

Towards a New Understanding of Games: Auteur Game Criticism

(an early manuscript)

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SUMMARY

This thesis examines the adaptability and applicability of auteur theory to video games. Auteur theory is used as a critical method to analyze films as art works and can be applied to video games. Video games are not only commodities which are used only for entertainment purposes, they can also be considered as works of art. This analysis defines games in the field of popular art and focuses on different dimensions of games, such as simulation, software, rule-based system in relation to the potential of games as art works. The analysis of art and video games relationship focuses on the different valorization methods of art works and the art value of games in different perspectives.

After studying art and video games relationship, I present the historical background and key concepts of auteur theory. Starting with the transformation of artisan as craftsmen to artist, theories around auteur as film artist are examined. The changes of the theory, the effects of the theory in different times and places, and different uses are introduced to draw the borders of the auteur concept.

The impact of auteur to the field of games and theories around authorial methods of game making comes next. I criticize the idea of promoting game makers to auteur level and then I propose the use of auteur theory as a criticism method. Instead of defining game auteur as a genius artist I suggest to reevaluate games and reality relationship. Then, to develop the auteur game criticism I examine expressive uses and possibilities, also narrative and formal aspects of video games. Differently from the original auteur theory, I define the possibility of player as auteur.

After the reconceptualization of auteur theory, I propose an example of how this criticism method could be applied to video games. I take Gonzalo Frasca as an auteur and criticize his games. I use both game elements defined as aesthetic variables in the control of game auteur, and also Frasca's own perspective and methods described in his writings.

1. INTRODUCTION

Attention viewers: This film is an experiment in cinematic communication of real events. Without the help of intertitles, without the help of a story, without the help of theatre this experimental work aims at creating a truly international language of cinema based on its absolute separation from the language of theatre and literature. (Vertov 1929)

Dziga Vertov is one of the most famous Soviet directors and also one of the founders of cinematic language. After viewing his movie “Man with a Movie Camera” several times I realized that it’s possible to find new meanings at every time. Without dialogs and intertitles this movie manages to tells you a story, manifest some ideas, represent an ideology, show you the modern city life and teach you how and the reasons to use your camera. Without using verbal language, only with the help of moving images...

I have played video games since my childhood. Sometimes I play and finish a game several times. And some games were an addiction for me. I have vivid memories of certain moments I experienced in some of these games. But I have encountered very few examples which I really like in a critical perspective and not only for fun. I always wonder if it is possible to design a game like a movie, full of meaning, not only with some small dramatic moments but as an art work with aesthetic aspects. I keep playing and games keep developing. The generation I belong to has been raised playing games more than watching television.

Now, years after I have matured, games are not at the same, they are also getting mature. Multi-dimensional games with rich content like Knights of the Old Republic or World of Warcraft shows us that the limits of games are still to be discovered. While game technology progress its development, expressive capabilities of games still stand undiscovered. Hopefully there are academic attempts to establish critical methods to analyze games now. Furthermore there are game makers who try to produce games for different purposes than pure entertainment and mature players have also come to demand mature games.

In this thesis I focus on expressive capabilities and aesthetic dimensions of games. My question is “Can auteur theory as a critical method be used to analyze aesthetic dimensions of games?” In the past auteur theory has been used by critics to identify the values of films as art works. Now we know more on the aesthetic aspects of the film medium, and we accept great

directors of film history as auteurs. Also in the field of games there are so-called “auteurs” and currently the aesthetic value of games is on debate. Auteur theory proposed mise-en-scene analysis to locate the style of auteurs and the meaning in films which is a sign of personality and world view. Similarly a theory on game elements and game primitives combined with auteur theory can be used to identify the values of games as art works.

My goal is to reconceptualize auteur theory so it can be applied in the field of games as a critical method. To achieve this goal I will start with describing the unique features of games as art works to understand the differences of this medium. In order to be able to use auteur theory which belongs to film art, I will try to define the relationship between art and games. After that I will go through the history, key concepts, different uses and different understandings of auteur theory. Then I will try to reconceptualize auteur theory and to apply it in the field of games. I will critically review the literature around author and auteur theory in the field of games. Furthermore I will define some game concepts which are symmetric to mise-en-scene and editing in auteur theory. For this purpose I will borrow other theories on narrative and formal qualities of games. Additionally I will include theories on social reality in games. In my final chapter I will apply reconceptualized auteur theory to Gonzalo Frasca.

2. VIDEOGAMES AND ART

In this chapter I will take the relation between videogames and art to argue that games can be popular art and that there is a space for artists in the field of videogames. But a deep analysis of game-like art, digital art, and Art Games are outside the limits of this work. To show that games are an object of popular culture, I want to reframe the game-creator relationship as an art-artist relationship. I want to discuss the limits of the artist -or in other words the author- in the following chapters. For now it's enough to point out that, in game play or in game production there is room for expression of players and artists.

2.1 Different Dimensions of Games

2.1.1 From Commodity to Popular Culture

Videogames as commodities in mass production show different kinds of relationships with their creators. They are perhaps the best example of the overlapping of different kind of roles in different paradigms. Superficially, player, artist, worker and consumer roles seem distinct. But ultimately we can say that there is a strong connection between these roles. These roles can be considered as different reflections produced by a complex structure.

These days, with the rise of giant companies and bloody profit wars, it's easy to say that games as cultural products mostly show the ideas of the ruling class and impose capitalist values. Rob Wilkie attacks optimistic ideas about the freedom that games provide. He tries to explain the relationship between deskilling of labor, consumption and videogames.

Video games do not represent an alternative to the capitalist mode of production, despite the dominant claims they open the space for the emergence of spontaneous, de-regulated, and post-capitalist "cyber-communities" to emerge. On the contrary, they have become the latest means of extending the market-share of the technology industry in a moment of economic crisis. Video games are part of the extension of need that capitalism engenders and, thus, the expansion of the control of capitalism over the daily lives of workers. In short, such software does not break capitalism, but rather provides the foundation for the expansion of commodity production required for the realization of profit. (Wilkie 2003)

At first glance it's reasonable to believe that a strong game industry dominates all possibilities of free action and that there is no chance to represent a different culture or criticism within the

borders of market rules. I acknowledge the problems concerning the dream that technology will one day solve all the problems of mankind, and that social differences such as class no longer operate in virtual worlds. But the missing point in Wilkie's work is the potential uprising of some game workers or game artists.

The solution lies in Marxist literature. If we define popular culture as a cultural battlefield, as Antonio Gramsci does, there is a possibility for a takeover of this hegemony.

Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates organically, together with itself, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields. (Gramsci 1986, 309)

These type of intellectuals appear as "organic intellectuals" in Gramsci's work as the ones who define and defend the groups' own interests and demands against the common ways of reproducing of the hegemony of the ruling class.

I believe that Gonzalo Frasca's search for new concepts in the field of games to facilitate social change is driven by such a responsibility. In this case the subordinate group to defend is defined as "oppressed people".

I personally believe that by enhancing critical awareness among citizens, society could actually change. There is no way that this process could be attained but through the joint work of educators, politicians and artists. (Frasca 2001, 75)

In this perspective we can say that games are not only commodities but also a part of popular culture. There can be a free space for artists(maybe not just genius individuals but also ordinary people who seek social change) to express and criticize their world view in the form of popular art.

In *Scratchware Manifesto*, Greg Costikyan appears as Designer X and presents his revolutionary ideas about the game industry and alternative ways of game production.

The machinery of gaming has run amok... An industry that was once the most innovative and exciting artistic field on the planet has become a morass of drudgery and imitation... It is time for revolution! (Costikyan 2000)

In *Death to the Game Industry*, Costikyan introduces his ideas about low-budget production with full artistic control and alternative distribution channels.

What do we want? What would be ideal?

A market that serves creative vision instead of suppressing it. An audience that prizes gameplay over glitz. A business that allows niche product to be commercially successful - not necessarily or even ideally on the same scale as the conventional market, but on a much more modest one: profitability with sales of a few tens of thousands of units, not millions.

And, of course - creator control of intellectual property, because creators deserve to own their own work. (Costikyan 2005)

These words carry the problem of a change in power from one hand to another. That is also possible that these low-budget developers will one day take the place of old ones.

Nevertheless, it's clear that we can see a will to change the game industry to aid creator control.

A different kind of resistance comes from the opposite site. Anne Marie Schleiner, a programmer and the creator of *Velvet-Strike*, did something that every *Counter-Strike* player can do. She changed an in-game tool to spray anti-militarist logos on the game walls.

Velvet-Strike is a simple example that shows that, from both sides, creators and players are trying to take a role in changing of the routines of game development. And they are gaining strength in their struggle.

It's clear that games are not only commodities. But before coming to an early conclusion we have to discuss the possibility of videogame as art work.

2.1.2 Videogame as an Art Work

In *Realtime Art Manifesto*, Auiea Harvey and Michael Samyn invite artists to follow a set of rules in order to create different experiences with Realtime 3D tools:

1. Realtime 3D is a medium for artistic expression
2. Be an author
3. Create a total experience
4. Embed the user in the environment
5. Reject dehumanization: tell stories

6. Interactivity wants to be free
7. Don't make modern art
8. Reject Conceptualism
9. Embrace technology
10. Develop punk economy (Harvey and Samyn 2006, 293-299)

Following these rules will perhaps lead artists to create remarkable realtime art. But is it enough to call videogame software “art” because it’s created by someone who believes some ideals or follows an art manifesto? Many of the works of directors related with art movements are considered art by critics, but can we easily say that all works of known artists are art works?

In his work *The Value of Video Games as Art Work* Tincuta Parv presents different types of definitions of art from different writers to show that games are “of art”.

