



READING VIDEO GAMES AS LITERATURE

Shayne Taylor

Shayne.taylor@summitcountyco.gov

Summit County Libraries

EVOLUTION OF STORYTELLING

- Oral Tradition
 - Audio Narrative
- Books
 - Narrative
- Silent Film
 - Visual Narrative
- "Talkies"
 - Audiovisual Narrative
- Video Games
 - Audiovisual Ludonarrative

AUDIO

- Things to think about:
 - Score
 - Sound Design
 - Footsteps, Combat Noises, Ambient Sounds
 - Aural Cues
 - Chimes and alerts to help the player execute tasks, provide hints, and reward completion
 - Think about collecting coins in Mario games

VISUAL

- Things to think about:
 - Head-Up Display
 - *The HUD also often includes a variety of targeting, weapon sensor, firing status, and other pertinent information*
 - *"Head-up and eyes-out"*
 - Landscape
 - Colors and Lights



MARIOKART

WINE & COGS



07 1/3

3rd

LUDO

- Things to think about:
 - Gameplay
 - What the player *can* do
 - What the player is *supposed* to do
 - Level Design
 - The space in which the player must accomplish their quest



Standard-Kart



A OK

NARRATIVE

- Things to think about:
 - Narration
 - Character Dialogue
 - Item Descriptions
 - Game Flow
 - Railroad vs Player Choice
 - What is not said, but directed

MARIO
058700

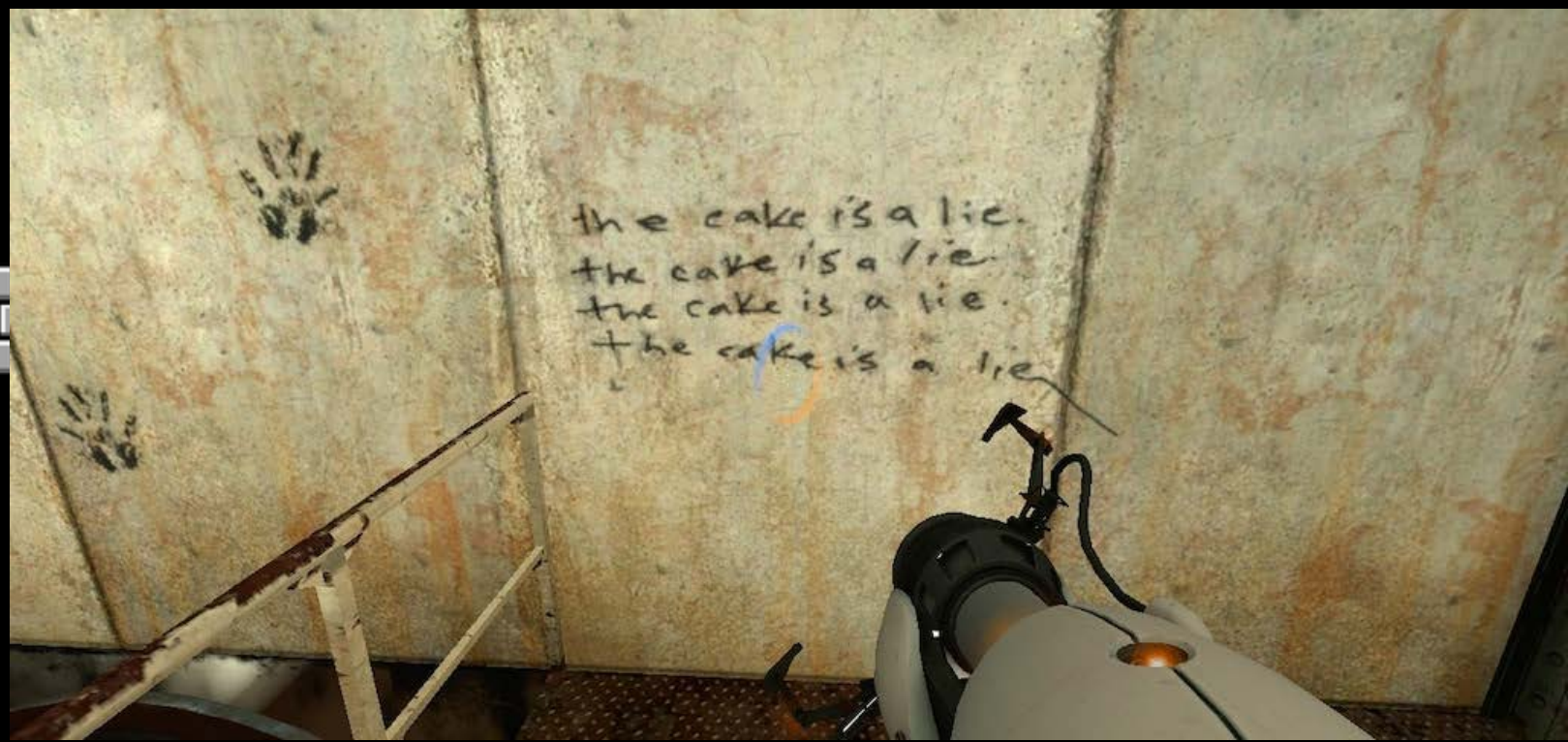
0x20

WORLD
1-4

TIME
200

THANK YOU MARIO!

