively in order to achieve a higher level), Melee (chaotic, close-quarters fighting), Quest (a distinct, goal-oriented adventure, typically part of MMORPGs), Gold Farming (gathering gold earned from low-risk, repetitive tasks in order to trade or sell to other players), Ending/Level Boss (enemies found at the end of game sections, larger and more challenging than typical enemies), D&D (DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS), Guild (a group of players that play quests together, typically in MMOs), Nogginfogger (a special elixir in WORLD OF WARCRAFT with various magical properties), PvP (Player vs. player), newbie (or "n00b," someone who is unskilled at a game), Pubbies (second-class team members, not part of the skilled, "elite" player ranks), Gank (to have your player killed in an unfair manner, e.g., ten vs. one), Epic Win (the most awesome thing to happen in a game...or life), Wiping on Trash (decimating much less skilled players), Running Riot (to go on an uninterrupted killing spree in a game), AI players (Artificial Intelligence, characters operated by the computer in a particular game)."]

Matt: The low risk MMOs sort of like your older WORLD OF WARCRAFT and stuff where you can PVP without any real consequences.

Rob: As of now, I mostly play WORLD OF WARCRAFT. I upgraded to the MMOs...

Patrick: ...I think, the best connection is through the RPGs or the role-playing game where you are a character...

Matt: ...One I did get heavily into was WORLD OF WARCRAFT when that came out, and I was horrible at that game. I never liked the grind, I always hated the grind...

Nick: ...Whether it's leveling up a character, fighting off mobs, doing quests, or farming for gold or other merchandise.

Patrick: ....It's either platform or any kind of role-playing games I get into.

Erin: Probably most of the games I play are time management and how quickly can you get things done. And can you accomplish X goals before you run out of time?

Rob: Gaming is a way of expressing yourself more than anything else. You can judge a person by their gaming style. You really can. ...If you look at it from a PC standpoint, an MMOer is much different than FPSer, first-person shooter. Like you can tell that person's attitude, their views on life.

[Ending title slide and music. Fade out.]

✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳

LEVEL THREE: THE OUTSIDERS

Panel Sixteen: At this level, the background begins to get more crowded with boulders, bushes, and such. Our heroes enter the scene to encounter another video montage. They speak.

Jamie: One telling aspect of this collection is the similar manner in which many of the subjects construct their identities within their tales. As Bamberg tells us, "narrative positioning," or the construction of self vis a vis others and previous or future selves, is a core dimension of the storytelling activity. Positioning reveals important information about how the narrator conceives of the power dynamic within the narrative as well as in his or her relation to an audience. Relational positioning also demonstrates how the teller dialogically rewrites the self through the act of narrative performance (336-337). We can see these operations at work in the following clips. One striking similarity among them is how the narrators position themselves as OUTSIDERS, a label sometimes imbued with defiant pride, at other times with quiet self-deprecation. A key method by which narrators position themselves,

according to Bamberg, is in relation to others within the narrative. Here, we notice that many of our gamers place themselves in contention with their real-life communities, as when Matt and Rob joke about the semi-rural lifestyle of Marion, Ohio, or when Erin makes a point of mentioning her itinerant, rootless childhood. By Bamberg's schema, this sort of positioning helps to construct the speaker as a particular type of protagonist, in these gamers' cases, a beleaguered soul whose character is stifled by a small-town lifestyle and looks to gaming as a way of transcending an oppressive mindset.

Ben: This attitude is echoed in the appearance of some of the interviewees as well. Note how Matt's shaved head and mirrored sunglasses, Rob's low-slung, game-related cap, Nick's Harley Davidson shirt, and Scott's punk-styled hair and beard visually reinforce the semiotic domain of gaming culture (and related affinity groups): slightly unconventional, skirting the dividing line separating mainstream society from the realm of the outsider. This strategy certainly has a political dimension to it: As Gramsci reminds us, narratives are tales that enact a particular kind of agency that "creates this possibility, suggests the process, indicates the opening" (132). These are stories about out-of-place protagonists who use gaming to escape the cultural vacuum of an oppressive educational or rural setting by fostering connections with distant gaming peers (as with Rob or Matt), who seek out and effectively socialize with a like-minded group (as with Scott), and who seek out gaming spaces as safe environments to try out novel problem-solving strategies without the constraints of disciplinary doxa. This positioning extends beyond the gaming self and into other literacy spheres: Matt grew up reading "unsanctioned" texts beyond his grade level (Michael Crichton's SPHERE), much like he later relished the transgressive aspects of metagaming or "griefing" in EVE ONLINE (Bakioglu); Rob eschews traditional "literature" in lieu of Marvel comics and similarly sees games as a way of leaving behind his immediate (and unsatisfying) cultural milieu; Patrick's outsider status as a student writer in the humanities is informed by his systematic, step-by-step approach to playing platform games. To an extent, this outsider framing reflects a larger cultural attitude regarding the practice of gaming (unserious, childish, geeky, and so on). However, we can read in these narratives a tendency to resist or even challenge that attitude.

A quotation hangs above the video montage; it reads, "Thus, in conversations—due to the intrinsic social force of conversing—people position themselves in relation to one another in ways that traditionally have been defined as roles. More importantly, in doing so, people 'produce' one another (and themselves) situationally as 'social beings'."—Michael Bamberg, "Positioning Between

Structure and Performance" (336)

You press the play button on "Who?," the video clip adjacent to the panel, and it begins playing.

WHO? TRANSCRIPT:
[Title screen and intro music fade in. Cut to caption, which reads, "Gamers offer interesting identity constructions in their narratives...." Cut to montage.]

Erin: My name is Erin Price. I'm 24, soon to be 25, and I'm from Pittsburgh, raised here and have been kind of all up and down the East Coast, through high school and through college. And I'm back here in the city to look for a job.

Scott: Rhet/Comp sort of seemed the ultimate expression of applied textuality. I don't know if that's not... That doesn't sound like it's a thing, but... But, yeah. And so, doing rhet/comp and doing media stuff sort of became my way of living through those interests and still being math science-y enough, I guess, that appeals to my left brain nature. Otherwise, as far as hobby stuff in my spare time goes, when it's not gaming, I'm just sort of an all-purpose nerd.

Matt: I was born in Columbus, Ohio, then lived in Marion basically all my life.

Ben: Brutal.

Matt: Yeah, just got done flunking out of college. Oddly OK with that mainly because it was when you have the career counselor at the college and two of your therapists say--two, because I changed therapists not because I'm that messed up. The two of them say, "Wait, why are you still doing that? You don't know what you're doing. Maybe, you should take a break." I'm going to set myself up to move out West, probably to Tahoe, maybe, Colorado and just do ski stuff, either start off being a liftie or get my EMT stuff together as a paramedic, start out as a ski patrol and basically turn into a professional ski bum.

Matt: My parents were like, "He's got to get out of the house!" During the summer, other than that ...I used to be kind of active outside, I'd go around and just kind of keep to myself, never really...I was always shy as a kid and I kind of broke through that by just giving up on being shy, basically.

Ben: You just made a concerted effort to...

Matt: No, I basically just after a while, I just said, "F-it! I can break the ice really well if I can just go out and kind of act kind of off kilter and loony and just put my sort of weird sort of kooky nature out front and just let them sort of deal with it." And then, somewhere in there I discovered somethingawful.com which when you kind of go back in the history of the Internet and Internet communities... You'd look at somethingawful and you'd say, well that's where kind of like the memes started coming from, from somethingawful. That's where the first, sort of, Internet trouble makers came from.