- Aesthetic-functionalist: An art work has capabilities to present aesthetic experiences or belongs to a category which has this capacity.
- Institutional-Procedural: “The artwork is an artifact of a certain type especially created to be presented to a public of the world of art.” (Parv 2006, 289)
- Historical reflexive: “A work becomes an art work only if a place had been reserved for it in the world of art.” (Parv 2006, 289)

Certainly videogames can function aesthetically. Given that games are presented at art galleries and museums videogames also satisfy the institutional definition of art. And for Parv, who argues Tomb Raider is comparable with Andy Warhol’s portraits of Marilyn Monroe, videogames also fit the historical-reflexive view of art. But Parv also points out that these arguments only make the case that videogames are “of art”. But are they art? This question stays unanswered. Instead of answering this question, he proposes two different approaches: an aesthetizant approach and a cognitive approach.

If we consider the aesthetizant account of art value, then we have to consider concepts as ideal form or the feeling of beauty in our analysis. Still, the complexity of video and computer games, from visual to narrative and technical aspects, conduct us to realize the limitations of such an approach. (Parv 2006, 291)

If we call this kind of approach to the field of games as “ludic aesthetics”, this will bring us to the discussion of the formal qualities of games.

If we consider the cognitive arguments, then we have to evaluate the cognitive and affective aspects of the games. What we have to question is what had changed in the functioning schema of the “poesis” once with the video games. Can we for example, speak about a changing function of the game from “catharsised” to “divertisment”? Conduct the interactive and participative function of the game to a fragmented city? (Parv 2006, 291)

Parv suggests that cognitive approaches are more suitable for videogames, but he leaves further questioning open for development.

When we consider the relationship games with art, we must take on account the essential qualities of videogames. What are the differences between video games and traditional media and what are the similarities? This question will be challenged through my further investigation.

2.1.3 Video Games as Simulation

Gonzalo Frasca succinctly defines the difference between simulation and representation in his article *Simulation versus Narrative: Introduction to Ludology*. Simulation in computer software is a relatively new form compared to other media.

Traditional media are representational, not simulational. They excel at producing both descriptions of traits and sequences of events (narrative). A photograph of a plane will tell us information about its shape and color, but it will not fly or crash when manipulated. (Frasca 2003, 223)

Manipulation of the environment in simulations is a core aspect that we encounter in games. Interaction is the term for manipulating entities in a virtual environment. But this kind of player-machine interaction did exist before computers.

Historically, simulation has been performed long before the invention of computers. For example, early planes have been tested by creating small models. This kind of simulation is known as analog, in opposition to digital simulations, which are performed by computers. (Frasca 2001, 21)

Here we see that computers allow simulations to be easily controlled and manipulated. As a scientific tool, computer simulation can digitalize the start conditions and final results, and compute all the necessary calculations. A nuclear bomb test can be simulated with the necessary variables and the results can be monitored.

Since simulation has its roots in science, it was normal for scientist to simulate real systems instead of fantastic constructions. The computer, particularly videogames, has allowed authors to simulate systems that do not exist and even contradict the rules of physics of our universe. (Frasca 2001, 25)

In a videogame, encountering an alien isn't so unusual. And differently from a fictional alien, you don't only read about or see it, you can kill or make contact with it. Computers are now capable of simulating huge fictional world full of creatures and players, for instance J. R. R. Tolkien's Middle Earth. But what is the difference between a fictional dragon in a movie and a simulated dragon? Espen Aarseth answers this question in his article *The Perception of Doors: Fiction vs. Simulation in Games*.

Consider a dragon. These beasts do not exist in our world, but are part of imaginary worlds in literature, film and games. However, the literary, fictional dragon, say Tolkien's Smaug is different from the simulated dragons we find in a game such as *Everquest*. They are not the same, or there would have been no difference between our experience of Tolkien's world and the world of *Everquest*. One dragon is clearly fictional, the other is simulated. One is there to read about, or watch on a TV or movie screen, the other is there to be played with. One is made solely of signs, the other of signs and a dynamic model, that will specify its behavior and respond to our input... (Aarseth 2005)

This additionally defined dynamic model changes the picture fundamentally. Toying with a dragon inside a game is a play experience, and is hard to compare with reading a fantasy fiction story. In video games we face both fictional and simulational aspects together.

In the game design process, the game designer must select which aspects of the fictional world to actually implement in the game rules. The player then experiences the game as a two-way process where the fiction of the game cues him or her into understanding the rules of the game, and, again, the rules can cue the player to imagine the fictional world of the game. (Juul 2005, 163)

Videogames are not simply fictional worlds and computer simulations. Video games are first games, as they have a strong relationship with the traditional game form. The rules are one of the indispensable qualities of all types of games.

2.1.4 Videogames as Games

Jesper Juul's classical game model is a result of comparing of different game definitions. It incorporates the essential elements of both traditional and digital games.

A game is a rule-based system with a variable and quantifiable outcome, where different outcomes are assigned different values, the player exerts effort in order to influence the outcome, the player feels emotionally attached to the outcome, and the consequences of the activity are negotiable. (Juul 2005, 36)

This model perfectly summarizes what a game essentially is and also incorporates video games. And it also explains why games and computers work well together. Computers can easily handle game state and rules in memory, and compute the actions of players and changes in the game system.

Similar work has been done by Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman. Their definition is a little different but the essence is not so far from Juul's definition.

A game is a system in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules that results in a quantifiable outcome. (Salen and Zimmerman 2004, 80)

These two definitions show us the basic elements of games. But these definitions focus on only one dimension of our object and the process it creates. Perhaps Salen and Zimmerman's second definition is more useful for my approach.

Game design is the process by which a game designer creates a game, to be encountered by a player, from which meaningful play emerges. (Salen and Zimmerman 2004, 80)

This definition puts the game designer in the center of the game creation process. In this perspective the player is secondary, but that's understandable. Because here we are not talking about game play. In the following chapters I will keep this definition in mind when I present the concept of auteur theory and try to analyze the auteur-game relationship.

Returning to the classical game definition, is it possible for the creator of the game to create values outside the necessary information of the game universe? If we take backgammon as an example, what are the aesthetic values created by players' moves? Perhaps "challenge" or an

ingenious move is an aesthetic value created by the player? Or maybe the shape of the pieces or board shows us some aesthetic values, if they have a unique design? If we look at games so one-dimensionally, it looks impossible to discuss art and games as a meaningful relationship. We must take into account simulation, fiction and ludic dimensions together in order to understand artistic values of games.

2.2 Art and Games Relationship

2.2.1 Virtual Worlds as Art Galleries

MMOGs(Massively Multiplayer Online Games) provide a good example of all the various aspects of video games. They are computer simulations that create virtual environments and take advantage of the Internet to connect millions of players.

MMOGs are not only games, they also include virtual markets, virtual economies, chat rooms and many aspects of social life. In the games' fictional worlds we see avatars, NPCs(Non-Player Characters), buildings and objects. And as game software we use the interface through graphics, buttons, text and other visual material. We hear sound effects, voice chat and music. We read quest descriptions, accept missions, kill monsters, collect money and useful objects, build houses, conquer land etc.

In these game worlds the audio-visual experience is created by game artists. Much like an art gallery, when we travel through different spaces of the game world we encounter different works of different artists. We only know the name of the game not the artists but these works markedly effects play experience.

These 2D and 3D graphics, textures, models, texts, sounds and other materials are created by game artists, but can we say that these are art works? Can we separate the content from the game itself? Or do these artistic works promote the game to the level of "art"? If we consider games as virtual spaces our answer will be negative. Paintings alone don't transform art galleries to art work. It's not so easy to separate two game elements from each other, because the final experience is more than the sum of these elements.

If we talk in the terms of contemporary art, we can take focus on curator and view an exhibition as an artistic experience. Games are not simply empty art galleries waiting for the next exhibition. In this perspective we can compare games with exhibitions structured around a concept or idea. In particular, consider the rise of “art as a game” trends in the art world. After the wide use of interactive elements in art, the borders between game and art are not so solid anymore.

2.2.2 Virtual Works in Art Galleries

When we encounter the art works related to computer technologies or aided by computers, our identities as visitor, user, player and consumer melt together to create a new identity. Additionally, the visitors’ active participation turns into cooperative creation of meaning.

The YOU_ser exhibition in ZKM Karlsruhe presents a good example for this discussion:

In the twenty-first century, through the possibilities of the Internet, the beholder now also generates the content of artworks, which are exchanged and freely distributed online. The beholder becomes a user. Over the next one to two years, the exhibition *YOU_ser: The Century of the Consumer* will show the first contours of this new user-based art through changing art works and positions.
(Weibel)

Most of the works of YOU_ser exhibition do not operate without action from the visitor. Some of them require that the user write something, and then the work generates a specific output for each person. For example, choose eight pictures from a large photo collection and print them on paper: you will have your own exhibition in your pocket. Write a word using the keyboard and then watch as the installation includes images, videos and sound about the concept you input.

These kinds of works are now staples guests of art galleries. But what about video games? They are also featured in exhibitions. Last year, a game exhibition named Game On was presented to visitors in the London Science Museum.

From the PDP-1 of the 1960s to the latest must-have consoles *Game On* examines the technologies that have revolutionized the gaming world. The exhibition features the ten most influential consoles of all time plus more than 120 playable games so you’ll be transported back in time to play some of the defining games of

the last forty years and reminisce over the classic games of your childhood.
(London Science Museum)

This is not the first time games have been at the center of an exhibition. In 1989, the “Hot Circuits: A Video Arcade” exhibition at the American Museum of the Moving Image opened its doors to public. Forty seven games from *Pong* to *Pacman*, from *Space Invaders* to *Outrun* were presented in this exhibition. These games are the milestones of video game history.

Even if we put aside the cultural and historical value, these old games still have aesthetic value. The founding director of the museum, Rochelle Slovin, elaborates:

That super-rational element is reflected in the early games’ graphics, which we have a spare, modernist feel. This again become another point of interest because, considered as moving images, the aesthetic of these pioneering games are unique in digital media.