BUT OUR PRINCESS IS IN
ANOTHER CASTLE!



HARMONY VS DISSONANCE

- Coined by game designer Clint Hocking
 - Ubisoft and Valve
 - Splinter Cell, Far Cry 2, Watchdogs: Legion
- Harmony
 - Audio, Video, and Ludic components work together to tell a story that can only, or best, be told as a game
- Dissonance
 - Some elements do not align or are in direct opposition with the narrative of the game

BIOSHOCK (2K, 2007)

- Critique on Ayn Rand's philosophy of *Objectivism* exhibited in "Atlas Shrugged"
 - The idea that one should follow their own self-interest and profit from their own abilities and ambitions while being virtually uninhibited by others
- Jack (player) crash-lands in the ocean by a lighthouse that reveals itself to be the underwater city of Rapture
- Rapture is governed by Andrew Ryan and objectivist ideals



NO GODS OR KINGS.
ONLY MAN.

BIG DISS-ONANCE

- *Bioshock* is a commentary on the relationship between freedom and power through a Randian Objectivist lens
- Clint Hocker wrote a now infamous blog post 2 months after release critiquing the dissonance of *Bioshock*

CLINT HOCKER

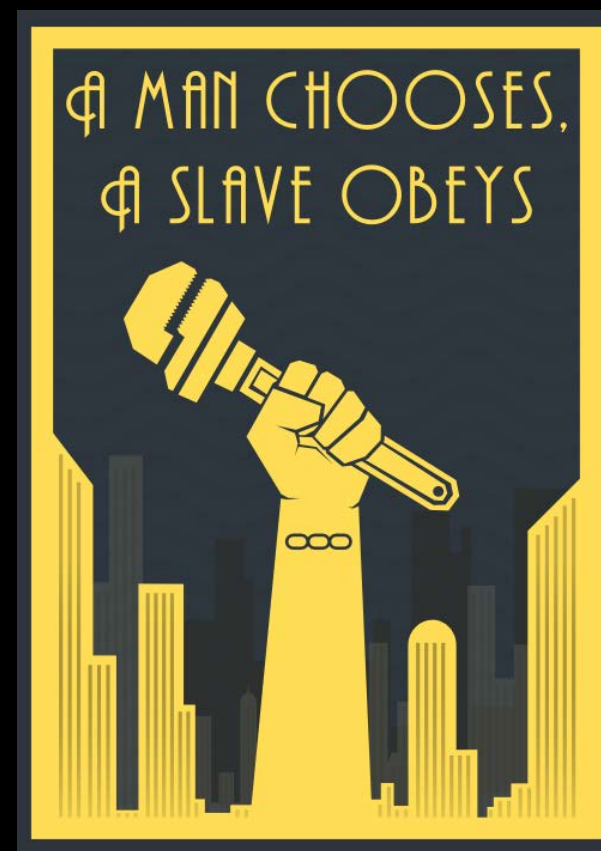
"LUDONARRATIVE DISSONANCE IN BIOSHOCK"

- "The leveraging of the game's narrative structure against its ludic structure all but destroys the player's ability to feel connected to either, forcing the player to either abandon the game in protest (which I almost did) or simply accept that the game cannot be enjoyed as both a game and a story, and to then finish it for the mere sake of finishing it."
- <https://bit.ly/ludonarrativedissonance>

LITTLE SISTERS, WHAT ARE THEY GOOD FOR?



ATLAS VS RYAN



SLAVE ALL ALONG



HADES (SUPERGIANT, 2018)

- Retelling of the myth of Hades and Persephone from the perspective of their son Zagreus (player)
- Zag has never known his mother and sets off to escape the underworld in search of Persephone
- We meet and are given boons and advice from the entire pantheon, demi-gods, furies, and heroes along Zagreus's difficult journey
- Everyone Zag meets responds to what he has just done

FAMILY REUNION



Z<<US

KING OF THE OLYMPIANS

Greetings there, young man! Look, your father's always been rather difficult, and he's not so much as called in quite some time. You'll have a better home where you belong, here on Olympus! And to help you on your journey, have my blessing.

