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JOYCE GOGGIN

READING AND WATCHING: LITERATURE AND GAMES

On a vacation in Germany last summer, I thought I would brush up on my German by reading Hermann Hesse's *Das Glasperlenspiel*, a novel I had intended to read while writing my PhD thesis on literature and play, many years ago. While I had expected a sort of psychedelic hippy narrative about spirituality, my guilty procrastination was rewarded with a text that has more to do with my current research into digital culture and how it is affecting a shift in the contemporary novel. On sifting through the secondary literature, moreover, I learned that the few critics, who have written about this text, tend to align it with science fiction, and that Thomas Mann once described *The Glass Bead Game* as being "prophetic and sensitive to the future" (Norton, 1973, 10).

What struck me immediately was Hesse's description of the Glass Bead Game played in his futuristic land of Castalia. This multiplayer game produces an abstract synthesis of science and art, while itself constituting, to some extent, the narrative structure and content of the novel. In one odd passage, Hesse suggestively describes it as a sort of cosmic, metaphysical game played by intellectuals and artists at the beginning of the 24th century. The participants, who hale from a vast community of thinkers, play the game by sending strategies and solutions to a game master who positions their contributions within a complex system, as one might string glass beads along the cords of a universal Aeolian harp. As Hesse writes:

This is a mode of playing with the total contents and values of our culture [...]. All the insights, noble thoughts, and works of art [...] produced in creative eras, all that subse-

quent periods of scholarly study have reduced to concepts. [...] it is only this immense body of intellectual values [that] the Glass Bead Game player plays [...]. Theoretically this instrument is capable of reproducing [...] the entire intellectual content of the universe. On the other hand, within this fixed structure [...] a whole *universe of possibilities* and combinations is available to the individual player. (Hesse, 15)

Hesse is notoriously vague as to how the game is physically executed, and contemporary readers can only be amused by the notion that people in the 24th century would play the game by surface mail, however Hesse's game image cannot help but conjure a number of associations, such as the World Wide Web or Wikipedia, in the minds of contemporary readers. As Roger C. Norton has noted, Hesse's "intention in his ironically voluminous, yet very inexplicit, descriptions of the Game was obviously not to picture his ideal of a super data-computing centre [...]. Yet there are enough concrete details and specific mention of science and technology [...] to warrant closer examination" (83). So while Hesse, writing novels in the 1940s, could not have foreseen what the personal computer and the internet would make possible, the Glass Bead Game, to my mind, bears an uncanny resemblance to the MMORPG, or massively multiplayer on-line role-playing game.

A MMORPG, simply put, is a digital, on-line, 24/7, real-time possible world, where players meet and strategize with or against each other, from locations around the globe. This, for me, is reminiscent of the way in which the players of the Glass Bead Game strategize with their peers from a great distance to create a sort of musical possible world, containing a universe of possibilities and random combinations. And while MMORPG players generally have less lofty intellectually goals in mind than Herman Hesse's Castallians, they virtually coordinate their movements to defeat monsters, accumulate wealth and tell each other stories. At fan sites, players of WoW, for example, create virtual libraries of esoteric, game-related knowledge, such as technical script on how to cheat and where to find objects, as well as films, pop songs and videos.

More importantly, players of MMORPGs frequently relate their experiences in game worlds in the form of lengthy personal narratives and dialogues of discovery, quest and friendship. The narrative potential of digital environments accounts for why one gamer told game scholar R.V. Kelly that the MMORPG experience was like living "inside a novel as it is being written". And although Hesse's Glass Bead Game most closely resembles on-line games, single-player games present equally compelling cases for the narrative potential of some computer games and their relation to more "paperly" narrative forms like the novel. And at the level of structure, players

progress through games by completing various tasks that unfold like narrative episodes, as the player "levels-up" through game configurations that "remediate", in Bolter and Grusin's terms, structural novelistic conventions such as chapters.