...

Video game programmers, fighting against the limitations of the chips’ tiny memory, were forced to compress their ideas. But that compression had a creative edge-it functioned much in the way a sonnet necessitates a compression of language and an economy of metaphor. (Slovin 2001, 139)

In this passage, we can begin to see how artistic expression emerges. Slovin demonstrates that the characteristics and limits of game medium can also engage creativity. But there is also nostalgia about technology. Exhibitions foreground the cultural value of games at the expense of the artistic value of each specific game. Arcade machines in an exhibition are presented like moving sculptures that you can touch and manipulate. But if we think again about the present, in which these old games are distributed over the Internet, it’s clear that video games as a medium do not necessarily depend on arcade consoles. Still, videogames are clearly accepted by major art institutions. But are there examples of video games as art, where not only the object, but also the play experience, creates an aesthetic feeling? Game play should be the essential part of these aesthetic experiences.

2.2.3 Art Games

Art Games, as the name implies, are games or game-like software created for artistic purposes. In his article in *Gamescenes*, Matteo Bittanti defines Art Games.

Art Games are videogames specifically created for artistic (i.e., not commercial) purposes. According to Tiffany Holmes (2003), an art game is “an interactive work, usually humorous, by a visual artist that does one or more of the following: challenges cultural stereotypes, offers meaningful social or historical critique, or tells a story in a novel manner”. She further elaborates: “To be more specific Art Games contain at least two of the following: a defined way to win or experience success in a mental challenge, passage through a series of levels (that may or may not be hierarchical), or a central character or icon that represents the player”. (Bittanti 2006, 7)

When we closely examine Art Games, we see that interaction is a core part of this software. But in most cases interaction is not the base of art value. These Art Games are playful, but the game rules are merely an afterthought. Other examples show an artistic use of game elements separated from game structure and gameplay. We can hardly consider Art Games as games, because most of the aspects presented are not compatible with the essentials of regular games.

Art Game designers juxtapose art and game, but the final result is either a game with artistic visuals, text and sound, or an art work with game-like elements. In the former situation we can ask what the difference is between commercial games and Art Games. An asteroid destruction game where the enemies are words is still an asteroid destruction game. The player concentrates to aim for the words when firing a missile. The rules and goals are essentially the same in every asteroid destruction game, and the information that the game presents fails to change the play experience. It's possible to play chess with different pieces, as the material or shape of the pieces doesn't affect the game.

The latter situation forces us to ask what reason there is to call these art works games. The use of famous sentences from Shakespeare on the screen doesn't suddenly transform a movie into literature. Similarly, the use of game objects, game characters and other elements of game worlds in art works does not necessarily change their classification.

Bittanti raises another question: Can commercial games be considered Art Games as well? His answer is yes. And I agree with him. His examples are *ICO* by Fumito Ueda, *Electroplankton* by Toshio Iwaii, *Rez* by Tetsuya Mizuguchi, and *Okami* by Clover Studio. The boundary between art games and commercial games is blurry. Here we can also add that Art Games have a commercial value in the art market. Thus the distinction between commercial purposes and artistic purposes melts away.

Bittanti suggests a new concept and definition: Game Art. He considers Art Games to be an expression of Game Art.

2.2.4 Game Art

Matteo Bittanti's definition of Game Art is different from the definitions of Art Games:

Game Art is any art in which digital games played a significant role in the creation, production, and/or display of the artwork. The resulting artwork can exist as a game, painting, photograph, sound, animation, video, performance or gallery installation. (Bittanti 2006, 9)

And here again I ask a question that I asked before, but with small changes: What is the reason to group these art works together with the game concept? Neither photograms nor digital techniques change the artistic classification of photography. Why think that using digital games as tools will turn photographs from photography into Game Art? If we take his example of *Unreal Art* by Alison Mealey, the use of game, gameplay and game tools to create digital drawings is ultimately still drawing. Take, for example, the people who use turntables or synthesizers to make music. We can view them as composers of this age, but we don't frame their creations as a new art universe outside music. Video art is related to cinema, but in this perspective, why not collect everything related to video technology under the umbrella concept of video art? "Video art" could include video games, video films, and gallery installations. And we could also add television programs, because they are created with a video recorder too.

The problem is comes from the circularity of the definition. It's possible to put any existing art work related with games inside this definition of Game Art. And if we take games as an example of resulting artwork, the reason to consider games as artwork becomes the significant role of games in the creation in any art discipline. But which one is the existing art discipline to create games then?

Here my purpose is not to propose an art discipline and suggest a name for this discipline. This endless discussion about art and game looks like an art form or game itself. My opinion is that games are popular art. I take Gramsci's definition of popular culture: a cultural

battlefield to over the hegemony. Looking through this window the distinction between art games and commercial games is useless.

2.2.5 Gameartist

Throughout this thesis, I will take gameartists, -or say authors- as the center of my approach. The name Game Art sounds fair to me, but I believe that games need a more beautiful name much like movies have “cinema”. And I have objections to the definition of Game Art. In the following chapters, when I discuss authors and authorship in games, I will try go in depth with the limits of the game-artist relationship.

All the definitions I mention here support the role of the artist in the field of games. But there are differences over the technique, resulting artwork and tools. My opinion is that discussing game as art without taking the game designer, programmer, game director, player and other participants into account ignores the essentials of games. Like films games are in fact collaborative works, and if we consider games to be popular art the first step is to see the daily routines of game making for what they are. Video games combine simulation, fiction and games together and the gameartist is the one who can speak the language of this medium.

3. AUTEUR AND AUTHORSHIP

In this chapter I will discuss author theory which has historically been used in regards to cinema, but which can also be useful in understanding popular art. I want to examine the rise and fall of the idea of the grand auteur as well as, the history of author theory and criticism. In the end I will suggest different uses of the author concept and authorship approaches.

3.1 A Brief History of The Auteur

3.1.1 The Origins of Art, Artist and Art Work

Before the Renaissance the artist was the carrier of meaning and truth. The origin of creativity was only God alone. The artists duty was to produce useful tools and objects to reflect divine power. The artwork was an object of craftsmanship. After the Renaissance the origin of creativity was transferred from God to the artist. The notion gained power that the artist had the divine gift of inspiration and genius.

We know that the earliest art works originated in the service of a ritual – first the magical, then the religious kind. It is significant that the existence of the work of art with reference to its aura is never entirely separated from its ritual function. In other words, the unique value of the “authentic” work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value. This ritualistic basis, however remote, is still recognizable as secularized ritual even in the most profane forms of the cult of beauty. The secular cult of beauty, developed during the Renaissance and prevailing for three centuries, clearly showed that ritualistic basis in its decline and the first deep crisis which befell it. (Benjamin, 1936)

In this era the artist was dependent upon the patronage of the ruling class. Workshops were opened with the support of the church or rich families. The Medici family in Florence is one of important example. Lorenzo de’ Medici patronized Florence’s leading artists: Leonardo Da Vinci, Sandro Botticelli, Michelangelo Buonarotti...

A division emerged between craftsman, or artisan who produced for consumption, and artist whose innate genius presented a potential challenge to the assumptions of the prevailing social order. However, the artist’s autonomy was limited by his/her dependence upon the patronage of the ruling class. (Cook 1985, 114)

With this change in the function of the artist, the function of the art object also changed. After the Renaissance the value of the exhibition becomes more dominant than magical or cult value. It's also understandable that exhibiting a painting is much easier than exhibiting a fresco or mosaic.

With the different methods of technical reproduction of a work of art, its fitness for exhibition increased to such an extent that the quantitative shift between its two poles (*cult value and exhibition value*)¹ turned into a qualitative transformation of its nature. This is comparable to the situation of the work of art in prehistoric times when, by the absolute emphasis on its cult value, it was, first and foremost, an instrument of magic. Only later did it come to be recognized as a work of art. In the same way today, by the absolute emphasis on its exhibition value the work of art becomes a creation with entirely new functions, among which the one we are conscious of, the artistic function, later may be recognized as incidental. This much is certain: today photography and the film are the most serviceable exemplifications of this new function. (Benjamin 1936)

With the effects of mechanical reproduction, capitalist economy and the market, the relationship between artist and society changed entirely: from direct dependence upon the patronage of a clearly defined group to the market. The artist was now free to sell the results of their labor to the highest bidder, but artistic genius resisted commercial art in the favor of artistic autonomy. Now the artistic function of art works is the target of never-ending controversy.

Both photography and cinema changed the way we understand art and the artist. The art work is a commodity which is governed by the laws of the market, but is also a part of popular culture. With the rise of film the debate emerged again in the form of auteur theory.

3.1.2 The Rise of the Auteur in Cinema

In France after the World War II, foreign films and especially American movies were made available to audiences. Cinematheque in Paris played an important role both in French cinema and also in the political climate of 1960's. The new 16mm lightweight cameras made filmmaking possible for small groups outside of the studio system. These cameras also made it possible to make films with low budgets. This opportunity had an important effect on French film criticism and filmmaking.

¹ Text in square brackets added by author

We can start to understand the history of the auteur in French cinema with Alexandre Astruc's manifesto-like article *The birth of a new avant-garde: la camera stylo*. "Camera-stylo" or "camera-pen" in English means that the director can express his/her thoughts using the camera like an author uses a pen. This expression is written in the new language of cinema and presents a world view, the author's philosophy of life.

Astruc's emphasis on la camera-stylo functioned as a critical intervention to break the then current model of cinema's reliance on literature as its primary source of storytelling. La camera-stylo should not merely be understood in direct correlation to the literary author's pen but as a metaphor for grasping the cinema as a "means of expression, just as all the arts have been before it" (Gerstner 2003, 6)

Later the authors of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, one of the most important cinema journals in France, responded to this call. They formed "politique des auteurs": the policy of the author.