SMART DIALOGUE



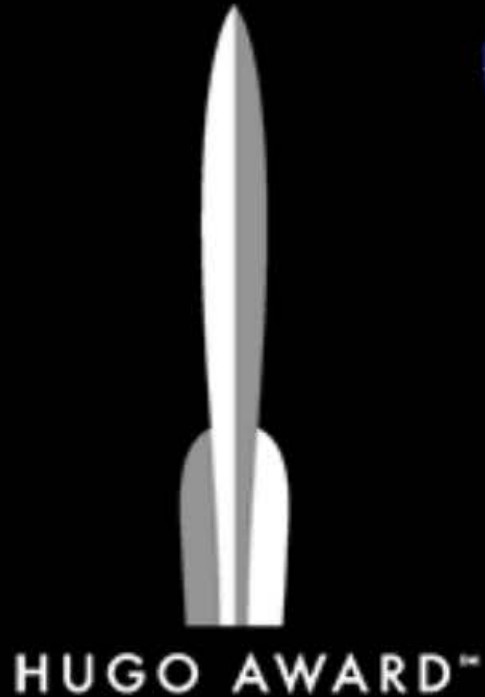
HYPNOS
SLEEP INCARNATE

Hey, you're the latest victim of a Wretched Sneak, that's something, right? They like to get you when you least expect it, so next time, why not keep spinning around and around? Then you'll catch them trying to sneak up!

BEST VIDEO GAME

Hades

Publisher and Developer: Supergiant Games



CRITICAL HITS: VIDEO GAME CLUB


- Meet once a month at a local brewery
- Present a theme for the month one week before
 - EX: JRPG, Horror, Female Protagonists, etc
- Members pitch games they want to play within the theme
 - Majority vote to decide the Game of the Month
- Use Discord to ask questions, get hints, and stay connected
 - Most members are virtual!

TEXT CHANNELS +



- # game-talk
- # screenshot-gallery
- # hellblade-senuas-sacri...
- # pokemon-go
- # dnd
- # ori-and-the-blind-f... 👤 ⚙️
- # the-witness
- # spiritfarer
- # assassins-creed-odyssey
- # celeste
- # hades
- # fable-anniversary
- # borderlands-3
- # bendy-and-the-ink-ma...
- # octopath-traveler

@FlyPhillyFly I just 100% the game and got all the collectibles. It's was fun going all over the map...

 **shaylor** 08/21/2022
Hell yeah! Nice work!

I'm got frustrated in the ancient wind temple and took a break

 **FlyPhillyFly** 08/21/2022
Oh Sorrow Pass? Yea I was super frustrated there. Especially right before the save station in the area.

Pretty much after that is Mount Horu which is the last level. So your super close!

Mount Horu can be difficult too but I found each area challenge within it both challenging and a nice brain teaser.



Sorrow pass might be the most annoying part of the game.


A good break from Sorrow pass is to go to the save station in the sunken glades and go right which will open you up to Black Root Burrows a whole new area. Only available in the definitive edition. This area will give you dash making sorrow pass easier I think.

Anyway ldk if you have been there or not but I didn't find out till I beat the game.



- ONLINE — 3
-  Nobody
 -  Peter
Playing Halo Infinite 🎮
 -  shaylor 👑

- OFFLINE — 20
-  Zhoufan1
 -  90_percent_dead_insi...
 -  andyruo
 -  BeardedSheesh
 -  Cameron
 -  FlyPhillyFly
 -  i Michael
 -  jakegreenhaus84
 -  jlefixit

 **shaylor**
#3869

🎤 🎧 ⚙️

+ | Message #ori-and-the-blind-forest

🎁 GIF 📄 😊

CRITICAL HITS: AGENDA

- 30 Minutes: Catch up, discuss other games we've been playing, discuss video game news
- 60 Minutes: Discuss the Game of the Month, book club style
- 15 Minutes: I share designer intent and inspirations
 - When relevant, I explain design theory, narrative structure, or canon/historical influence
- 15 Minutes: Pitch next month's games and vote

CRITICAL HITS: PROVISIONS

- I read and collect reviews, critiques, and designer interviews which I distribute via email one week prior to meetings
 - Includes screenshots, comparative images, and other visual aids for discussion
- I gather fiction and nonfiction books and movies from the library collection, available for checkout at meetings

CRITICAL HITS: DISCUSSION TOPICS

- *Octopath Traveler* (JRPG)
 - Comparing Western and Eastern narrative structures
- *Bendy and the Ink Machine* (Horror)
 - Allegorical retelling of Walt Disney's and Ub Iwerks' professional relationship
- *Celeste* (Female Protagonists)
 - Mental Health representation in video games
 - Trans (and LGBTQ+) representation in video games
- *Spiritfarer* (Oceans of Possibilities)
 - Accepting mortality and loss

CRITICAL MISSES

- Fighting Stigma
 - We don't just play games
 - Research everything
- Financial Accessibility
 - Take advantage of sales
 - Indie games are significantly cheaper
- Less Can Be More
 - Make a safe space for gamers to be gamers

ENGAGING WITH VIDEO GAMES IN THE LIBRARY

- Game Reviews
- Game Critiques
- Literature Circles
- How-To Guides
- Displays or checkout bundles with a game and its media influences