Patrick: Well, I am 27 years old. I am originally from Edenburg, Pennsylvania which is actually small village up in the New Castle area of Pennsylvania. When I have time, I actually recently started bicycling throughout Pittsburgh, riding trails and anytime as I try to search Pittsburgh little bit from the point of view of a bicyclist. Outside of that, I like to read, I do play the occasional video game. And if it's anything it's nothing usually new school stuff. It's usually some old school Nintendo thing or something just to kind of occupy my time.

Jamie: Do you play online MMOs?

Patrick: No, I do not. I have never really been interested in that, never even tried. And, to be quite honest with you, it was just no other big reason rather than the fact that it just was never seen too appealing to me. I have not much more to add rather than the fact I just never really got into it. I have had friends that have done that kind of gaming before. And I've been with them when they are playing online, and I kind of miss the novelty of it. It just wasn't something that was too appealing to me.

Ben [to Robert]: So, you say you grew up in Rockingham. You eventually make your way up here. I'm going to close this door because of the air conditioning. You made your way here when?

Robert: About five years ago.

Ben: You lived actually in Marion?

Robert: In Marion, yes.

Ben: In Marion, five years ago. You work at...?

Robert: I work at Whirlpool in Marion, 3rd shift.

Ben: 3rd shift.

Robert: And it's not fun... Let's just get that out there now.

Ben: So, World of Warcraft, what draws you into that game?

Robert: I'm a social animal by nature. And when I moved up here, like I have no friends or family outside of my immediate family, my girl and my son, her grandma—her mom, sorry. And I, even as a kid I never had a lot of friends that I went to their house to hang out and stuff, so video games, that was my outlet. I'd come home and I spent hours just playing games.

[Ending title slide and music. Fade out.]

****

WARP ZONE: THE CO$TS OF GAMING

As you leave Level Three, you are sucked into the first of several Warp Zones in the game. In this Warp Zone, titled "The Co$ts of Gaming," you see Jamie standing beside a wooden cube or crate with a video embedded in it.

Jamie: Another way that outsider status is conveyed in these narratives is though mentions of the exclusionary or prohibitive cost of gaming hardware and software. Such remarks highlight historic issues of technological access, as well as narrators' efforts to navigate the digital divide in sometimes resistant ways: borrowing games, resisting the lure of marketing, developing a preference for older games, and basing console purchases on value-added functionality.

You press the play button on the video clip on the wooden crate, and it begins playing.

THE CO$TS OF GAMING TRANSCRIPT:
[Title screen and intro music fade in. Cut to caption, which reads, "Gamers discuss their experiences with the costs of gaming." Cut to montage.]

Scott: Christmas of my fourth-grade year, so that was '88, parents finally broke down and got me and my brother the Nintendo, and that pretty much initiated my life in the great console cycle. I've never been a great PC gamer, so most of my gaming has been in console environments. But got the Super Nintendo and at first, like everybody else, just a lot of MARIO BROTHERS, MARIO BROTHERS and whatever I could borrow from friends. Gaming had always been kind of a social experience in that as a sort of lower-middle-class family of limited means, if I wanted to play games I would borrow them from friends or wait until the fateful trip to that one store, that one weird store that apparently didn't know what they were doing and had, like, game rentals for a buck. We had one of those, and boy did we take advantage.

Jamie: Yeah, I think everybody had one of those.

Scott: Yeah. And then they went out of business, and we were crushed. It was social in that there was always kind of the lunch room chatter over what everybody was playing. And it worked out well that Super Nintendo, that Nintendo cartridges were the perfect size to slip into your lunchbox.

Rob: As of now, I play mostly WORLD OF WARCRAFT.

Ben: OK.

Robert: I upgraded to the MMOs. That is a lifesaver in and of itself because I still have my consoles, and I still have a few games that I play, like mostly party games, social games. I play KATAMARI DAMACY, DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION, GUITAR HERO, stuff that I can do with my family. Before that, before the MMOs, I was a bad compulsive buyer of games, like if something new or shiny came out, I was like, I'm going to pay $50 and do that and buy it and play it and basically forget about it. I have my stacks and stacks of games. This is my collection, but a lot of them I never finished. It was just something that I felt like, what was the point? Eventually, I discovered computer games, and that was something else I could put my time to but not sink all my money into wastefully. I was never a person to read reviews on the games. Oh, this is something new, I would buy it, and if the game sucks, I wasted all my money on a game that sucks now.

Patrick: Actually at one point, I originally bought an Xbox 360, sold that. Bought a Wii, sold that. And then I bought a PS3, and PS3 sort of stuck for me. I found games that were more in tune to what I was looking to do, like LITTLE BIG PLANET is a wonderful example, as a platform game. But also just

the functionality having a Blu-Ray player with my HDTV was sort of big selling point for me.

[Ending title slide and music. Fade out.]

✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳
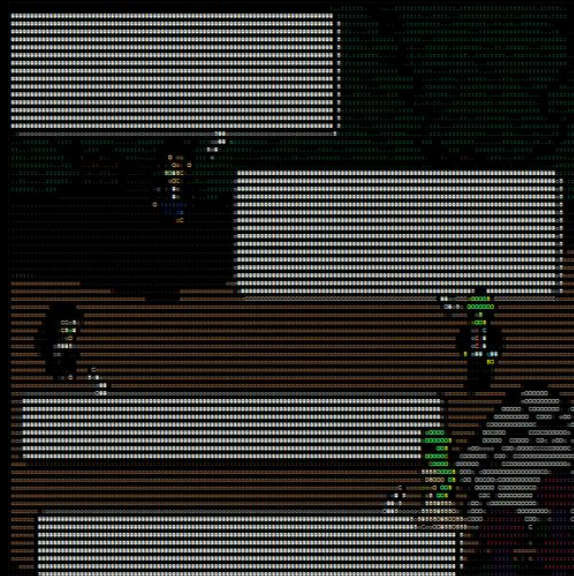
LEVEL FOUR: SHAPE-SHIFTERS

Panel Sixteen: This panel is broken down into three sub-sections, each depicting a slightly different scene. In the first, Jamie and Ben are fused together along the vertical axis, speaking out of both sides of their/its mouth...

Ben: Building off of this notion of how self is constructed in these narratives, we noticed interesting slippages among the gamers' identities. Many of the interviewees indicated that they saw a distinct division between their gaming lives and the other areas of their literate selves (school, work, and other groupings).

Jamie: They talk of gaming as "escape," a way to "relax" or get away from these other aspects of identity. When they opened up about the connections that bridge this division, however, they were very forthcoming and articulate about them.

In the second section, our heroes have successfully separated and stand

talking in a forest clearing.

Jamie: Our narrators display a complex, context-dependent notion of identity,
but one that's fundamentally tied together with shared cognitive and visceral
bindings. This contradictory position--separate but intimately connected
facets of identity--demonstrates what Filiciak terms "hyperidentity," the
fluid, postmodern play of subjectivity that occurs within MMOs and, we would
argue, in other gamespaces as well (89).

Ben: For example, Nick, Patrick and Rob each echo Edward Castronova's
contention that gaming allows one to "test" aspects of self-development
through role-playing and other gaming tropes (109). The risks of identity play
within games, compared to real life, are not only minimal, but also fun.

In the last section, Jamie and Ben appear in drag (dressed, respectively, in a
nun's habit and a formal gown). They speak.