Before politique des auteurs cinema traditional film criticism assumed that the industrial nature of film production prevented a single authorial voice making itself heard in film. For some critics cinema could not be regarded as art: a commodity product at the service of the laws of the capitalist economy, it could do no more than reflect the ideology of the capitalist system. For others, cinema only achieved the status of art when a film or body of films could be seen as the expression of certain intentions carried out by an individual person, who was an artist by virtue of his or her struggle against the industrial system of production to attain control of that process of production in order to Express his or her personal concerns. (Cook 1985, 114)

Andre Basin, one of the leading figures in French film criticism, was mostly concerned with the reality-cinema relationship. He believed that "the film-maker should act as a passive recorder of the real world than manipulator of it" (Cook 1985, 119) He resisted the idea of the director as the primary organizing source of meaning in film. One of his major concerns is the reality question in cinema.

Bazin preferred deep focus photography and the long take to montage because they preserved the natural continuity of reality rather than cutting it up and analyzing it. (Hess 1974)

These principals are formed "mise-en-scène". Mise-en-scène is basically the staging of events for the camera. But the term is also used to mean the formal organization of films. The term

originally comes from the theatre. For the Cahiers, mise-en-scène represented a shared interest in form and language in cinema. Bazin differed on the use of mise-en-scène from the later Cahiers like Truffaut and Godard.

Bazin's emphasis on the transparency of cinematic language was at odds with many Cahiers critics' interest in the possibility of manipulating the language of cinema to express the director's personal concerns. Bazin's argument comes close to eliminating human intervention in the process of production altogether. (Cook 1985, 120)

Because Cahiers believed that the individual artist is the primary source of meaning in film, they made a distinction between auteurs and metteur-en-scène. The true auteur is not only an expert about his/her technical device. True auteur also shows artistic creativity and present a coherent world view, manifesting an individual style in his/her films. Metteur-en-scène is a director who only knows and uses the cinematic language, but presents a meaning that is not his/her own.

The young Cahiers created a critical shift in politique des auteurs. Truffaut attacked "quality cinema", French commercial cinema in the influence of psychological realism. His polemical article "A certain tendency of the French Cinema" published in *Cahiers du Cinéma* had a major influence on French Cinema and led to the birth of New Wave. He criticized two scriptwriters, Jean Aurence and Pierre Bost, because of their understanding of adaptations.

In fact much of Truffaut's subsequent writing about the French cinema consisted of vitriolic attacks on the established commercial cinema in France. Truffaut accused it most of all of lacking ambition, stifling inspiration, keeping its best directors un- and underemployed, and, naturally enough, preventing young men from making films until they had served a long and deadening apprenticeship in the industry. Thus we have seen that Truffaut's analysis of French film history was carefully contrived to divide the French cinema into two warring camps—a conventional "Tradition of Quality" having "psychological realism" as its basic approach to art (as a formula, at its worst) and the little appreciated *cinéma d'auteurs*. At the outset of his article, Truffaut makes Jean Aurenche and Pierre Bost the main representatives of the "Tradition of Quality"; the main body of "Une Certaine Tendence du Cinema Français" is a through going attack on these scriptwriters' manner of working and on their view of the world. (Hess 1974)

The reason for this attack was to take the control of cinematic production, and get people to acknowledge the auteurs of the older cinema, thereby completing the development of auteur

cinema. Truffaut and other young Cahiers saw themselves as the heirs of this tradition. Cinema belongs to directors, not to producers or scriptwriters. In order to do this Truffaut divided French Cinema to two camps: quality cinema and auteur cinema.

After the polemic writings of the Cahiers, certain historical, technological and economic factors enabled young filmmakers to influence French Cinema. The New Wave movement rose and the industry opened its doors to experimentation and expression of personal concerns.

Jean Luc Godard, like Truffaut, was both a critic as a member of *Cahiers du Cinéma* and a young director in New-Wave movement. His works are perhaps the most well-respected examples in cinema on account of his use of film language. In contrast to most New Wave directors, he tried to use all the possibilities of cinema -both mise-en-scène and montage theory. He created new concepts and topics with his films more than he did in his writings.

Peter Wollen sees Godard as the creator of “counter-cinema” and presents seven sins and seven cardinal virtues which were used by Godard.

Narrative Transitivity – Narrative Intransitivity: Episodic construction against one shot following another

Identification – Estrangement: Direct address vs. emotional involvement

Transparency – Foregrounding: Visible mechanics vs. pure representation

Single diegesis – Multiple Diegesis: Different codes and channels vs. homogeneous world

Closure – Aperture: Quotation, open-endedness vs. self contained-object, harmonized within its own bounds

Pleasure – Un-pleasure: Provocation against entertainment

Fiction – Reality: Real life vs. acting a story (Wollen 1982, 79)

These juxtapositions were the results of Godard’s search to break the Hollywood rules of cinema. As an auteur, Godard set the rules of contemporary cinema and become a living legend.

It's also interesting to think that Godard, one of the creators of the idea of the auteur, was also responsible for destroying the concepts of the auteur. Wollen presents this idea when he examines results of intertextuality and quotations on Godard's film.

The film can no longer be seen as a discourse with a single subject, the filmmaker/auteur. Just as there are multiplicity of narrative worlds, so too there are a multiplicity of speaking voices.

...

In orthodox logic and linguistics, context is only important as an arbiter between alternative meanings (amphibologies, as they are called in logic). In Godard's films, the opposite process is at work: juxtaposition and re-contextualization of discourses, leads not to a separating-out of meanings, but to a confrontation. (Wollen 1982, 86-87)

The film-author association and author discourse leads us to the potential result of film-discourse association. Is the "author" still a viable concept? Is the author an invisible hand which organizes the meaning or is just a misinterpretation of a text? Later I will discuss the possibilities of the auteur, both in a practical and theoretical context. But, first I will follow the routes of auteur in different countries.

3.1.3 Expansion Period: Auteur Theory of Andrew Sarris and British Free Cinema

The 1960's American cinema had many similarities to French cinema. American film criticism was under the influence of social realism. Hollywood relied mostly on entertainment films and these films were not taken seriously by critics. Old movies were shown on television and this made it possible for many people to review earlier works. From a critical perspective, American cinema was on the decline and like in the New Wave movement, young filmmakers formed independent studios to oppose this decline with their own filmmaking practices.

Andrew Sarris translated the *politique des auteurs* into English and transferred auteur theory to the USA. Sarris had contact with the New Wave movement and he had spent a year in Paris in 1962, watching Hollywood films in Cinematheque. His appropriation of auteur theory reframed Hollywood films as worthy of critical consideration. He also popularized the use of the director as a central criterion of value. (Cook 1985, 137)

Sarris sought to bring critical analysis to Hollywood cinema against the backdrop of critical condenscension. To do this he identified the film's director(following the Cahiers's agenda of auteurist criticism) as the criterion of value. Sarris opposed the more contemporary practice of film criticism that relied on a review of the star, screenwriter, and/or producer. To counter this, he established a set of evaluative criteria upon which he determined the worth of the American director as auteur. (Gerstner 2003, 8)

Andrew Sarris presented the idea of "levels" which is useful for categorizing directors. At the top level technical competency is the director's ability to use film language. At the middle level, we identify personal style, a common aesthetic that unifies a director's body of work. And at the nucleus stands interior meaning, a personal view of world which the author presents in her films. The true auteur must have all three of this qualities.

The three premises of the auteur theory may be visualized as three concentric circles: the outer circle as technique; the middle circle, personal style; and the inner circle, interior meaning. The corresponding roles of the director may be designated as those of a technician, a stylist, and an auteur. (Sarris 1962, 563)

In his book *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions*, Sarris makes a categorization of directors. This categorization is used to distinguish the true auteurs from ordinary directors. In his terms "pantheon directors" are the best directors. He presents a kind of hierarchy of these director groups, with pantheon directors like Hitchcock sitting on top. (Sarris 1968)

Sarris' work is valuable for educational purposes film reviews, but as a theoretical method the problems are larger than the benefits. Locating meaning in the art work and not the interpreter creates a never-changing and therefore problematic interior meaning. It assigns the critic the most important role of solving this mystery. But in truth the work of the critic is very subjective. This creates a value system around commercial cinema, in which some films with so-called "authors" are overrated for increased profits. A theory that was originally formed against the studio system suddenly becomes a tool to aid the Hollywood industry.

One critical opposition comes from Pauline Kael. According to Kael, Sarris lacks rigor and is undisciplined. She suggests that "auteur theory is an attempt by adult males to justify staying inside the small range of experience of their boyhood and adolescence." (Gerstner 2003, 9)

In England the debate over auteur theory is somewhat different than in France. Cinema criticism in is largely England based on literary criticism and social realism. Critics in England already accepted the importance of the author in art cinema. But this kind of authorship is seen as a kind of cultural resistance against industrial modes of production related to entertainment rather than art itself. This tradition, challenged by debate over popular culture and *Movie* magazine writers, attacked the status quo in British cinema for its lack of style and imagination. But unlike the young filmmakers of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, *Movie* critics are not filmmakers. This situation led to the domination of British film production by the American industry. However, one good effect was getting people to consider cinema as a serious field of study on the level of other arts.

The Free Cinema movement appeared in parallel with British author criticism. *Movie* critics criticized Free Cinema with their polemics. This relationship is different than the relationship between *Cahiers du Cinéma* and New Wave, because *Cahiers*' polemic aided New Wave. *Movie* argued that the critical tradition in England ignored the questions of form. The other film magazines *Sequence* and *Sight and Sound* also tried to oppose the popular values of British cinema. But they supported the social realism tradition and Free Cinema was under the influence of this tradition. Writers of these magazines defended the idea that "meaning was an essence which pre-existed the film, brought to life by the director with the minimum of interference." For *Movie* critics, "meaning was inseparable from form and that only through close attention to the cinematic language specific to each film could meaning be deduced, constructed after the event." (Cook 1985, 147)

3.1.4 The Beginning of The End: Auteur-Structuralism

After the impact of "structuralism" on the academy, the auteur debate entered a new phase. Understanding society, culture and history as a result of structural relationships threatens the idea of the auteur. According to structuralism it is language that makes people conscious of their individuality. Language transforms individuals into "subjects". But like a text, the subject is a structure, a result of textual codes.