One of the first major scholarly works to appear in 1997 on the storytelling potential of videogames was Janet Murray's *Hamlet on the Holodeck*, in which she hailed videogames as "a new medium for story telling". As she argued, "[t]he combination of text, video, and navigable space suggest that a computer-based microworld need not be mathematical but could be shaped as a dynamic fictional universe with characters and events" (6). The obvious objection here is that an adventure game, FPS, or MMORPG does not a *War and Peace* make. Hence, people who object to Murray's early and somewhat ambitious claims argue that hanging out in *Grand Theft Auto* and stealing stuff, let alone staking and fragging opponents in *Quake*, hardly amounts to the same kind of complex narrative activity that either writing or reading a great psychological novel involves.¹ To such objections Murray has countered that "[a] game is a kind of *abstract storytelling* that resembles the world of common experience but *compresses* it in order to heighten interest [...] each move in a game is like a plot event in a *simple* but compelling story" (1997, 142-3). In other words, the stories that videogames generate are as simple as medieval tales and fables, a literary period and genre that many videogames seek to remediate. Or, to put it in Marie-Laure Ryan's terms, narrative in videogames amounts to *internal-exploratory interactivity*, which is "not about interpersonal relations, but [rather] the sequence of transformations that affect a micro-environment" (2006, 11). So instead of looking for a grand narrative in video games, we must content ourselves with little stories and the pleasures of discovering the nooks and crannies of a digital possible world (10).

Published in the same year as Murray's work, Espen Aarseth's *Cybertext* took a somewhat more reserved view of the storytelling capabilities of video games. Here Aarseth outlined his method for analysing hypertext and videogames as opposed to "codex texts", or printed, bound works that rely on simple, non-navigable print as their medium of communication. In so doing, he proposes a means of analysing "ergodic literature" or narrative forms that require "nontrivial effort [...] to allow the reader to traverse the text", which allows readers to follow their own forking path as they execute the narrative. This is to say that hypertexts, and particularly

1 Cf Aarseth, "Gaming isn't storytelling. Don't be so sentimental. Gaming is about killing your prey" (347).

videogames considered as a form of text,² require that readers *actively* configurative the text, rather than subjecting it to the standard hermeneutic procedures, in order to get story out of the digital world or document. To use a slightly different vocabulary, hypertexts like Michael Joyce's *Afternoon*, or videogames played for their narrative potential, require lean-forward or active participation as opposed to lean-back or passive participation on the part of the reader. This is why, Aarseth prefers the terms "user" or "player" to "reader" because players, as opposed to readers, must effectuate a "semiotic sequence, and this selective movement is a work of physical construction that the various concepts of 'reading' do not account for" (Aarseth, 1997, 1).

There are, of course, notable exceptions to be found among codex narratives such as Saporta's *Composition No. 1*, which requires physical effort to decode because the text's packaging forces readers to order its pages before attempting any deeper hermeneutic or interpretive activity. Drawing on Barthes' concept of *mesis*, or skimming or skipping passages, Aarseth argues that any novel has multiple random points of entry. Although this is not the principle operation involved in reading most books, it highlights ways in which readers of lean-back, or "readably" texts in Roland Barthes' sense, may also be physically active in the process of producing meaning from codex texts. While there are plenty of exceptions to Aarseth's arguments, *Cybertext* is a productive and pioneering attempt to produce a typology that enables us to think about text carriers such as paper and screen; text producers and their relationship to writerly readers; as well as the varying degrees to which communities of readers and gamers re-write texts and deconstruct the line between themselves and authors or programmers.

The arguments I have just presented were advanced from the side of narrative against commonly-held the notion that new digital media should not to be equated with books, and that these media are possibly antithetical to reading and the role of literature in society. There is a camp in game studies, however, that also takes exception to the notion that digital media and literature are somehow similar in terms of narrative potential. Gonzalo Frasca, for example, has eschewed the use of any literary theory, and particularly narratology, in the study of computer games, proposing ludology "against the common assumption that videogames should be viewed as extensions of narrative", or some new kind of book. But of all the scholars who promoted ludology as the method for studying games, probably the most

hysterical was Markku Eskelinen. In one of his more frenzied attacks on narrative, Eskelinen set out "*annihilate* for good the discussion of games as stories, narratives or cinema" because "stories are just uninteresting ornaments or gift-wrappings to games, and laying any emphasis on studying these kinds of marketing tools is just a *waste of time and energy*".³