Jamie: Nick, who plays with several different characters in WoW, is perhaps
the most dramatic example of a player comfortable jumping in and out of
various identities. This is perhaps a reflection of the various positions he
occupies in real life: small business owner, Army sergeant, biker, student).
Nice dress, by the way.

Ben: Thanks! Despite the layering of identities players encounter when gaming,
which Gee labels as "Virtual," "Real," and "Projected," at some level, our
gamers are able to intuit the interrelatedness of these identities...perhaps
demonstrating Gee's own "Situated Meaning Principle": the theory that meaning
is situated in embodied experience (108).

A quotation hovers above the accompanying video montage. It reads, "But
perhaps the most important effect of these synthetic roles is their influence
on your own self development. [...] Perhaps you, a man, began playing as a
male avatar. The you switched to a female avatar, just to see. Then back to
male. In the real world, nothing seems different. But you learned something,
about the world, about yourself. Indeed, cross-gendering is incredibly common,
and I can say from personal experience that it can dramatically affect one's
perception of the game of gender as we play it here on Earth."-Edward
Castranova, SYNTHETIC WORLDS (109)

You press the play button on "Slippery," the video clip adjacent to the panel,
and it begins playing.

SLIPPERY TRANSCRIPT:
[Title screen and intro music fade in. Cut to caption, which reads, "Gamers demonstrate the fluidity of identity that often accompanies gaming... They initially acknowledged sense of separation between their gaming lives and 'everything else'..." Cut to montage.]

Nick: I wouldn't say I'm a hard core gamer. I'm kinda the opposite of that. I'd be more of a weekend gamer, in a way. I would say. I don't look at it as my life, or my job, or anything like that. It's just to relax, take some time to myself, and escape out of the area. It's my relaxation time.

Erin: But in terms of reading, it has always been, like, a getaway. I don't know. I haven't really thought about it, the connection between gaming and reading because I actually don't like to read when I'm gaming. If there's a story, I don't want to read it. I don't care.

Ben: Do you see any connection between what you do in your gaming life and what you do in those other spaces?

Rob: [sighs] Not particularly. Not off the top of my head. I don't really see that much of a connection. It's kind of--I know that I'm two different people. It's a different dynamic. Because I have to be this certain person in this certain area, like at work. But I'm a lot freer to be who I am online in a game. Gaming is a way of expressing yourself more than anything else.

Matt: I haven't found a real, I'd say, use for what I've done in games. I'm not big enough of a bastard to really use the metagaming to one-up people, and I keep the mayhem and all that in the game.

Caption: As they considered this separation, however, it began to break down.

Patrick: I think there's a great parallel between the two, especially when I was talking about platform games. It's very goal-oriented. You start at the position. You move from point A to one part of the screen to another point on the other side of the screen, from the beginning of world one to the flagpole in MARIO kind of scenario. In other types of games, you might have this large world map and your available ability to just get onto a horse and ride through this valley and see these dimensions that are provided to you. They're interesting to me but, to me, I'm a point A to point B kind of guy. And I think a lot of times it was just the simple nature of "I have a task, and I

need to complete it." And how I go about doing it is just without dying as much as possible in the games. And you do that by keeping things simple and getting from point A to point B to point C on to your destination.

Ben: You say characters, plural. You have a whole stable?

Nick: I have a whole slew of different characters on WORLD OF WARCRAFT, and I play them all.

Ben: Can you unpack some of those?

Nick: I have a couple different warriors on the alliance of the Horde side, death knights, hunters, paladins, warlocks, a druid. They each offer a different gaming experience, whether you want to lean towards the magical side of things or a melee side of things where you're actually up close with the enemy fighting it. Each character offers a different aspect of the game and a different storyline behind the game. Depending on what kind of mood I'm in that day would depend on what character I'm going to play. If I want to be relaxed and laid back, then I might be a shaman or one of my caster characters. If I want in more depth of getting up close, then I'll be a warrior, my death knight, hunter, or my druid. Everything in your life is going to affect the way that you play a certain game in some aspect, but I see myself as...The way that I go about attacking mobs or other characters in the game lean kind of towards my military experience, yet my reading and school experience comes in to effect from the mythical side of it with the names that I choose for my characters and the way that I word the talking that goes on throughout the game. I kind of play both aspects of what I've learned in real life experiences to what I've also learned in books.

Ben: In that case, you're actually doing research or scholarship in order to inform your game play.

Nick: In a way, yes.

Ben: That's fascinating. Do you find yourself in situations where your military training comes in handy? For instance, if you're working with a guild or a group of people on a quest, do you take leadership positions or things like that?

Nick: Depending on what the quest is, if it's something that I've done before with another character and I know how it needs to be run, I will take the role

of leading through a quest or through a dungeon and help direct the group where they need to go and how it needed to be done to overcome what wanted to overcome.

Erin: Well, I think the idea of challenging, the idea of finding the best way to do something quickly or efficiently, I'm starting to see that. As we were just talking about it, I'm starting to see that come through. It's like a career choice.

Rob: You're running through the steps. Once you get to a certain cognitive level of understanding, you can just kind of click with it. It makes sense. Now, you're doing this job and you're holding a conversation with the guy behind you about his weekend and you're not missing a step.

Ben: Wow. It's kind of like learning to throw a fireball in STREET FIGHTER or something.

Rob: Right. Once you figure that out, it's a cakewalk. That's... I'm glad you mentioned STREET FIGHTER, because one of my earlier games that that I remember... For Christmas, my mom, she asked me, "What kind of games do you want?" I had a Super NES at the time. She was like, "Would you like a game called LEGEND OF ZELDA?" LINK TO THE PAST is what it was. I was like, "Yeah, sure, I guess." I'd never... I'd heard of ZELDA, but I'd never got into it until that moment. It was like, "What about a game called SUPER STREET FIGHTER? Would you be interested in that?" I was like, "OK. Sure." In my childlike mind, I forgot about it, and I got these games, and that was my life. That was the epitome right there, learning how to play these characters. I will never call myself a pro at any of the characters, but I knew the certain move patterns that you had to do to win a battle. It was educational in and of itself.

Matt: I definitely take the humor of Goons which is very ironically horrible. It's basically making the most horrible thing you can, taking that and making it funny. And I'm probably going to get my face punched in one of these days by using that style of humor, but I enjoy it and I, it's given me a very dark sort of humor doing that. And it's given me also a taste for geopolitics and I'm watching, looking at that and understanding that better.

[Ending title slide and music. Fade out.]

****

LEVEL FIVE: THE WISDOM OF ELDERS
Panel Seventeen: As before, this panel is separated into different sections
(in this case, two). In the first, our heroes have made their way to a rock-
strewn section of the forest clearing and deign to speak.

Ben: We found that interviewees commented with enthusiasm on those who had
impacted their literacy practices. Each interviewee identified at least one
person who had acted, either formally or informally, as someone who created
the exigencies for learning literacy skills. Erin, for example, identifies
both her grandmother, who made her learn penmanship by copying long tracts of
text from novels, and a college professor who introduced her to writing as a
mode of analysis. Matt similarly cites his grandmother, a schoolteacher, as
instrumental in his reading development.

Jamie: Scott also identifies his experiences with one teacher in particular
who captured his interest by drawing connections between the novel BLEAK HOUSE
and the STAR WARS trilogy of films. Figures such as these are fixtures in
narratives of "traditional" literacy practices as well. Deborah Brandt calls
these people "literacy sponsors," people who function as "delivery systems for
the economies of literacy, the means by which these forces present themselves
to-and through-individual learners" (19).

In the second section, our heroes continue speaking.