If an individual is also a structure, a result of the interaction of historical forces, how can we speak about the personality of the auteur expressing meaning in film? In the structuralist view,

meaning is constructed by structures, and the author is only one of these structures. This decentralization of self signaled the beginning of the end for auteur theory.

Returning to the questions of authorship, while traditional criticism envisages the work of art as the expression of the intentions of the individual artist containing an identity which can be directly recovered by the critic, structuralism proposes that the 'author', far from controlling the meaning of the work, is an effect of the interaction of different texts, or discourses, which have their own autonomy. (Cook 1985, 166)

In film criticism, structuralism changed the common understanding of the auteur. Rather than a self-expressing individual, the auteur was transformed into a code, or one of the structures in a given text. According to Wollen, the auteur was still the dominant code, but not the originating source of the work. The relationships between structural elements shape the author's view of the world. Wollen reads the films of Godard as a clash of world-views.

This approach, as a combination of auteur theory and structuralism, is called "auteur-structuralism" or "cinestructuralism". Both structuralism and cinestructuralism have their own problems. In structuralism, structures are seen as never-changing, outside of time and space. And in cinestructuralism still author code is the dominant code in text. The incompatibility of two approaches produces contradictions in the arguments. Author theory in principle put forward the subject is the producer of unique or distinct meaning. Structuralism founded upon the interchangeability of subjects in the production of meaning. Besides, paradoxically "good" and "bad" director categories still exist in auteur-structuralist texts. In structuralist approach this distinction is meaningless.

3.1.5 The Theoretical Death of Grand Auteur

After structuralism the idea of the grand author almost lost popularity. The theories that focus on the reader shifted the locus of meaning from the intentions of author to the interpretations of reader. Structuralists describe authorial intentions as an interference of different discourses. "Post-structuralist" strategies established a new critical position: the reader of the text becomes its writer. Not only in literary criticism, but also in media studies, this kind of approach gained prestige.

One of the most important works in this field is “Death to the Author” by Roland Barthes. The shift from structuralism to post-structuralism brought with it a complex and political consideration of the author. For Barthes, assigning a text an author closes the writing and imposes limits. Reader consumption is also a production. The meaning of a text is not the past or the future, but here and now. The text is interpreted, and its internal meaning disappears when the reader reads the text. The subjective position of the reader creates the meaning of the text. The author is merely a construction of the reader. (Steiger 2003, 45)

Michel Foucault also influenced post-structuralist approaches with his essay “What is an Author?”. Foucault defines “author-function” as a strategy for investigating “how the discourse of authorship is produced and produces meaning.” (Gerstner 2003, 14)

He described the process of author-function as:

(1) pointing by name to a person creates designation; (2) the designation permits categorizing (a method by which to group texts and hence useful to criticism or to capitalist profit making); (3) the categorizing make (and likely will) produce status in our culture; and (4) the categorizing infers meaning on the texts: “revealing, or at least characterizing, its mode of being”. (Steiger 2003, 28)

This categorization opens the possibility to punish or reward the individual, and is useful for discipline. It suggests that a discourse of human agency is useful for capitalism. Unlike Barthes, Foucault rejected the death of the author. But he also rejected “constructing the empirical character of the author into a transcendental anonymity”. (Steiger 2003, 29) There are other writers like Derrida, Deleuze and Baudrillard, who shares the post-structuralist strategies and discuss authorship, but further discussion of the author in post-structuralist terms is outside the scope of this thesis.

In this chapter, I tried to summarizing historical change in the understanding of the author and authorship, mostly in terms of film studies, but also with regards to art and culture. Now, I will summarize the different approaches towards the author in order to make it clear that auteur theory is a political strategy, a philosophy more than a methodology.

3.2 Authorship Approaches

In the case of “authorship as origin” (Steiger 2003, 30) the author is a free agent and the message is an expression of the author. Writing is the flow of the author’s morality onto the page. The author’s biography is useful during evaluation.

“Authorship as personality” (Steiger 2003, 33) has a difference from the former one. The difference is that there is an opening for problems in free agency. The author is not a fully conscious agent but ideally, a coherent personality. Auteur theory is an authorship as personality and auteur debate in France can be seen through this lens. The author is the creative source of the meaning.

“Authorship as sociology of production” is a sociological approach for understanding the modes of production. Authors are workers and they produce messages as a consequence of their production experience. There are both “liberal” and “critical” versions of this approach. Based on Marxist literature, the critical version examines the production and the role of the worker in the production, which has “features such as division of skills, routinized work sequences, and hierarchies of power by which the mode extracts surplus value from the employees.” (Steiger 2003, 41)

For “authorship as signature” (Steiger 2003, 43) approach, author is a kind of signature in the text, known by repetition among the various texts signed by a historical person. The author is a structure within discourses. Author-structuralism is one example of this kind of approach.

“Authorship as reading strategy” (Steiger 2003, 45) focuses on text. The reader produces a representation of the author during interpretation. This is simply a reading strategy, and there is no need to discuss agency and biography from this point of view. This kind of approach tries to solve the problems of author-structuralism- that is, the effect of the individual subject on the forced importance of author-code.

In “authorship as site of discourses” (Steiger 2003, 46), the author is neither an individual nor an agent, but rather a site of discourses. This entity has a historical body without agency, continuity or significance. The author is a tablet upon which and through which culture writes its historical discourses. Post-structuralist approaches can be categorized under this approach.

“Authorship as technique of the self” (Steiger 2003, 49) suggests that authorship can be viewed as a technique of self, creating and recreating the individual as an acting subject within history.

Yet the message is produced from circumstances in which the individual conceives a self as able to act. The individual believe the author-function, and this works because the discursive structure (our culture) in which the individual acts also believes in. (Steiger 2003, 50)

This kind of approach has its origins in Foucault’s writings. The relationship between power and resistance is an important figure for Foucault: “where there is power, there is resistance”. This theory inspired feminist and queer cinema. Feminist filmmaking is thereby framed as an author practice, not in terms of the individual author, but in terms of author as technique of the self.

3.3 The Use Of Author in Cinema

One of the uses of author concept is “author studies”. Author studies started a discussion about the author concept and authorship. This study is mostly useful for educational and academic purposes. Thinking about the role of the author is fruitful for understanding how films are made and how they are perceived. Author studies comprises an important part of the history of film studies. New ways to understand films are often born in the heat of debate over inner meaning and authorial intentions. Author studies is also useful for understanding author cinema.

The other us of author concept is “auteur criticism”. In one way auteur criticism is a critical method for evaluating directors. In another way, auteur criticism presents the style, world view, intentions and other characteristics of an author in his/her films. The former approach acts as a supportive force for industry resulting in the use of author as brand name. The latter approach is a useful method for analyzing the differences of cinemas other than Hollywood. Author studies and auteur criticism are examples of the use of the author concept from the receiver side.

“Author polemic” is a tool for film-maker movements against the actual tendencies of a certain cinema, more than a single critical method. This tool was most famously used by Truffaut and other Cahiers to attack the idea of “Quality Cinema” in France, and to dethrone scenarists in the favor of directors. Following this movement, young film-makers found a chance to experiment and develop different styles.

“Author as Brand Name” is a commercial use. Hollywood and other major film industries used the author’s name for commercial reasons. The name of an author functions as a brand name, a proof of quality in the eye of the spectator. The name hints at the genre, style, theme and other aspects of a film.

3.4 The Journey of the Theory

Auteur theory as an aesthetic approach, when combined with the essentials of game medium can result with a consistent and fruitful method. In the field of games, the polemical power of the theory can start new debates on aesthetic qualities of games. After Truffaut wrote his article “A Certain Tendency in French Cinema” his effort resulted with the rebirth of cinema. Why not polemics on games get the same result? Critical debates on art are the engine of creativity.

The analysis methods of auteur theory, as a form of criticism can be a supportive force for aesthetic experiments. A rich literature on game auteurs can affect both design and analysis. For educational purposes, the examples of the authorial use of game elements can be fruitful.

In next chapter I will try to conceptualize auteur theory to use in the field of games. I will discuss the concepts of auteur theory like mise-en-scene, editing, auteur, reality, technical competence, individual style, inner meaning, “authorship as a brand name” etc. Instead of directly translating these concepts, I will adapt them with the help of game literature. My effort will be a two sided elaboration. Both the concepts of auteur theory and theories related to authors in the fields of game will be on focus. Some of the concepts already transferred to game studies. For instance Wollen’s Godard analysis on counter-cinema is used by Alexander Galloway. To understand and elaborate the reconceptualization of auteur theory we should know the background of this theory and its development.

4. THE GAME AUTEUR

In this chapter I will try to bridge author theory with game studies. First, I will discuss the possibilities and key concepts of auteur theory and criticism, the adaptability and applicability of this theory to games, the unique features of games that create obstacles to a theory from the field of film studies, the problems of the theory when applied to different game genres, and the limits of the auteur concept. Then, I will try to contribute the existing literature around the auteur concept.

4.1 A Certain Tendency in Game Industry

These days, a thesis on auteur theory is not so charming in the academy. Both film and game studies are distant to such approaches. There are many reasons for the partial dismissal of the auteur concept. The theoretical and practical death of the author was announced a while ago, and a majority of researchers identify both films and games as texts. But still, some members of the academy believe that movies are to be viewed and games are to be played. The translation of these ideas to game studies has been termed ludology. “Playing analysis” (Aarseth 2003, 5) is an answer to approaches that consider games as texts. Games are not only texts to be interpreted, but also to be explored, configured and sometimes totally redesigned by players. A “non playing analysis” denies the possibilities of different understandings in game play and partly reduces the play experience to a visual experience. I want to keep my distance from such approaches when I try to establish a theory which has its grounds in film and literature criticism. Auteur criticism is meant to be a method of playing criticism rather than a method of non-playing criticism.