More recently, however, most games scholars have calmed down and accepted the insights that narratology makes possible, and Gonzalo Frasca himself now refers to the narratology / ludology wars as "the debate that never happened". Yet every year articles claiming that games are in no way narrative continue to be published, based on a number of recurrent and uninformed claims on the nature of both narrative and literature. Many such claims were brought together at a recent conference by pioneer game-designer Chris Crawford in a passionate lecture wherein he discussed his "dramatic universe engine" for interactive storytelling, which he calls the "Erasmatron". Throughout his lecture Crawford opposed his notion of ludic storytelling to narrative literary fiction, thereby reinforcing the narratology / ludology debate that had supposedly been resolved, and unwittingly supporting those who see games as a form of cultural impoverishment.

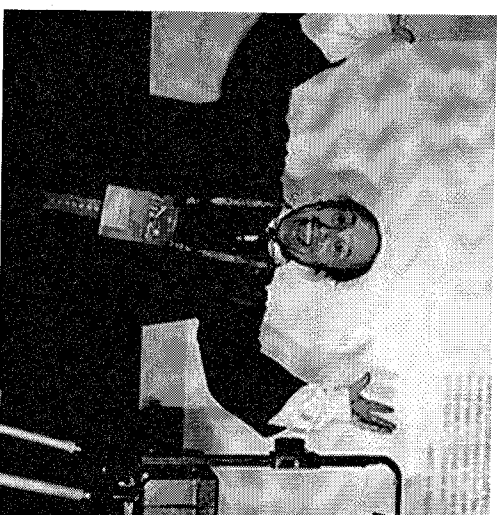


FIGURE 1 CHRIS CRAWFORD EXPLAINING HIS DRAMATIC UNIVERSE ENGINE.

2 On Aarseth's definition of text, see *Cybertext*, 19-21.

3 See <http://gamestudies.org/0101/eskelinen/>

One of Crawford's most contentious claims was the assumption that literature, unlike games, is not fun. In the category of "fun" Crawford included games, gun, comic books and candy, relegating literature to the category of "not fun" and serious. While on the surface the thought of Crawford deciding what is "fun" and opposing it to "not fun" makes me nervous, there is also the consideration that literature as a discipline has ceaselessly had to defend itself against the claim that it is not serious, not empirical, and not scientific enough to merit a place at the university. Unlike the utilitarian, expository discourses of the natural sciences, literature is seen by government administrators and budget makers as a sort of "baggy monster" of feelings and impressions that does not merit serious study, because it yields largely non-quantifiable, non-verifiable results. Moreover, as anyone knows who has been badgered for not doing something "serious", "real" or "useful" with their life as they pursued an academic career in literature, the common perception is rather that literature is way too much fun.

But it's not just parents and spouses that say this. Scholars have long argued that literary narrative is a sort of autotelic game that has no purpose outside itself, and the creation of ludic possible worlds, whose primary function is to entertain rather than to produce measurable goods. Indeed, many scholars claim that literary narrative is, in fact, a particular kind of game hence, Nancy Morrow's *Dreadful Games*; Mihai Spatius's *Literature, Mimesis and Play*; and Peter Hutchinson's *Games Authors Play*.⁴ And of course, there is Huizinga who claimed in *Homo Ludens* that literary narrative constitutes a type of game playing, because it is supposedly voluntary and serves no end outside of itself. And all of these arguments proceed from Aristotle's *Poetics*, in which he defines "poesis" or literary production as a form of *mimesis* or imitation. This is to say that because poesis in its mimetic function imitates various aspects of reality, it acts as a game of pretend, or one that is regulated by "as if" conditions, and ultimately constructs possible worlds with their own characters and conditions of reality.