Ben: What we noticed here, however, were the striking range of literacy
sponsors we found in communities of players and how our interviewees
themselves acted as literacy sponsors in both in-game and real-world
settings. Some terms in this conversation are shared in both domains. Erin
touches on this, specifically, when she discusses her work as a tutor,
teaching students to break complex mathematical problems down into linear,
constituent parts.

Jamie: Literacy sponsorship isn't always a direct transaction, either-it can
have transitive properties. For instance, when talking about her younger
brother's absolute resistance to reading, even in a setting such as an ice
cream parlor, Erin hands down the message given to her by her most influential
writing teacher: "Don't be stupid." Another coincidence we noticed, among both
Scott and Erin, was a less-than-fond remembrance of handwriting instruction
early in their school careers.

Ben: Interviewees who commented on their reluctance to "buy in" to the literacy sponsorship they received or who discussed their disdain for traditional academic reading and writing were energetic teachers in their own lives. Rob lights up, for instance, when talking about teaching his son to play games. Patrick does the same when he talks about the procedural approach to writing-as-problem-solving that he teaches to his students.

Above the video montage accompanying this level, a quotation levitates. It reads, "Sponsors, as I have come to think of them, are any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, and model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way. Just as the ages of radio and television accustomed us to having programs brought to us by various commercial sponsors, it is useful to think about who or what underwrites occasions of literacy learning and use."—Deborah Brandt, LITERACY IN AMERICAN LIVES (19)

You press the play button on "Literacy Sponsors," the video clip adjacent to the panel, and it begins playing.

LITERACY SPONSORS TRANSCRIPT:
[Title screen and intro music fade in. Cut to caption, which reads, "Gamers discuss the roles that literacy sponsors have played in their lives." Cut to montage.]

Erin: Well, my grandmother was a big reader to the point of exclusion of anything and anyone else. My mother's not a reader at all. She's actually dyslexic so she's like, can I get it on tape? ... Well, I think in terms of the actual learning to write with your hands and a pencil, I remember that being very challenging, probably through most of my academic career until I got into high school.

Jamie: So, like penmanship.

Erin: Yes. Penmanship and not having chicken scratch. I remember my grandmother being like, "Whatever, practice writing today." I'm like, she would make me sit down and write a page out of her book. I actually didn't learn how to analytically write or creatively write or any of that until I got into college and I had this crazy professor, Dr. Nelson. He was like, "Don't be stupid. That's my only rule." So, he actually taught me a lot about writing, about grabbing the reader's attention right off the bat. So, it was actually kind of traumatic but really, really informative.

Ben: And so, you have a son?

Robert: Yes.

Ben: OK.

Robert: He was also trained to be a great gamer.

Ben: [laughs]

Robert: Because you gotta start 'em young... you gotta.

Ben: How old is he?

Robert: He is four.

Ben: He is four, so he's gotten manual dexterity...

Robert: He is getting there; like his thing is DS because me and my girl, we both got the DSes because we wanted to play and eventually he kind of just confiscated them both. And he just, it really is a great teaching tool for him because he figures it out on his own. Right now, he is playing MARIO PARTY. He really loves that. And he'll play... He just discovered multi-player. So, this big phase like he wants us to play with him and it's amazing how fast he picks it up.

I mean for a more complicated machine like say the Playstation, I had to set it up for him and then he can go but he already knows like what to do, how to set up wireless play which I don''t even know. He says, "Just go type this and do that," and I'm like, "What?" I feel like what my parents felt like when I was trying to explain something simple to them. It's passing down but it's really cool.

Ben: He is going to surpass you one day.

Robert: I'm hoping. He is getting good. He wants to play GUITAR HERO. And he is not that dexterit-ous (is that a word?) with the whole idea of like playing different keys and then strumming. But I expect to come home one day, and he is just going to be on "Expert" and just going up and down the neck...I'm like "way to go."

Scott: My parents, God bless them, kept me away from the Atari which was a smart idea on their part. So I knew of the Atari, the various Atari systems in the early to mid to late 80s as just being these weird objects of mythological fascination. Like there was the one kid in class who had the Atari, and maybe if you schmooze him enough, you'll get that ticket to the birthday party and, in between piñata bashing and donkey-tail-on-pinning, you'll get a chance to go play PITFALL or something. So I didn't do that. But, when the Nintendo debuted in America in '87, '88, it didn't take very long for it to become a big thing. And, Christmas of my fourth grade year, so that was '88, parents finally broke down and got me and my brother the Nintendo, and that pretty much initiated my life in the great console cycle.

Patrick: Even going back to what I said earlier about trying to dissect a larger problem into something smaller so you can explain it a little bit better to somebody and taking the approach of handholding them to get them to a certain point where they kind of understand where you're talking about. It's always been something where, when I've had friends that would come to me for any kind of help or any kind of work when it comes to math, calculus, geometry, physics, anything like that. A lot of times they would get so convoluted by the ideas of taking a simple derivative because it didn't have any kind of meaning to them. Providing them the context via saying, "Here, let me show you. This is a line, and what we care about is finding the slope of that line. Why? Because we want to find out where this line is heading. If we have a simple trend here, let's see, can we describe this line using various variables?" and things like that, and providing that context to them has always been sort of beneficial to them. And the way I get to that point is by drawing a simple X-Y coordinate system, showing them a line, and saying, "OK, let's start here. Understand this. Let's see where we apply it." Going from there to saying, "OK, can we derive a function for this? Can you interpolate or extrapolate information from this?" Then they start grasping that this is not just a method. It's a tool. It's a way to accomplish a goal that might not be looked for in the book or by the teacher but giving them something that they can apply for themselves. And it's always about going back to that simplistic nature of two-dimensional plot and eventually getting to a point where they can see more complexity that comes from that, that 2D formation of a line on a X-Y coordinate system.

[Ending title slide and music. Fade out.]
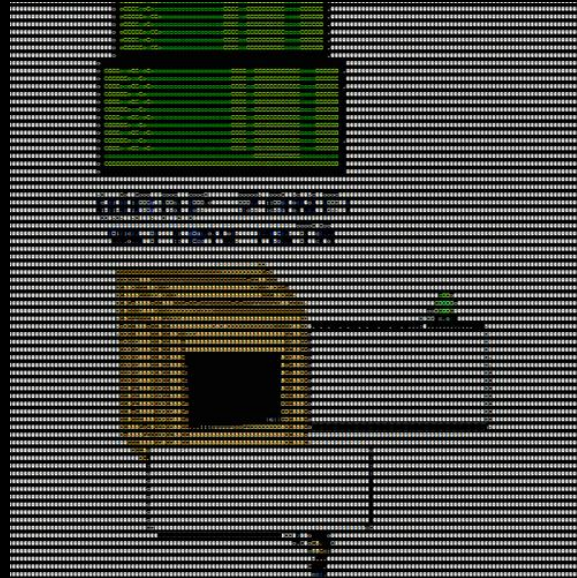
WARP ZONE: GETTING META

As you leave Level Five, you are sucked into the second Warp Zone. In this
Warp Zone, titled "Getting Meta," You see Ben and Jamie standing beside a
wooden crate with a video embedded in it.

Ben: In-game literacy sponsorship was an important factor in the interviewees'
development as gamers and their continued interest in gaming. Matt's comments
on his participation in the EVE ONLINE community "GoonSwarm" demonstrate a
useful example of how an entire community of gamers recruit, train, and
support new players in their organization. They offer comprehensive training
and mentorship—a kind of apprenticeship—that furthers the player's immediate
goal of learning the fundamentals of the game. In the long run, however,
GoonSwarm indoctrinates players into the culture of the organization, its
goals, and its peculiar form of "metagaming."