Auteur theory is partially dismissed, but there are no grounds to say that the author is dead. Author exists but his/her intentions are not the only variable in meaning making. Meaning is also produced by the choices of the player, with effort. Different players show different behaviors in-game, different choices end in different situations, and the values attached to in-game events and players’ intentions construct the final meaning. Multiple goals suit different player types and some players create their own sub-goals. Socializing, having fun or making money are some common motives of players. The possibilities of a game and the demands of players are intertwined, so the game industry tries to suit most of its players. I say “most of” because some player desires are denied due to profit making mechanisms. Critical players are

considered a minority and they are driven outside the boundaries of the entertainment world. Furthermore, critical designers are either marginalized or silenced when they find themselves in the center of a maelstrom of profitable ideas. These critical intentions of designers and players are replaced by an uncertain meaning, but here I define them as the intentions of the game industry. This situation creates a certain tendency in contemporary video games. Auteur criticism has to pay attention to these mechanisms and to try and find the cracks in the “perfect looking” system.

When I say a “certain tendency”, I should give a description. The categorization of games is defined by the industry. Game genres are useful for producing and selling games with specific qualities, and also for helping players easily find games that fit their interests -sport games for sport lovers, card games for gamblers, action games for military buffs, RPGs for identity searchers. These genres are useless for scientific purposes and also limit the creative possibilities of this medium. Especially some genres like sport and card games tend to be worthless. Designing or producing a video game as an imitation of an existing game targets the potential fans or players of the existing game and guarantees potential market demand. The rules and goals of existing games are clearly defined and can be easily digitalized, and game state can be simulated with enough computational power. And also, games simulate not the reality of a sporting event but its representation, a simulation of the TV broadcast of a game. There is little room for issues related to doping, family matters, the paparazzi, stress, or the problems of threat of injury. In these games the question of reality seems like it has been thrown in the garbage. Auteur theory has polemical potential in these situations.

Besides with the introduction of first person shooter’s (FPS) and other three-dimensional games the reality problem is substituted with pictorial reality. Realistic games are viewed as the result of realistic physics. “Engine” and “AI” are two favorite terms of this discussion. More frame per second and polygon counts determine the level of reality. Perhaps a slightly different can be seen in historical games. A realistic war game contains sound effects taken from real weapons, and 3D models of war machines, and places are taken from war history. These are very specific ways for understanding reality. In this perspective reality is bound to pixel, polygon or frame counts. But numbers like body counts are less important than human values. Auteur theory heralds a logical return to useful debate over social reality and truth.

The game industry has relied upon technological innovations. Since the beginning, the development of computers has influenced the development of games. Early games are the fruits of funny experiments of scientists. Willy Higinbotham converted an oscilloscope to a pinball game in Brookhaven National Laboratory and Steve Russel developed *Spacewar* in MIT for mainframes (Malliet and Meyer 2005, 23). Later innovations are followed by creative efforts of designers. Expansions of the game form resulted in different game types. Game types are categorized as game genres. Genre creation and creativity using genre codes are hallmark qualities of smart designers. But after the industrialization of games, creativity lost its commercial importance. Or we can say that creativity transformed was into an engineering problem. The shift from 2D images to 3D virtual worlds, from single-player or two-player games to MMOs, created beneficial but problematic possibilities regarding creativity. Auteur theory can be used to understand games in different ways changing the foci of games from technological development to artistic creativity.

Art games are a marginal part of the game universe. There is an inverse relationship between their artistic value and ludic value. Trying to balance these two variables is not so fruitful. And also, the distinction between art and commodity is not so clear. Are commercial games so far from the space of art? In the first chapter I tried to present an introduction to the artistic value and possibilities of commercial games. Perhaps, taking into consideration the aesthetic beauty of the machine, the mechanics of games employ a neo-futurist approach. But games are not only machines, they create also audiovisual experiences. Auteur theory can be used to examine commercial games as art works.

Games are made by game workers. This is a double-sided identity. On one hand game workers are the under control of an industry driven by the mechanisms of capitalism, which creates surplus value based on exploitation of work power. On the other hand they have creative powers over the reproduction of a hegemony which is limited and manipulated. The game worker, like other workers, is both the subject and the object of history. In the division of labor, he/she is both the creator the social and cultural reality, and also the result of the collective work of humanity. Auteur theory can transform this approach to an advantage when analyzing game production mechanisms.

And as in other domains in world history, there is little room for women in game history. Nearly all of the known names are male designers and producers. We can name some famous

female players only if we try hard. Gender and race issues are not hot topics in existing commercial games. Recently women authors like Agnes Varda, Márta Mészáros, Dorothy Arzner etc. have been taken more seriously in film studies. Game studies shouldn't stand as an exception or find excuses against feminist approaches. Auteur theory can be used to study female game authors and their perspective on women in games.

4.2 Reconceptualization of the Auteur

Game studies is very broad and author studies is not so fixed a discipline. This leads innumerable ways of studying games. Some ways are beneficial and some are problematic. If we consider the discussions around narrative, the nature of game, roles of game makers, capabilities of the game designer, the reality-game relationship, player mods and player behaviors, we will realize that a full modernization of auteur theory for games is certainly outside the scope of this thesis. Here I will try to collect necessary elements related to authors in the field of games to establish a new understanding of games.

The author question is not new in game studies. The author's existence, role, tools, capabilities and competencies and the aesthetic variables of games are questioned by Espen Aarseth, Gonzalo Frasca, Janet Murray and Alexander Galloway. Work from these authors look at different aspects of the game author. Here I will reconceptualize the theory in the light of these efforts, and also add my own suggestions. I will also add my interpretation of related theories from an auteur perspective.

Auteur theory in game studies should examine at the different specifications of a series of games by one author. There is no one magical formula for every game because the nature of video game allows us to see them as real life, software, representation, simulation, the disguise of another art or just a simple game like tic-tac-toe. Different starting points can be established, but in the case of the search for the author, the authors style, technique, personality, genre choices, world view and perspective on games are all important.

But what are the capabilities of an ideal game author? If we try to find the clues of a distinct style, a master technique, and intentions in a game where should we look first? For cinema, the answers are already given: the choices in mise-en-scène and editing create difference between directors. Film form has already reached maturity, but game form is still so young, and new theories and new dimensions are open. Looking at different faces of games leads to

different perspectives. Considering video games as digital theatre brings us discussions about stage, characters, role playing, and directing. Treating games as interactive stories places narrative, plot, storytelling, multiple endings, dramatic structure, and hypertext methods into scope. Comparing games with movies underscores qualities like time, space, acting, and movement in frame. But we can identify 3D models as virtual sculpture, or in-game buildings as architecture. These kinds of approaches view games as an additive medium, where game-making is a mix of different arts.

What kind of qualities make games different from other media? Videogames also have different mechanics because their origin lies in conventional games. Rules, goals, components, interface and other elements of videogames present a second layer. Game-making is a different thing than storytelling and the game author has to learn these unique qualities of games.

If we think in terms of auteur theory, a game author's main characteristic is the use of games as an expressive medium. Like the camera-stylo(camera-pen) of Alexander Austruc, the game auteur uses the game-stylo to write his/her expressions using certain aspects of games. These require a mastership of games also creative control is also a necessity. This kind of control is only possible for well known game designers, small art collectives, genius programmers, and indy game-makers...

4.3 Game Auteur as Individual

Technical competence, individual style and inner meaning are the three circles of Andrew Sarris' auteur theory. These can be translated to suggest that the game auteur is a competent designer and a creative game world-builder with a critical world view reflected in his/her games. A game auteur should create a series of games to be taken seriously, and also only under these conditions can we criticize his/her body of work. Alternatively it's possible that the model auteur is a genre creator or genre breaker.

A different starting point is set by Espen Aarseth in his work *The Game and its Name: What is a Game Auteur?* His approach is an application of the hypothetical category of game auteurs as a critical perspective on games. I would rather create a critical methodology for

understanding games than hype a few selected game authors. Because of this motivation I want to criticize the criteria for auteurs according to Sarris and Aarseth.

Aarseth presents three criteria for game the auteur.

They must have made such an impression that the game is associated with their name, rather than that of the Development Company or publisher. (Aarseth 2004, 262)

This first criterion brings to mind the “auteur as brand name” concept. This gives the impression that the association can originate from commercial strategies. Commercial strategies are useful for the game industry, but for a critical approach we should search for authors who earned their reputation with his/her work, not the names that are used for commodity value or as a marketing trick. Also an architect can be an author with building many exciting buildings attached to his/her name only.

They must have made more than one game. (Aarseth 2004, 263)

This is a an acceptable and logical idea not because the quantity of games made is important but because auteurs only when we examine the body of work as a whole, comparing characteristics one by one, can we point out repetition and changes over time, and trace obsessions. In this way, we can find dominant themes and similar contexts.

The games must stand out and be different from standart genre games. (Aarseth 2004, 263)

Most film authors are creators of new genres, but this is not a necessary criterion. The game author like New Wave authors can use and break genre code. New techniques and innovations are the engine of genre creation, but these are not the primary skills of an artist.

The other question is which qualities will make a game will stand out: story, content, mechanics, game play or something else? Without answering these questions anyone or no one can be considered an author.

For Sarris technical competence is the key to good directing. Decor, editing, music, costumes, photography and other cinematographic qualities are necessary, but good directing is the

central concern. This requires a responsibility for all the aesthetic variables. Everything on the screen must work together like a running engine. This requires master knowledge of the material. Good game designers and programmers need these qualities too. But for the game author mastery is more than creating a realistic 3D engine or a fast algorithm to solve computational problems. Game authors should have a keen understanding of the mechanisms that create game play experience.