Moreover, while philosophers and literary theoreticians have conceptualised literature as a kind of game, authors of fictional narrative from Chaucer to Dickens have narrated card and board games as a sort of nod to the notion that narrative fiction is a kind of game. Early examples include Pietro Aretino's 16th-century *Le Carte Parlanti: Dialogo di Partenio Etrio* [*The Speaking Cards*], an allegorical poem

4 Note, however, that not all literary genres, or even narrative genres, are concerned with the projection of possible worlds. Very roughly, this category of narrative is limited to epic poetry, novels and short stories.

in which the characters are playing card figures. At roughly the same time in Spain, narrative poems known as *feulletoes* were published daily and re-enacted court politics substituting playing card figures for sovereigns, which readers in turn played at deciphering.⁵ In the 20th century, the self-conscious foregrounding of games was a popular postmodern device employed in texts like Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, Calvino's *The Castle of Crossed Destinies*, and Cortazar's *Hopscotch*. The salient feature of these texts is their self-proclaimed game structure that requires the expenditure of a considerable ergodic effort in flipping backwards and forwards as one attempts to decipher their message.

In Chris Crawford's talk, to which I would now like to return, he asserted that literary narrative is highly formulaic and structured, while storytelling is spontaneous and therefore fun. As Crawford explained, storytellers like himself have no particular formula or blueprint in mind and are at liberty to shift directions at any moment. So while games produce spontaneous stories, narrative, and particularly literary narrative is rigid and structured. As he spoke, the first counter-example that sprang to my mind was the claim made by Émile Zola, that most rigid of 19th-century realists, that his fiction was a random experiment.⁶ According to Zola, his technique consisted of providing a grid and some characters and then turning them loose to do as they pleased while he, the author, recorded their unpredictable actions. While Zola's theory is largely metaphorical, Crawford supported his argument with the example of a Grandfather telling a child a bedtime story wherein the hero takes a boat trip. His interlocutor, a little girl, protests, "I don't want a boat, I want a pony" and immediately, the spinner of this epic yarn turns the boat into a pony and continues. But what this logic ignores is the reason why Grandpa is able to do this, this being that he, like everyone else, was acculturated with countless story blueprints involving narrative conventions and specialized rules. From birth we become familiar with these structures however implicitly, and as Crawford himself explained in the question period, we all need stories about "cowboys, brave soldiers, fearless explorers whose masculine curiosity takes them to distant planets, and about whores with a hearts of gold". While his examples could profit from gender critique, all of them are highly formulaic even if the teller is free to change narrative elements at will.

5 Pietro Aretino *Le carte parlanti* (1545), Palermo: Sellerio, 1992. *Les Cartes Parlantes*, the translation of Aretino's dialogue was also popular in France, where it enjoyed two editions in 1589 and 1651. On the 16th-century political Spanish genre *los folletos* see Jean-Pierre Etievre's article "Du jeu comme métaphore politique" in *Poétique* 56, 1983, p. 397-415.

6 Although Zola properly belongs to a movement known as naturalism, this category or genre is generally seen as a subgenre of realism.

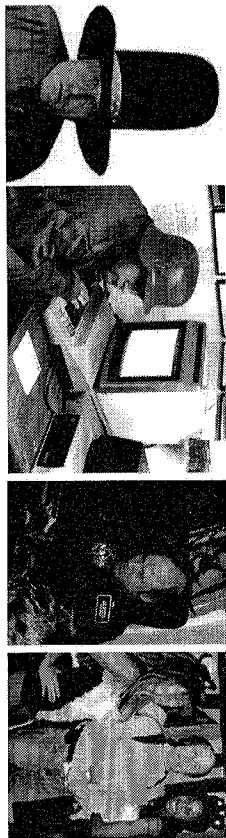


FIGURE 2 CHRIS CRAWFORD ENACTS STORYTELLING BLUEPRINTS

But before leaving the topic of arguments that oppose games and digital worlds to narratives, let me introduce two final objections. It has often been said that games cannot be narrative or literary because the characters in games are flat, or two-dimensional and that their primary function is simply to interact in conflict as agents of good or evil, rather than to involve the reader in lengthy meditations on the meaning of life and the human condition. However, the first psychological novel to offer this kind of narrative was *La Princesse de Clèves* in 1678 and it was preceded by episodic narrative literature popularized by characters like Chanticleer the proud cock or the sly Fox of *The Canterbury Tales*, all of whom are all flat characters devoid of psychological depth. What I surmise from the negative comparisons made by most ludologists, therefore, is that they are looking for what E.M. Forster in 1927 referred to “characters with a but”, or psychological doubt which creates the illusion that fictional characters are actually complex, meditative beings rather than flat constructs of ink and paper?