Jamie: In a way, Rob discusses the same thing when he talks about his work
environment. At Whirlpool, he is an experienced machine operator and sometimes
interacts with less experienced coworkers. He understands the task-oriented
discourses of the workshop floor, such as hand gestures and technical
jargon. In his interview, he comments extensively on mentoring new employees
into this community via a kind of apprenticeship of "learning by doing."

You press the play button on the video clip on the wooden crate, and it begins playing.

GETTING META TRANSCRIPT:
[Title screen and intro music fade in. Cut to caption, which reads, "The group Goonswarm composes sophisticated multimodal paratexts as part of metagaming in the MMO EVE ONLINE." Cut to montage.]

Ben: So in EVE ONLINE, at least until fairly recently, you were part of an alliance called, the alliance is called Goon Fleet?

Matt: The alliance was GoonSwarm.

Interviewer: GoonSwarm. And the corporation?

Matt: The corporation was Goon Fleet. Goon Fleet is only open to members of somethingawful.com or people that have been sponsored in. Early in the new millennium we, you'd look at somethingawful and you'd say, well that's where kind of like the memes started coming from, from somethingawful. That's where the first, sort of, Internet troublemakers came from and it was, that was and still is sort of a nexus of where sort of like the more metagaming comes from. Because it's always, you know, as Darius Johnson said it, "We don't want to destroy THE game, we want to destroy YOUR game." GoonSwarm, well, Goon Fleet has been one of the biggest corporations in the game mainly because it had all the people from somethingawful coming in and they go to that one, you know, they'd come into Goon Fleet. And then we had massive newbie drives where we would get people to come from somethingawful.com and started playing EVE ONLINE.

[Cut to "GoonSwarm Recruitment Video" by Feythabolis Rose, which features a computer-generated voiceover and a slow-zooming shot of the GoonSwarm hand grenade logo. This video ends with text reading: "Sign up for your 14 day free trial at eve-online.com."]

Computer voiceover: "We are the Swarm. We exist as an entropic collective. A beautiful perfect Chaos. For this we have become a target of fear by those who do not understand the poetry of our actions. Every speck of ash floating amid the Cosmos is another thread woven in the Tapestry of our Atrocities. Every cry of suffering and frustration is another song in our Symphony of Terror. Every Alliance collapsed, every friendship broken, every Pilot betrayed, every

life taken is another footnote in this Darkest Chapter of the Galaxy's History. New Eden will burn, and it will by your hand."

Matt: And also the propaganda; there is the Eye of Terror which was a jump bridge, basically a fast space high way to get from point A to point B.

[As Matt continues talking, a GoonSwarm propaganda video plays in the background, featuring in-game footage of spaceships engaged in combat, flashy graphics of the logo and stylized ships flying through text.]

Matt: There were little corps, pet corporations, you know, dominant corporations, and then there's basically your, it's more, think of like the Soviet Eastern Block countries. And so we basically had a line of systems under our control to be able to build this little space highway, and leading up to the space highway being completed we launched this massive propaganda campaign saying that, "We are coming." This mass of people's coming; there's nothing you can do about it. And when we get here, you're done. You might as well just pack your stuff and get out. If you run, we're not going to chase you. Just go back to Empire, you can keep your stuff. If not, you're losing everything. And it worked.

[Ending title slide and music. Fade out.]

✸✸✸✸✸✸✸✸✸✸✸✸✸✸✸✸✸✸✸✸✸✸✸✸✸✸✸✸✸✸✸✸✸✸

LEVEL SIX: TETRIS AND TOLKEIN
Panel Eighteen: The panel for this level is divided into two subsections. In the first, our intrepid adventurers are finally leaving the forest and stumble on the outskirts of some sort of stone battlement. They begin to speak.

Ben: We observed the gamers talking in very connected ways about their gaming and reading tastes. In several instances, they drew direct parallels between the kinds of texts they enjoy reading and the types of pleasure they derive from playing games. To echo James Gee again, these narratives indicate a larger area of overlap within the gaming community; these gamers fit into distinct affinity groups that share similar attitudes and aesthetics about the games, literature, films, and other texts that comprise their semiotic domains (27).

Jamie: Because many of our narrators like playing MMOs—open, expansive

sandboxes with extensive backstory, many characters and settings, and no clear goal or endpoint beyond surviving and growing—it makes sense that some of them would be drawn to similarly expansive genres of fiction: science fiction, fantasy, classical mythology, and thrillers among them. These works typically build worlds rather than plumb the psychological depths of a small collection of characters. Here, I'm reminded of Lamoureux's discussion of the power of mythology in creating identification within a game; although he primarily discusses an earlier era of gaming, I think we see the next generation of this appeal, not simply tied into the visual aesthetic of games, but woven through story, out-of-game lore, and player interaction (80).

In the second section, Ben and Jamie have scaled the perimeter wall and are standing on the inside. There are torches atop the wall's merlons (look it up). The two speak.

Jamie: Also, the type of associated pleasure that our subjects derive from gaming and reading shows up in other ways. Matt and Scott, for example, loved reading reference books of different sorts, texts that show how things function... "metabooks," if you will. This interest in the more esoteric dimensions of the games they play (creating propaganda outside of the game, the socio-economics underlying it), are directly related.

Ben: Similarly, Erin's interest in reading for its own sake, almost akin to mental calisthenics, syncs with her zealous approach to constantly seeking out new microgames. We also see this correlation spilling into the gamers' discussions of writing as well, as when Patrick compares his systematic approach to writing instruction manuals to his love of strictly regimented platform games or when Matt talks of his failed attempts to write complex techno-thrillers in the vein of Michael Crichton.

You notice a quotation floating above the accompanying video montage. It says, "GTA's structured configuration of possible actions within a larger space suggests a broader expressive tactic: space is used not for the repleteness of exploration, but in order to structure smaller, singularly meaningful experiences. One of the characteristic features of the modern is a lack of direction in, or a confused relationship with, time and space. We have already witnessed Baudelaire's response to the configurative properties of the modern city, and his poetry serves as an expression of the difficulty to find meaning in this new spatial reality."—Ian Bogost, UNIT OPERATIONS (159-60)

You press the play button on "Sandbox," the video clip accompanying this

level, and it begins playing.

SANDBOX TRANSCRIPT:
[Title screen and intro music fade in. Cut to caption, which reads, "Gamers discuss their reading and gaming preferences, with some noteworthy parallels." Cut to montage.]

Matt: A little like your Tom Clancy, Clive Cussler, occasionally I'd pick up. And then, since I always had a real burning interest in science and I still do, the ski bum thing might only last for a few years. And then, I'll say, "I know what I want to do," and go back to college. My grandmother was a nurse and worked, too. And so, she had a bunch of nursing texts lying around, dated, but still I'd start reading through those. I'd look through things in the dictionary. I'd read the ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE, old POPULAR MECHANICS sort of things. I'd also read real, more things that you would think of somebody out of high school reading, some more hard core scientific reading.

Ben: So, all of this, like, black-ops, the propaganda and stuff, it seems like it has an almost direct connection to, say your interest in a writer like Michael Crichton I guess.

Matt: Yeah, and also, the rhetoric of it, you know, you can probably tie that in with like Orwell and stuff.

Ben: He's someone you read?