Scientific truth is debated in many disciplines and science and philosophy have many different approaches to truth, objectivity and validity. But in the end, science and art are two very different subjects. Art is a highly subjective effort and art criticism is always a subjective matter. The existence of the auteur or the validity of the author can't be justified by finding a scientific truth in games or around authors. Sense, foresight, obsessions and motivations can't be separated from art and criticism. And also, given historical conditions, never-changing universal categories for auteurs are impossible. A methodology for promoting game-makers to the pantheon of game auteurs is problematic. Even so, these reasons do not invalidate the existence of useful methods for criticizing games in the auteur perspective.

The approach I choose here, then, is not to accept or reject the hypothetical category of game authors a priori, but to see what happens when we try to apply it as a critical perspective on games. (Aarseth 2004, 261)

A critical method should begin to work with this necessary acceptance but without a useful method the application of auteur theory to games is hardly beneficial. Our search for the auteur can start from game makers or the games themselves. Are the auteurs "the big names in games"? Or are they objects and subjects of game history and game art that unite a game language with critical methodology? The auteur is an abstraction at some level, but still has effects in reality. We need some basic arguments on controversial subjects like reality and ideology, the relationship between art and game and art and culture, and players' role in games.

Here I want to start with some of the names that Aarseth chooses from Hall of Fame of the Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences: Sid Meier, Shigeru Miyamoto, Hironobu Sakaguchi, John Carmack, Will Wright, Yu Suzuki and Peter Molyneux. Rather than clarifying the positions of these designers', producers' and programmers' positions within the

industry, I want to show that there are other qualities that should be examined in an authorial perspective.

Chosen arbitrarily from this list, Carmack is the genius programmer responsible for the *Commander Keen* series and best selling FPS games like *Wolfenstein 3D*, *Doom* and *Quake*. Certainly, he is the creator of some of the most innovative ideas in the industry.

“Carmack however, is in special position; he is a brilliant designer of game engines, and might be compared to a camera-making, technical genius rather than to a master photographer, filmmaker or author. The innovative games he produced, *Wolfenstein 3D* (1992) and *Doom* (1993) were also the creation of his partner John Romero, a Dionysian complement to Carmack’s Apollonian programmer intellect.” (Aarseth 2004, 263)

John Romero is the lead designer of many titles like *Wolfenstein 3D*, *Quake*, and *Daikatana*. And Tom Hall is the designer of the *Commander Keen* series and *Anachronox*. Who is the creative engine behind these projects? For *Commander Keen*, Hall or Carmack? For *Doom*, Romero or Carmack? Discussing roles and positions or technical knowledge is not sufficient for finding auteurs in games. Examples for analysis have to suit our purposes.

Hall is the creator of the Keen character and the designer of the Keen universe. But here we see Carmack and Romero can’t be easily separated from the creative ideas that lead to success *Commander Keen* series:

Carmack and I had stayed up late one night making a funny joke demo of Super Mario Bros 3 and putting it on Romero's desk in the morning. This led to a demo for Nintendo, which got to the head table but was rejected, so we decided to do our own thing. I went off to my office and in 15 minutes came up with the story of *Commander Keen*, which Scott was dying to publish, and so he did! (Hall 2006)

Calling Carmack, Hall or Romero auteurs is simply too easy and too difficult at the same time. This collaboration can be considered as collective authorship. For small teams it’s easy to decide every detail together, step by step. But the artistic value of the resulting game is still controversial. Do we compare the final product with the beauty of a machine, or measure it as expression through a medium? It’s also possible to analyze the game in the terms of game structures, or interpret it with our very subjective emotions.

Also, comparison is a problematic solution for these games. The comparison of themes, stories, ideologies, characters, design, game play and programming techniques can result in different authorial ideas. Commander Keen is the grandson of BJ Blazkowicz, (Allen 2003) the allied soldier hero in *Wolfenstein 3D*. Blazkowicz saves the world, Keen saves the universe. Is the author to be found somewhere in this vague domain of storyline? The story is the typical “save the world” scenario, and surely there is no artistic genius in the storyline alone. And the ideology of the game, US soldier in Europe, or in the larger universe and now in Iraq to save Iraqi people from their evil Emperor, surely represents a specific world view.

The change in programming infrastructure from *Commander Keen* to *Quake* is merely the development of game engine technology. But if we search for the auteur in game and level design, we have to play this games level by level, looking at all the elements and their relations, positions, and how they direct players.

Romero designed many levels of *Quake*. But who is responsible for the gothic sci-fi feeling found in *Wolfenstein 3D* and *Doom*? Also claustrophobia is a dominant aesthetic in these games, but this aesthetic its the roots in maze games. Developing a superb 3D engine for action games is a programming innovation, but choosing a particular technology to create emotions and using it for narrative reasons is an artistic choice. In take case of id Software, the central innovation is largely technical.

Shigeru Miyamoto is the creator of the *Mario* and *Zelda* series. The design of these games is more at the foreground when we compare them to the *Doom* and *Quake* series. But Miyamoto is a producer and director in many titles, and as such “his relationship to his creations is more like that of a Disney than a Truffaut.” (Aarseth 2004, 265) He is a star of the game industry, but everything he has done has been geared towards the game industry. It can be hard to find any clues of his personality and world view in his games. Frasca wrote an article about sexuality in *Super Princess Peach*, a sequel in the *Mario* series. The game reverses the typical roles, as Princess Peach has to rescue Mario using her emotional powers.

On an incidental note, I would like to mention that a few months after *Super Princess Peach* was released, Nintendo launched another Mario platform game for the Nintendo DS: *New Super Mario Bros*. This game featured new superpowers for Mario, too. Rather than using his emotions, Mario was able to shift sizes, from tiny to enormous. I never thought about this until I wrote this

article but Nintendo's choice of female and male superpowers for both games in nothing short of hilarious. One game defines women as emotionally unstable while the other one presents boys as being obsessed with their size. Why is Mario so worried about how big he can be? Who is he trying to impress? Has Luigi been recently dating somebody? Are the mushrooms an aphrodisiac? What is Yoshi's gender? I always thought Yoshi was male but he lays eggs. As you can see, sex in the Mario world can be quite a complex topic. That is why Nintendo should try not to oversimplify it with stereotypes. (Frasca 2006)

Analyzing *Mario* games, at least in the perspective of gender roles, but also as reflections of Miyamoto's personality can reveal Miyamoto's author status. Auteurs are auteurs not because of their reputation, but because of their choices and solutions in game design.

But are we looking for the Truffauts and Godards or the Hitchcocks of games? Hitchcock is a founding father of auteur cinema. Truffaut is a follower of this tradition, one of the heirs of auteur cinema. But Godard is something different Surely he can called an auteur, but he is also the creator of counter-cinema. It's hard to find an ideal auteur model in cinema and compare that model with game auteurs. Historicity of auteur theory has to be a part of these kinds of approaches. We have to search for the Hitchcocks of games before we search the Truffauts of games.

Hironobu Sakaguchi is the creator of the *Final Fantasy* Series. With long storylines these games can be good examples of auteur games, but the linearity of the scenarios leaves little to chance in basic gameplay. The conflict between narrative and game play here disturbs this seemingly perfect picture. When game making becomes a substitute for storytelling, the game maker is transformed into a director-as-artist. Game art has to be something else then cinema, if there are to be real auteurs in the field of games.

Sid Meier is one of the most famous figures of game industry, responsible for *Civilization*, *Colonization*, *Alpha Centauri*, *Railroad Tycoon* and *Pirates!* But most of these titles and the sequels of these games were designed by different people: Jeff Briggs and Brian Reynolds. Meier is only the creative director of these titles.

Nevertheless the first version and basic idea of *Civilization* belongs to Meier. Because of the game's relations to history, it's easier to speak about Meier's world view. In *Civilization*, world history is the history of wars of nations. This is a certain point of view, because others

might say that history is about class struggle. Civil disorder and anarchy are temporary situations in the game, but others might say that anarchy can be a permanent form of society. Communism is equal to totalitarianism in *Civilization*, but others might say that it's the most perfect form of freedom for societies. The dominant strategy of expansionism and imperialism and the necessity of militaristic moves are not optional, and must be used to achieve victory. These are inarguable truth of history in *Civilization*. Also, culture is a tool to conquer new lands. Nations create cultures, but there is no support for subcultures, female culture or working class culture. And more civilized nations are superior to barbaric societies. History is development, and there is no room in history for undeveloped societies. Colonize space, build a nuclear bomb, destroy other nations or die! A large army is always useful.

These are some clues to the discourses of *Civilization*, but we have to play the game again and again, analyzing each game moment, each element and their relations in order to understand the design choices and thoughts of an auteur. A game is a working system, a machine. It looks almost perfect when working and changing one element can end in malfunction. But that doesn't mean that a game is a tank or weapon, a car or airplane only. Design choices are also artistic choices, and even pleasure is a complex feeling. Taking a game element in isolation from this system and discussing the possibilities around it can reveal the meaning of the choice. Some choices are unavoidable, because of the nature of the tool and material. But some choices can be attached to an auteur's personality. You can't change one element of the rock-paper-scissors triangle, or the superiority of these pieces in relation to each other -or can you? It's also possible to claim that rule breaking is an artistic choice.

Peter Molyneux is the designer of *Populous*, *Black & White*, and *Dungeon Keeper*. He is the creator of the "god games" genre. In "god games", the player influences the game system by making some critical choices, but even without a player the game system continues autonomously. With isometric view, the player's position can be compared to someone looking down from the sky. Here we find the reason for this choice:

There were lots of different inspirations but one of the main inspirations was when I was a kid playing around with ant nests and feeling like I was in control of their lives by giving an ant nest sweets or using my magnifying glass. This made me as a twelve-year-old feel like a God and when I came to design my first game, I remembered that feeling. There are some other things like being in a glass lift and seeing people below that gave me ideas as well. (Molyneux)

Molyneux fits the model of the auteur as the creator in full control idea. But at the same time, his main goal is to design his games.