Others contend that computer games can never provide the narrative richness of literature because they consist of episodes, which are held together merely by the premise of the game. At the same time it is assumed that literary narrative is more or less chronological, and consists of events that all add up to one big story. But to return to *The Canterbury Tales*, this narrative consists of a prologue in which characters are introduced with the premise that unites them. They are travelers on a pilgrimage from Southwark to Canterbury who make a game of telling each other stories, which are collected in no particular order, to form a non-chronological narrative. Hence, although the episodes are set in a framing tale, they bear no other relationship to one another than their setting and do not add up to a greater, homogenous narrative. In this regard as well, it would seem that experts on litera-

7 It is worth noting that Forster was describing characters from 19th-century novels with the benefit of hindsight, which is to say that the psychological characters arrived very late on the scene, and by no means dominate contemporary fiction.

ture and ludologists alike argue against the literature and games analogy, based on assumptions that are most true of the 19th-century novel, which is of course just one kind of narrative.

As I listened to Crawford speak however, I was also struck by the resemblance of his project to that of the Russian Formalists who, in the 1920's, attempted to explain the specific mechanisms of literary production. The Formalists reacted to literature by systematizing it in terms of three central metaphors, namely the machine, the organism, and the system. Once the literary enterprise was boiled down to what their contemporary William Carlos Williams called a “small or large machine made of words”, and its inner workings revealed, texts could be dissembled and described in terms of syntax and function. Hence, the poetic process could be understood as the intersection of the axis of selection containing linguistic elements such as verbs, nouns, adjectives and so on, and the axis of combination along which the artist conjoins the linguistic elements chosen to form a poem or a fictional narrative, governed by rules of genre.

The structure of the computer program that Crawford is developing for his storytelling game is unconsciously, yet closely, related to much of what the Formalist school did, and essentially mimics their program in reverse. This analytic procedure basically amounted to taking apart literary texts and explaining how they work, whereas Crawford's program will allow the user to choose elements from a reduced set of syntactical blocks to be conjoined along a combinational axis (263-6). The player/author does so by selecting elements such as actors, verbs, stages or locations and events through standard menu-driven input, while being subject to “laws of drama”, which determine tone and govern which claims are true and false given set parameters chosen by the player-author (267). These laws are subordinated by universal or extradiegetic laws, and local or intradiegetic laws, which also determine what is possible in this new interactive, narrative fictional world. The end result is a system that allows for, “the progressive upward integration of its functional units”, which is how Barthes spoke of literary and cinematic stories in his essay, “The Structural Analysis of Narratives” (Barthes, 1982, 291). Ironically enough then, while espousing a method for engaging in non-literary and non-narrative storytelling, Crawford energetically argued for a method which has much in common with most structuralist accounts of how narrative works.

However, while there has been much debate on computer games and how they do or do not tell stories, little thought has been devoted to the relation of novels

to games from the reverse perspective. In other words, the notion that computer games are somehow like a form of narrative fiction has been explored at length, yet no attention has been paid to the impact of videogames on standard, codex fiction. For example, there has as yet been no study of the rapidly expanding market in novelisations of videogames or choose-your-own-adventure books, or the impact that videogames are having on the shape of what might be considered more 'literary' contemporary novels. In conclusion then, I would like to focus on the last category through a few texts that straddle the border between novel and videogame, and put aside the question of game novelisations for the time being.

We are currently experiencing a shift in contemporary novelistic discourse that manifests itself in how writers like Jeanette Winterson, Douglas Coupland, Chloé Delaune and others align their work with games. This turn in the art of the novel hinges on developments in novelistic structure and representation, similar to the exchange that occurred between print and film beginning in the 19th century.