Matt: Yeah, 1984 scares the crap out of me, and also a lot of, like, Thomas Barnett. That, you can see the rhetoric of that and how geopolitics functions in the real world. You could see, 'cuz now it's power blocks in EVE and that's evolved since the beginning of the game. And you can see, you know, some of the rhetoric that people use. The spying, the double-speak, the sort of mix of sort of bluffing and what-not in strategy. You can see a direct correlation of that in, like, sort of real life.

Nick: I would say that I'm interested in something that's more than just running through a couple levels here or there. I want something that is somewhat an exploring game, something that keeps you guessing every turn. That's how it's lead into what I do now. My reading comes into effect, and school experience, from the mythical side of it with the names that I choose for my characters and the way that I word the talking that goes on throughout the game.

Erin: In fact, I'm actually not that interested in what I'm reading. It's just the fact that I'm reading. So, I like to pick up big books and see how fast I can get through them. I love romance novels and fantastic fiction... fantasy fiction. Get me to the instructions. Actually, I don't want to read the instructions either. I'd rather just jump in and figure it out on my own. It's really strange.

Jamie: So, you're less attracted to the theme of a type of a game...

Erin: Right.

Jamie: ...than you are the mechanics of the game.

Erin: Right. Exactly.

Jamie: Is that what you're saying?

Erin: Yeah, which is partly why I'm a little more bored with games and always looking for the newest games to play because I've seen a lot a lot of times. There's thousands of hidden object games, and there's 50,000 time management games, and they're all the same. I'm looking for the new thing, a new way to challenge my mind.

Scott: ...Dr. Seuss books. But once I finally got my hands on an actual honest-to-goodness school library in about kindergarten and first grade, I read all non-fiction. And that's a trend that pretty much continued unabated until middle school.

Jamie: OK.

Scott: I read books on constellations and memorized where they were. I read everything on dinosaurs that was ever written by anybody, ever. I read books on astronomy. I can say that I was reading Isaac Asimov when I was in third grade, but I didn't read Asimov's fiction. I read a book he wrote about the Viking probes on Mars.

Jamie: So, this connection between your science and technology interests and your reading interests seemed to almost kind of grow up together.

Scott: They really did. So, part of me wants to hedge that and say that it's

lesser reading because it's not the imaginative fictional reading. For fiction, I watched movies and TV. There's something about WoW, it's also the social element of the game is so prevalent with the way that there are sort of discourse communities within the game. The game has its own language, and if you don't know the spoken language of the game you're not going to get very far, much less if you don't understand the language of the game in terms of the play language. Like, playing a certain class obligates you to perform and behave in certain ways, and if you don't perform that way, everyone else will yell at you and call you names and kick you out of the party, and you won't get the sword of a thousand truths, you won't get that. Not to mention what the social aspect, you know, forming guilds and groups and socializing within them and how there's an in-game economy that works the way that economies work. They work by this weird supply and demand principle that very much holds up. I think when you take all that stuff and put it together it almost gives you an excuse to not talk about the game WORLD OF WARCRAFT. You talk about WORLD OF WARCRAFT the social phenomenon or WORLD OF WARCRAFT the cultural phenomenon but you almost have to talk about WORLD OF WARCRAFT like it's something else because if you just talk about it as a game, what most people end up talking about is stuff that is intrinsic to the game itself. It's what happens AROUND the game, but it's not necessarily what the game IS.

Rob: [sighs] You're going to have to ask the question again because I went on a tangent for a second.

Ben: [laughs] The thing that draws you to WORLD OF WARCRAFT...

Robert: OK! What draws me to WORLD OF WARCRAFT, OK. At first it was just, it's this expansive universe that's in a box pretty much. You have, there's so many levels to it that brings me in, that keeps me there. One aspect is the story in and of itself; I dig lore. When I study a game or a comic book or a book, I like it if the author or the creator can have a really in-depth background of the world that you create. And if you go, and I have done enough searching just for my own leisure, looking at stuff like, WORLD OF WARCRAFT has such deep roots in so many aspects, and you can look at different races, and they have a certain history that dates back; this and these two groups clashed here. And I just find it very amazing how much thought was put into it.

[Ending title slide and music. Fade out.]

****
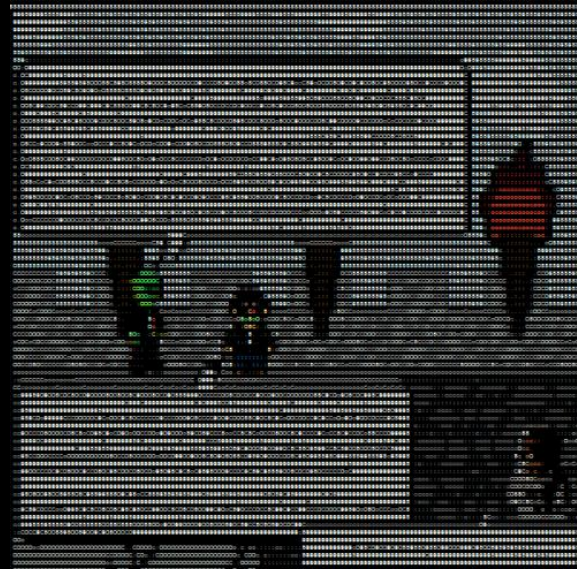
LEVEL SEVEN: BREAKING IT DOWN
Panel Nineteen: This panel is divided into three sub-sections. In the first,
Ben and Jamie continue their conversation within the battlement's confines.

Jamie: Patrick, Erin, Rob, and Nick all discuss gaming as an activity where
they both learn and practice task-oriented problem solving in an almost
dialogical fashion. Even the simplest games, such as the "platformer" games
Patrick prefers and the "time management" games to which Erin is attracted,
offer any number of possible solutions to discrete problems, and so lend
themselves to multiple play-throughs. The reward here is in the refinement of
strategy or technique.

Ben: Platformer games offer a particularly interesting model through which we
can see a clear process of working though a complex problem by breaking it
down into discrete steps. While the end goal, or "winning condition," of a
platformer game such as Super Mario Brothers may be to completely unfold the
in-game narrative by traversing the challenges of game space, the procedures
of the game require this story be broken into smaller components. These
elements are commonly called the "levels" of a game, and the most robust and
interesting platformers create new and more difficult challenges with each
successive level of the game.

In the second section, as our heroes converse, they are joined by a wise and
mysterious figure, whom we recognize as Ian Bogost thanks to a helpful arrow
and caption.

Ben: From level to level and game to game, the challenges change and require learning different sets of problem-solving skills in order to complete a task or goal. This task-oriented structure is central to what Ian Bogost calls the "procedural rhetoric" of digital games.

Ian Bogost: Procedurality refers to a way of creating, explaining, or understanding processes. And processes define the way things work: the methods, techniques, and logics that drive the operation of systems. [⋯] Procedural rhetoric, then, is a practice of using processes persuasively. More specifically, procedural rhetoric is the practice of persuading through processes in general and computational processes in particular.
(PERSUASIVE GAMES, 3)

Jamie: For Erin and Patrick, who exclusively play single-player games, the challenge is the game itself. In contrast, for Matt and Rob, the manipulation of in-game social alliances and convention (through "metagaming," as Matt describes) are the most interesting aspects of game play. Erin says she will resist the move to access paratexts such as walkthroughs or cheat guides because once the processes are explained for her, her interest in the game wanes.

In the third section, Ben and Jamie comment even more as Ian Bogost starts to de-rez in front of their very eyes, his wisdom to them successfully imparted.

