

WORKSHOP FILMING THE GAME/PLAYING THE FILM

31 MARCH-2 APRIL 2009

31 March

Coordinated by Bernard Perron (Université de Montréal)

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Filming the Game

From *Spacewar!* to *Gears of War*, portrait of the graphic evolution of the video game (cut-scenes, interactive movie, 2D and 3D images in real time). Thoughts on the generalized fascination from the video game universe for a filmic staging of games.

Alessandro Catania (University of Nottingham)

Watch, Play, Experience: The Immersive Media Spaces of Transmedia Storytelling and ARGs

Within contemporary movie industry and post-network television era, ancillary markets, merchandising, consumer applications are no longer secondary afterthoughts. All is brought to the earlier stages of script and content development. “Cross-platform multimedia ‘re-purposing’ – simultaneous development of products for TV, film, new media, video gaming, etc...– is now obligatory for the studios, a corporate house rule”. (Caldwell, J., *Industrial Geography Lessons: socio-professional rituals and the borderlands of production culture*, in N.Couldry and A.McCarthy, eds., *Mediaspace. Place, Space and Culture in Media Age*. London - Routledge 2004, p. 163)

Amid these ancillary products, games are becoming increasingly relevant. Producers of recent successful television shows such as *Lost* and *Heroes*, and blockbuster movies like *The Dark Knight*, are indeed developing game applications known as ARG (Alternative Reality Games) associated with their franchises. By creating alternate “hyper-diegetic” narrative universes that merge with our own, producers erode the boundaries between diegetic spaces and the spaces of consumption consequently “allowing narratives, promotion and advertising to overlap”. (Johnson, D., *The Fictional Institutions of LOST: World Building, Reality, and the Economic Possibilities of Narrative Divergence*, in R.Pearson,ed., *Reading Lost. Perspectives on a Hit Television Show*. London : IBTauris 2008, p. 49). The coordinated multi-platform deployment of content positions the viewer not as an external spectator looking in on the story, but as a resident situated within the diegetic universe in which that story unfolds. ARGs transform a movie or a show into an experience: an interactive environment playerspectators participate in and live with.

Drawing on the debate between ludology and narratology, this paper analyses these contemporary hybrid gaming experiences emphasising the prominence of narrative universes over game rules.

1 April

Coordinated by Patrick Coppock (Università di Modena e Reggio Emilia)

Stefano Baschiera (University College Cork)

Videoplayers and Tv Series: a Case of Hyperidentities

In the past decade, the process of digitalisation of images, brought different media closer to each other as never before, both in terms of production and consumption; films, Tv products, music and videogames, in their distribution share the same digital support (dvd, cd) and often are played through the same devices

(computers, game consoles, ipods). My presentation aims to investigate the relationship between the most recent Tv series and videogames in terms of narrative, aesthetic and form of consumption. I argue, in fact, that the tv series are the product closer to videogames in terms of length of entertainment (the demanding of time in front of the screen) and character persistence through time and seriality.

Dario Compagno (Università di Siena)

Representing and Playing Fate: Steps towards a Rhetoric of Interaction

Recent developments in game studies ask for describing the different ways in which *interactive strategies* are implemented in computer games. The active role that the spectator has in understanding audiovisual texts changes when he or she has to perform effective actions. This does not mean that there is no continuity between movies and games (or other forms of interactive cinema): we will focus on how the rhetorical figure of representing *fate* in movies is linked with (and contributes to the creation of) a corresponding *figure of interaction*.

The notions of necessity and contingency – fate and freedom – are fundamental categories for the understanding of fiction. Watching a movie, we want to know how characters manage to shape their destiny, or are overcome by it. There is an instance in texts (that of the *author*) that is in charge of everything that happens in the story. In *open stories*, this principle is weaker, and the spectator himself is asked for proposing alternative interpretations; he or she has to imagine how the fictional future will come to an end. Interactivity develops further this dialectic of closedness and openness, giving the power to the player to effectively determine some game variables, and so attributing to him or her the *responsibility* for these decisions.

Andrea Dresseno (Cineteca del Comune di Bologna)

Cineteca di Bologna's Videogame Archive: Preserving and Disseminating Videogame Heritage

More than 30-year history, a stimulating, visionary, rich and ever-evolving field of study and research: time has come to preserve the videogame heritage now with an urgency that most of archives share. The archive is conceived a means to preserve and start carefully investigating the relationship and many-fold connections between videogames and the other Arts, disciplines and fields of research as well as a place to promote the use of videogames and where private and public institutions can meet.

2 April

Coordinated by Andrea Babich (Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti, Milano)

Marco Benoît Carbone (Scuola Superiore di Studi Umanistici, Università di Bologna)

Authors of Worlds. The Evolution of Authorship in Videogames in Comparison with the History of Cinema

This paper is going to examine the evolution of *authorship* in games from the perspective of textual semiotics, looking at the relationship between gamers, the playable text, and the game makers. At the same time, the paper is going to underline historical and linguistic similarities and differences between authorship in games and cinema. It would seem as if videogames were not just *re-mediating* any previous form of expression as a result of their digital nature, and especially cinema; in a relatively small lifetime, they are also retracing a wide series of textual, social and cultural issues that media such as movies have already experienced from an industrial, aesthetic, theoretical, and critical standpoint.

While focusing on some of the many facets of the auctorial dimension in games, such as those of the old-fashioned *bedroom coder* (Jeff Minter), the novel *game designer* (David Crane), the *maestro-producer* (Shigeru Miyamoto, Tetsuya Mizuguchi), the *programmer guru* (John Carmack) and others, the paper is going to recall key topics in the history of games and cinema that show the similarity and peculiarity of the issue of authorship in two different media. It will also emphasize the importance of scientific continuity in

game studies and critics in regards to the methods, critical literature and theories of authorship already developed for other media; at the same time, the examples will show the ultimately unique characteristics of a medium fit to claim status as *the eye of the twenty-first century*.

Giovanni Caruso, Alessandro Cavaleri, Mauro Salvador (Università di Bologna)

The Dilated Fruition: In Search of a Link Between Video-Gamers and Movie-Goers

As the attention achieved confirms, video games studies are assuming a remarkable importance nowadays. Due to the affinity with video games, Cinema has been chosen as the best term of comparison and study. Unfortunately, cross-studies among these two media show their weakness as they reveal a research unable to progress: in fact, nobody has gone much over a systematic analysis of mutual influences. The problem is that a cross-study based on grammar seems an impossible operation because cinema and video games rely on divergent languages. To pass this stall, the research must find a new direction, a new path that set it apart from grammar and, at the same time, show it an alternative way to try a comparison. Setting out from this point, the idea of fruition¹, and in particular the figure of *hyper-spectator*², becomes the fulcrum of this paper.

The last generation of video gamers challenges softwares that allow them to edit the contents. *Spore*, the last Wright's game, is a routinely game. Nevertheless It has a great strength: it gives to gamers the possibility to customize the experience of play, modifying, as much as they like, creatures and buildings, sharing them on-line with other consumers aware of different creative moods. Acting in this way, gamers recall the figure of Lucas again, not the director but the expert who owns and blends all his abilities to realize his project. It's by using this dilated fruition that the common influence between cinema and video games can be thought over the grammar.