In *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate*, Kamilla Elliott explained how illustrations by authors like Thackeray were later absorbed into the idiom of cinema, serving as models for cut-away and establishing shots, dissolves and shot-reverse-shot sequences, as well as casting, costuming, framing and set design. Keith Cohen, has explained the shift from novel to film as being primarily located in the capabilities of presenting time and space specific to both media. For Cohen, "the cinema projects a series of permanently present moments against the screen", which means that it communicates chronology and character development spatially, as opposed to the novel which relies on the "predominantly linear manner of traditional narrative" and incorporates the temporality of reading into the representation of time.

The current exchange between novel and videogame involves the problematics of *real* time and *navigable* space, entailing a heightened version of Cohen's time/space argument. Moreover, this shift operates what Barthes called the "transposition" of narrative from the purely constative plane, which it has occupied until now, to the performative plane, whereby the meaning of an utterance is the very act by which it is uttered" (Barthes, 1982, 285). This shift is particularly evident in Chloé Delaune's *Corpus Simsi*, a novel whose title refers to the author's avatar body in *The Sims*, an online role-playing game. From the outset the reader is asked to perform what Delaune calls her "generator of fiction" in a number of ways, like deciding when to turn the book over and start again; dealing with bizarre language that reads like a high-snob discourse in Simlish translated directly into French theory; and enjoying the rich tactile environment that is the book itself. The text is also composed of jar-

ring images, a practice that makes inroads into subverting the word/image divide, while creating readerly difficulty that requires Aarsethian, nontrivial effort to traverse.

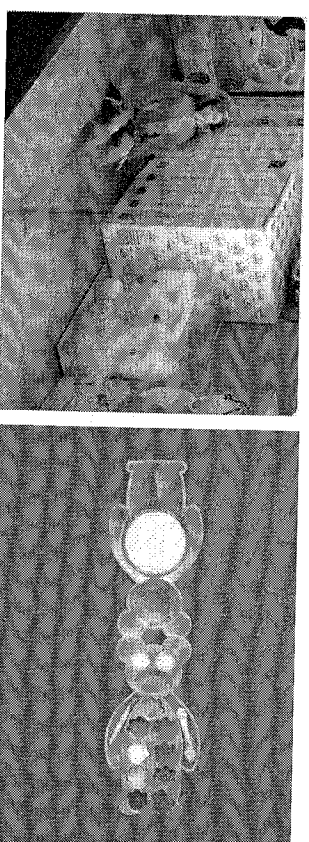


FIGURE 3 IMAGES FROM CORPUS SIMSI.

Throughout the novel Delaune insists that authorship is an equally performative act, hence "the meaning of any utterance is the very act by which it is uttered". As she explains, "apart from being totally immersed in the generative ludic illusion of [the videogame world] only the authentic project of writing can produce the same effect of the recreation-event of virtuality".⁸ In other words, the emphasis is on the performative or eventful nature of the text, which can also be said of the Sim/author. Delaune graphically illustrates this by transcribing Rimbaud's "je est un autre" [I is another] as "jeu est un autre" [Game is another], thereby conflating her author function and the game. This accords with Barthes' notion that while the novel was formerly composed of a mixture of two systems "[personal and apersonal], successively mobilizing the signs of non-person and those of person" to produce "psychology", novels like Delaune's are about "pure system" and "bringing the whole narrative down to the sole instance of the discourse—or [...] the locutionary act" (Barthes, 1982, 285). This threatens "the very content of the person [...] [so that] the psychological person (of the referential order) bears no relation to the linguistic person, the latter never defined by stases of mind, intentions or traits of character but only by its (coded) place in discourse" (Barthes, 1982, 285). Or, as Delaune puts it, she "was expulsed from the body [she] thought to be [hers] one spongy Friday in 2002" to become a "interminably a fictional character" in a

8 See Delaune's website at www.chloedelaune.net

“perpetual diaspora”, so that it is now through the game-body as discursive instance that the narrative plays itself out (Delaume, 2003, 4).⁹