Ben: Patrick also discusses something similar when he says that he will return to a game and play specific levels that have challenged him in the past, even though he has successfully completed the narrative arc of the game. Patrick's goal is to find new and more efficient ways to complete the same tasks. Both Erin and Patrick seem to revel in interacting with, reading, and capitalizing on the procedural systems of the game. And, as both Erin and Patrick state, the skills required for procedural learning and effective task separation travel effectively between the rhetorical situations of the game and education—science and technical education, specifically. Nearly all of the interviewees discussed the processes of composing—of moving from research, to outlining, to drafting and revision—as things that helped them understand writing better. Their affinity for highly structured writing processes reflects both their preferences in games and their academic disciplines. As technicians and scientists, they both see clear connections between a structured, linear approach to problem solving in general—whatever the nature of those problems may be.

Jamie: Rob discusses something similar when talking about his experiences
learning the procedures and procedural rhetorics of the Whirlpool shop
floor. Rob has a discrete task to complete over and over again while he works
and, through a kind of informal apprenticeship, he continually refines his
approach to this one task while operating within the procedures of the shop
floor. Effective task completion requires a kind of operational or procedural
literacy—in other words, an ability to read the systems of a situation and
revise processes to be more effective in a particular situation. Rob's
interest in WORLD OF WARCRAFT is interesting in this light, especially when
one considers the amount of time spent on activities referred to as
"grinding"—performing repetitive tasks such as farming or fishing in order to
increase in-game skill and wealth.

Ian Bogost: (I can see my work here is done.)

You press the play button on the accompanying video, titled "Task-Oriented
Problem Solving," and it begins playing.

TASK ORIENTATION TRANSCRIPT:
[Title screen and intro music fade in. Cut to caption, which reads, "Gamers
discuss the 'task orientation' of gaming literacies." Cut to montage.]

Patrick: I think there's a great parallel between the two, especially when I
was talking about platform games. It's very goal-oriented. You start at the
position. You move from point A to one part of the screen to another point on
the other side of the screen, from the beginning of World One-One to the
flagpole in MARIO kind of scenario. In other types of games, you might have
this large world map and your available ability to just get onto a horse and
ride through this valley and see these dimensions that are provided to you.
They're interesting to me but, to me, I'm point A to point B kind of guy. And I
think a lot of times it was just the simple nature of "I have a task, and I
need to complete it." And how I go about doing it is just without dying as
much as possible in the games. And you do that by keeping things simple and
getting from point A to point B to point C on to your destination.

Erin: Well, I think the idea of challenging, the idea of finding the best way
to do something quickly or efficiently, I'm starting to see that. As we were
just talking about it, I'm starting to see that come through. It's like a
career choice which is crazy. The scenes and the story lines and all that. It

doesn't matter. Get me to the instructions. Actually, I don't want to read the instructions either. I'd rather just jump in and figure it out on my own. It's really strange. Yeah, which is partly why I'm a little more bored with games and always looking for the newest games to play because I've seen a lot a lot of times. There's thousands of hidden object games, and there's 50,000 time management games, and they're all the same. I'm looking for the new thing, a new way to challenge my mind. I don't know. I think to me research writing is not very interesting. I much rather prefer the intro and the conclusions. I don't know. I just think the methodology in scholarly work is kind of boring because here's why, I think, they're telling me how to do it and I'm not figuring it out on my own.

Jamie: Oh, that's interesting.

Erin: Where they're giving me the instructions to read it which I guess is necessary. I understand that that's a necessary reason for it, but it's totally not interesting to me.

Jamie: So, you're not one of those people that gets--you're not one of those people that will go look for help when they get stuck in game?

Erin: Very rarely.

Jamie: OK.

Erin: I have to be stuck. Actually, there's a game I can recall. It's called SAFE CRACKER. There's no instructions, no story line, nothing. You're thrown in here, and it's a puzzle game. There's nothing, and after I sat there for four hours trying to figure it out, I got in some of the puzzles down to three, and you couldn't pass without doing one of these three. I sat there for four hours, and I was like, OK, now I can go get a hint from the walkthrough, so I have to be really frustrated to get help.

Rob: Anyway, I put these two parts together, press them in a machine and press. And then I either put them in a rack or I put them on the line; this rolling conveyor belt that keeps going all around 24 hours a day.

Ben: So it's literally assembly line work.

Robert: Yeah.

Ben: You're doing the same thing...

Robert: Over and over. It's the repetition that teaches you how to do it. A lot of people can't get it. It's not a difficult job. It's just very time consuming to get it down. And if you don't have enough time into it, people get frustrated and angry. I try to tell people speed will come; you have to get coordination first. You have to know the job and fine tune it to your own skill level. What I do may not work for you, but I will give you different options on how you can do this said job, and then you go from there. You may put a part into the machine and it may catch on something. It's like, "OK, re-adjust and try it again." That's just the aspect of learning.

Ben: It's body memory, very much. I mean, there's some thought process behind it.

Robert: When you get to a certain level, you've done it for a year or two, your body's able to autopilot. And then like before, when you've just started, this is the only thing that you can focus on. You can't talk to anyone. You're just trying to worry about what my foot needs to do, what my arms need to do with this and that. You're running through the steps. Once you get to a certain cognitive level of understanding, you can just kind of click with it. It makes sense. Now, you're doing this job and you're holding a conversation with the guy behind you about his weekend and you're not missing a step.

[Ending title slide and music. Fade out.]

****

WARP ZONE: THE CAVE OF SECRETS

As you leave Level Seven, you are sucked into the last and most important Warp Zone. In this Warp Zone, you will discover the titular Cave of Secrets (oooooh!), which is guarded by an imposing wizard conjuring electricity from the very air around him. This challenge posed by this foe is hardly worthy of your considerable skills. Simply clicking on the crate at the mouth of the cave will reveal the secret: a link to the motherlode of DALN gaming narratives! The crate reads:

"Bonus: Congratulations! Now you can find more game-based narratives in the DALN by clicking on the link below." The link is:

http://daln.osu.edu/search?order=DESC&rpp=10&sort_by=0&page=1&query=game&etal=0.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

LEVEL EIGHT: OFF THE MAP
Panel Twenty: Our heroes stand strong on the battlement wall, continuing their discourse. A helpful quotation hovers above them, flanked by torches and reading, "In general, what we are seeing in public discourse is simplistic either/or thinking regarding whether video games are 'good' or 'bad'."—Summers and McGauhey-Summers (123).

Ben: The aspects we've highlighted in this exhibit only begin to touch on the rich connections within this small collection. Beyond these six interviews that we collected, the DALN houses even more narratives that address gaming, a data set sure to lead to even more fascinating discoveries (did you find them hidden in this piece?). Our small foray only briefly explores the kind of questions Summers and McGauhey-Summers pose when they urge us to look at gaming and gamers in a context outside of the popular discourse and the controversies surrounding violence and sex in video games (123).

Jamie: We should, instead, look at the complex practices of learning and communicating that happen in and around game spaces. Ultimately, we are left contemplating the implications of such connections in terms of literacy pedagogy, whether it be in terms of critical reading and analytical writing skills, or in the context of multimodal production and reception. As games continue to develop as a bona fide cultural form, these are issues our field will be working to figure out in the coming decades, to be sure. Additionally, these are issues that the DALN can play a central part in illuminating, both by providing a site for sharing gaming literacies as well as a repository for scholarly inquiry.

****

GAME OVER
Panel Twenty-One: Our tenacious pair stands silently triumphant at the game's end, facing an important-looking figure clad in all red, with long yellow hair and beard and wielding a fiery axe. The figure speaks.