This tendency to evacuate subjectivity from both character and author, placing agency in the performativity of the text is a gesture common to novels that remediale videogames. For example, characterisation in Coupland’s *Pod* is weak and expresses itself through elaborate game back-stories involving sexual fantasies about Ronald MacDonald, created by sketchy characters who work as game designers. Similarly the author has written himself into the novel as a dispersed character to whom others refer as “that asshole Douglas Coupland”. While these questions of agency could easily be described as simply and adorably postmodern, I would argue that something different is going on, at least in the textual support. In his reading of *Afternoon*, Aarseth argued that the hypertextual environment in which Michael Joyce’s disjointed prose is presented naturalises it, “and therefore [does] not cause the subversion [that it] might have in a codex format” (Aarseth, 1997, 86). Published to years after Aarseth, the graphic display of *Pod*, including junk mail, pages that breakdown into code, 81 pages of code and the inclusion of pop-up messages, encourage us to read the novel as hypertext, a hermeneutic operation ostensibly inaccessible to the computer illiterate.

Jeanette Winterson’s *PowerBook* likewise incorporates pages with commands such as “save”, “restart” and “view as icon”, while the title implies that the book is to be read as though through a laptop. This novel too is full of disembodied voices and diffused characters implying, in ways similar to Delaume and Coupland’s work, that agency, both authorial and readerly, has been fed into a random generator, from which neither emerges on top. To the question “[w]hat happened to the omniscient author?”, a disembodied voice replies, “gone interactive”, while another narrative voice explains “[t]his is where the story starts. Here, in these long lines of laptop DNA. Here we take your chromosomes, twenty-three pairs, and alter your height, eyes, teeth, sex. This is an invented world” (27, 4). And if, in Cohen’s view, spatiality supplants temporality from novel to film, according to Winterson in videogames and novels that adapt them “[t]ime is downloaded into our bodies. We contain it. Not only time past and time future, but time without end” (2000, 103).

Given the importance of digital worlds and games in a growing number of everyday lives, it behooves us to take a closer look at the novels that adapt this medium.

Worlds like *Second Life*, where it is possible to visit my bank and countless other commercial institutions as well as universities, while taking in spectacular scenery and chatting with friends around the world, doubtless provides the sort of rich environment for creating fiction that has inspired novelists for centuries. One place to begin would be a typographical and topographical classification of videogame novels on the basis of structure, character development, text base and the representation of agency. This is important work because, while some object that videogame narratives are disjointed, episodic, shallow and support only two-dimensional characters, I would argue that, should human beings and novels revert in the direction of earlier psychological novels, a video game industry that has long surpassed Hollywood revenues and develops at a mind-boggling pace will keep up if need be. In this regard then, the correct conclusion to draw is probably that the fat Sim hasn’t sung yet.

SHORT BIOGRAPHY:

Joyce Goggin completed her PhD in comparative literature at the Université de Montréal and came to the University of Amsterdam in 1997 to work on a post-doctoral project on gambling in 17th-century Dutch painting. Her major areas of research are literature, play and game theory, film and new media. Dr. Goggin teaches literature, film and new media and has recently become Head of Studies for the Humanities.

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FORUM DISCUSSION BETWEEN SPEAKERS, LED BY RACHEL VAN RIEL

Mr. Konrád

Twenty minutes earlier Rachel van Riel had given the audience the opportunity to ask the members of the panel (the speakers that day) questions and now a man rises and directs his question to the Hungarian writer and key note speaker György Konrád.

'Mr. Konrád, not so long ago a game maker said in a newspaper article – and he was criticised for it: literature is so heavily laden with rules, that nobody can move within it at all. In his view literature is a big burden of the past. What would be your answer to this? What would you say to someone who says that literature is all about rules?'

Mr. Konrád sighs, shuts his eyes and sighs again. It's only a few hours ago that he made his random walk through writing and reading, a speech in which he stated that writers are unruly, that they break the law and cannot be controlled, that writers don't do things by the law but challenge the law – and now he's confronted with the phrase: 'Literature is all about rules.' But he noted that the man who asked the question doesn't agree.

Then he opens his eyes and says, loud and clearly: 'I'm afraid the man is stupid. I won't say writers are criminals, but they are nonconformists. That is: if they're good writers.'

All the answers mr. Konrád gave were that accurate. Even when the subject was chocolate, the drug of the eighteenth century...

Joyce Goggin took the first question, earlier that afternoon.

'Will games and literature get closer in the future, because many game players want more than two dimensional characters?'