Very Important Guy: Congratulations! You have successfully completed LUDIC
LITERACIES. May the gods be with you on your next quest.

As you advance past this slide, you're given one last overview of the game
space, a small reward for a job well done. Roll credits.

****

CREDITS
Works Cited / Referenced

Bakioglu, Burcu. "Spectacular Interventions of Second Life: Goon Culture,
Griefing, and Disruption in Virtual Spaces" JOURNAL OF VIRTUAL WORLDS RESEARCH
vol. 1: 17 Jan 2009. 3-21. Web. 14 May 2010.

Bamberg, Michael G.W. "Positioning Between Structure and Performance."
JOURNAL OF NARRATIVE AND LIFE HISTORY. 1997: 7(1-4). 335-342. Print.

Bogost, Ian. UNIT OPERATIONS: AN APPROACH TO VIDEOGAME CRITICISM. Cambridge:
MIT Press, 2006. Print.

Bogost, Ian. PERSUASIVE GAMES: THE EXPRESSIVE POWER OF VIDEOGAMES. Cambridge:
MIT Press, 2007.

Brandt, Deborah. LITERACY IN AMERICAN LIVES. New York: Cambridge UP, 2001.
Print.

Castronova, Edward. SYNTHETIC WORLDS: THE BUSINESS AND CULTURE OF ONLINE
GAMES. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2005. Print.

Consalvo, Mia. CHEATING: GAINING ADVANTAGE IN VIDEOGAMES. Cambridge: MIT
Press, 2007. Print.

Dopedope2. "GoonFleet Propaganda Video." YouTube. 4 July 2006. Web. 15 August
2012.

FeythabolisRose. "GoonSwarm Recruitment Video." YouTube. 6 December 2008. Web.
15 August 2012.

Filiciak, Miroslaw. "Hyperidentities: Postmodern Identity Patterns in Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games." THE VIDEO GAME THEORY READER. Eds. Mark J.P. Wolf and Bernard Perron. New York: Routledge, 2003. 87-102. Print.

Gee, James Paul. WHAT VIDEO GAMES HAVE TO TEACH US ABOUT LEARNING AND LITERACY. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. Print.

Gergen, Kenneth and Mary Gergen. "Narratives of the Self." STUDIES IN SOCIAL IDENTITY. Eds. T. Sarbin and Scheibe. New York: Preager, 1983. 166-185. Print.

Gramsci, Antonio. SELECTIONS FROM CULTURAL WRITINGS. Eds. D. Forgacs and G. Nowell-Smith. Trans. William Boelhower. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985. Print.

Halasek, Kay. A PEDAGOGY OF POSSIBILITY: BAKHTINIAN PERSPECTIVES ON COMPOSITION STUDIES. Carbondale, IL: Southern IL UP, 1999. Print.

Lamoureux, Mark. "8-bit Primitive: Homage to the Atari 2600." GAMERS: WRITERS, ARTISTS, AND PROGRAMMERS ON THE PLEASURES OF PIXELS. Ed. Shanna Compton. New York: Soft Skull Press, 2004. 78-91. Print.

McGaughey-Summers, Deanna and Russell Summers. "Gaming, Agency, and Imagination: Locating Gaming Within a Larger Constellation of Literacies." GAMING LIVES IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: LITERATE CONNECTIONS. New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2007. 121-132. Print.

✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳

CREDITS
DALN Narratives Used in This Exhibit

Patrick Dudas, "Reading, Writing, and Playing Through Problems." 29 July 2010.
http://daln.osu.edu/handle/2374.DALN/1635
Nick Fouts, "On Landscaping, Combat & World of Warcraft." 7 July 2010
http://daln.osu.edu/handle/2374.DALN/1611
Matt Howard, "The Proud Goon." 16 July 2010
http://daln.osu.edu/handle/2374.DALN/1617
Robert Johnson, "Warcraft, Whirlpool, Wolverine." 15 July 2010
http://daln.osu.edu/handle/2374.DALN/1610

Erin Price, "Solving Problems in Games and in Real Life." 28 July 2010
http://daln.osu.edu/handle/2374.DALN/2096
Scott Reed, "On Rhetoric, Composition, and Game Studies." 2 August 2010
http://daln.osu.edu/handle/2374.DALN/2095

✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳

CREDITS
Notes on Production

This project was primarily designed using Prezi. Additional production
software and resources include the following: Adobe Photoshop CS4, Victor's
Pixel Font (available from dafont), the Charas-Project Generator (charas-
project.net), and 8-bit vector images from Gomediazine (with permission).
Video editing software included iMovie HD, Final Cut Express 4, Final Cut Pro
7, and Quicktime Pro. Video transcription service was provided by
CastingWords. The music sampled in the video clips is "Megablast" by Cornbeast
(and used in accordance with Creative Commons License A-NC 3.0).

✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳

CREDITS
Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the participants who submitted their narratives to the
DALN in conjunction with this project (thanks Erin, Patrick, Scott, Matt, Rob,
and Nick!). Additionally, we would like to thank our colleagues included in
this collection who offered insightful advice as we developed this
composition. Lastly, many thanks to the editors of this collection, whose
tireless work made this piece all the better.

✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳✳

APPENDIX
Some Thoughts on the Design of This Exhibit

As a whole, STORIES THAT SPEAK TO US is a rather unconventional, multimodal
collection of DALN-based exhibits, and "Ludic Literacies" is no exception.
While we could have just as easily crafted a text-exclusive essay, we
recognized early on the advantages of creating a piece that incorporated
elements of graphic design, video, and audio. First and foremost, we knew we

wanted to include video footage of the six interviewees rather prominently, giving them as much of a voice in the exhibit as the two of us; to reiterate Jamie's comments above, we consciously approached the design of this exhibit as "'carnivalesque' space, one wherein a heteroglossic mixture of interview clips, pull quotes, commentary, and asides work together to create a dialog with the viewer based upon emergent connections teased out by us, our gaming subjects, scholars, and the viewer him/herself."

David Bloome highlights the importance of privileging the voices of our subjects in the foreword to this collection when he writes: "As readers, we use the particularities of people's lives and their expressions (the particularities of their narratives and how they tell them) to better understand what it means to be human (including the diversity of what it means to be human) and to better understand ourselves within the particularities of our own lives." This is also why we set up a YouTube Channel (link: http://www.youtube.com/user/LudicLiteraciesDALN) exclusively comprised of these videos. We think they can be experienced as a standalone piece in their own right--gamers talking about gaming, with only the lightest editorial touch on our part.

We also wanted to design the exhibit to suggest that we were dealing with the narratives in a way that went beyond a traditional scholarly reading (although, we admit, there are traces of a traditional reading contained herein) and into that unruly" terrain that Bloome highlights. Visually, we attempted to inject an element of play into the piece, one that hearkens back to the 8-bit era of gaming culture, an era when the two of us first became gamers ourselves. The avatars, the overall layout, the inclusion of "warp zones" and Easter eggs are all meant to foster the sense that readers are navigating part of a much more expansive landscape of gaming literacy narratives, one that invites additional exploration. Making one's way through the DALN--finding a similar group of narratives to analyze, teasing out fruitful connections and gaps among them, applying and (to quote Bloome) "exploding" a theoretical framework in an attempt to make meaning of that particular collection--is in many ways a game-like activity, and we wanted to capture that sense in our exhibit; a traditional linear text would not have accomplished this.

--BM/JJB

****

END OF FILE