I'm pretty involved in every stage but not at the final testing stage. I used to do programming on the games but I don't do that much anymore. Now it's more pure design. (Molyneux)

Pure design sounds like pure cinema -a cinema built only upon the language of moving pictures. But is it possible to discuss the possibilities of pure games? Is a pure game a game in which the auteur writes his/her intentions with pure ludic elements? What are the pure ludic elements of games? Rules, goals and interaction? Mathematical or logical expressions? Is it possible to express something with such abstract formulas? But also cinema can also be reduced to vectors of movement. We have to consider audiovisual elements as pure elements of games as well. There is huge difference between Knights of the Old Republic and Tic-Tac-Toe.

The designer's role is not only to find a good ruleset and to create balanced game play but also to research and learn. This effort can be seen in different fields. Directors first study their subject when they have a new film idea. Actors try to think and feel like the character they pretend to be. Molyneux also does research for game ideas. *The Movies* game is a good example.

We did a lot of research. We went to Hollywood. We spent some time with directors like Guy Ritchie and Oliver Stone. We spent a lot of time at agencies and with producers to find out how the industry works. (Molyneux)

We know Will Wright from *SimCity*, *The Sims* and other games in the Sim series. Like Molyneux, he is a genre creator, and his games have sold millions of copies. *SimCity* is a city building game and *The Sims* is an everyday life simulator. Simulations are his primary interest. I played *SimCity* in my childhood, but then my aunt, a city planner, drew my attention to the fact that the game only supports some types of cities. She said that she tried to build a peaceful, ecological and orderly city, but she failed because her dreams do not fit the game system. Trying to build a city without nuclear or coal power, while acting in the interest of the people, is almost impossible at the start.

SimCity started out as a tool for creating cities for a bomber game Wright is working on. It was an incidental hit, in other words, and for that reason hard to configure as an “author game” (Aarseth 2004, 263)

An “Incidental hit” is not a measure of one’s auteur status. It can’t say anything about the process of making the game. At start *SimCity* can be a tool, but only after the idea of turning this into a game does the creative process start. And also, there is something not just incidental in the making of *SimCity*. Wright was inspired by a story.

He was also intrigued by a story by Stanislaw Lem called "The Seventh Sally," which appears in "The Mind's I," a collection edited by Douglas R. Hofstadter and Daniel C. Dennett (Bantam, 1982). In the Lem story a banished tyrant returns to his despotic ways after being given control over a simulated city. (Lew 1989)

Soviet director Dziga Vertov in his manifesto film “Man with a Movie Camera”, tried to show the new possibilities of the film medium and the film camera. Cine-eye was a new way to understand life and art. It’s also a tool to see the reality of daily life.

I am kino-eye, I am a mechanical eye. I, a machine, show you the world as only I can see it. Now and forever, I free myself from human immobility, I am in constant motion, I draw near, then away from objects, I crawl under, I climb onto them. I move apace with the muzzle of a galloping horse. I plunge full speed into a crowd, I outstrip running soldiers, I fall on my back, I ascend with an airplane, I plunge and soar together with plunging and soaring bodies. Now, I, a camera, fling myself along their resultant, maneuvering in the chaos of movement composed of the most complex combinations. Freed from the rule of sixteen-seventeen frames per second, free of the limits of time and space, I put together any given points in the universe, no matter where I've recorded them. My path leads to the creation of a fresh perception of the world. I decipher in a new way a world unknown to you. (Ruby 1991)

If the camera creates the cine-eye, then games create the ludic-mind. Simulating daily life can be a tool for understanding society. Simulating economics, politics and other social constructs can empower players to understand so called “complex” structures of modern life, and transforms abstract relations into concrete mechanisms.

Wright’s choice in *The Sims* is to make a game about daily American life. But it’s hard to see any deeper comments or criticism. In *The Sims* relationships between people and everyday life are reduced to commodity fetishism. The reality of life, and labour is absent in the game. Working hours are represented with a gap in time. To be happy you have to buy. To find a

girlfriend or boyfriend, you have to buy. You have the chance to improve your life, but only if you first buy the books that help you find a new job. If you are lazy and don't keep your home in order, you can die from starving or from a kitchen fire. Consumer capitalism is the ideology of the game. Buy or die!

Now, in the cases of Meier, Wright and Molyneux, we can claim that we have found our Hitchcocks. But it is easy to say this without critically playing and analyzing all the games of these designers. Fitting these designers into Sarris' circles or Aarseth's criteria is not enough. The real work is not in promoting designers to auteur status, but in creating a literature around authors.

Aarseth's pre-author example, Robyn Miller (Aarseth 2004, 266) is the creator of the best-selling game *Myst*. *Myst* is an adventure game in a first person view in which you travel around an island and solve puzzles. The goal is to set free two brothers (or their father) from imprisonment. The game is a good example of the conflict between narrative desires and the game medium. This conflict places author and player in opposing positions. Players might have control over a game and chose their path in a game, but authors have to build a dramatic structure to create climax and tell a story.

While game designers like Wright see this as an asset to be exploited, artists with narrative ambitions have a conflict on their hands between the players' wish to develop their own goals and actions and the artists' intended storyline. (Aarseth 2004, 266)

Are these limitations an obstacle to artistic creativity, or a must-known quality of the medium for the game auteur? For Janet Murray the dramatic effects in *Myst* are created using film techniques, images, ambient sounds and music. These are all important factors for creating emotional peaks in the game. She is also impressed by the losing endings of *Myst*.

The moment you release either Achenar or SIRRUS from imprisonment, he will mockingly turn on you and lock you in the very same dungeon from which he escaped! The visual effect is simple but brilliantly effective because it reverses your perspective. (Murray 1997, 141)

A game that marked a breakthrough in ease of navigation appropriately ends by immobilizing the player. (Murray 1997, 142)

This strong effect, the transformation from mobility to immobility, can be used in both cinematic and ludic ways. In a movie, his transformation can be triggered by a sudden change of free camera movement to a fixed angle. But in games, it can be achieved with the loss of control. In this case, the two effects are used together in the game ending. For artistic possibility in games, we have to analyze the use of losing control, or partly allowing and dislocating of control.

Murray is also aware of the conflict between game satisfaction and narrative satisfaction. How can story fit in the win/lose structure of games? According to Murray, games generally use language only instrumentally. Her solution is procedural authorship.

4.4 Procedural Authorship

Murray's author is a concept that tries to keep narrative and game form together. Murray's cyberdrama is based on familiar game examples. Multiform plot, kaleidoscopic stories and interactors seem like they belong to the interactive narrative world rather than the game world. But Murray offers a broad spectrum of examples and suggest that breaking the limits of medium allow, narrative possibilities. According to Murray, authors already have their place in game art.

Already in the gaming world there are clear auteurs, creators with characteristic and original style as well as strong technical mastery. To play *Mario Brothers* or *King's Quest* or *Myst* is to open ourselves to the vision of the shaping author in the same we open ourselves to the author's voice in novel. (Murray 1997, 275)

Her author is a mix of Shakespeare and commedia dell'arte actors. Both the expression of a virtuoso mind and improvisation are put together. Her game model is a collaboration of authors and players. MUDs (Multi User Dungeons), adventures, and RPGs (Role Playing Games) are her best-fitting examples of this model.

But what are the tools of the author? Murray presents several concepts for the procedural author, cyberdramatist and cyberbard... One tool is the use of "primitives". For instance "key primitives are the actions of the interactors themselves, as structured by author." (Murray 1997, 190) An icon palette in an adventure game(or puzzle game) forms and limits possible actions.

Another tool is the use of multiform plots. These include plots like quest, adventure, pursuit, rescue, escape, revenge, riddle, rivalry, underdog, temptation, metamorphosis and more.

(Murray 1997, 186) Broad possibilities and clever combinations of these formulaic patterns in a game can take advantage of computers to create complex narrative structures.

In the procedural authorship perspective, chatterbots like Elisa serve as good examples of the narrative capabilities of computer. Authoring chatterbots and virtual characters can be a useful tool for game authors. Modeling the inner life of characters, their goals and behaviors gives the author the chance to affect the interactor, create dramatic effects and change the storyline. Again, we face a concept most suitable to NPCs of computer RPGs.

Frame model, inspired by the work Marvin Minsky, is developed and applied by Murray to a western story. Murray outlines a frame for a saloon in western town, specifying all the objects, the possible events, and characters like gamblers, gunfighters and hall girls. The author's role is to specify all the possible events that can take place in this saloon with the most "dramatically significant elements". Bar fights, gun fights, cheating and many other possibilities can be triggered with certain actions. The relations of frames and the author's choices define which characters will be involved in a particular event. This model is a variation of multiform plot.

Fallout 1 and *Fallout 2* by Brian Fargo, post-nuclear RPG games in a western environment, have some similarities to this model. The games feature rich dialogs, and tens of different possibilities when speaking to NPCs. One selection can end in a life-long friendship, the other with a gun fight. Insulting a gang member can start a gang fight, while committing evil acts can decrease your general reputation and change the behavior of the town people. There are sometimes multiple of solutions to solve a problem. *Fallout* is a good example of balancing freedom of player choice with a charming story.

Façade is possibly the peak point of game ideas based in narratives. *Façade* is a one-act interactive drama based on a story of a married couple; Grace and Trip. As a friend, you are invited to their apartment, and you have the chance to affect their future. Their behaviors, emotions and dialogue are under the control of computer AI, but intelligent AI chooses the dramatically "best" options in order to develop the story coherently. Moment-by-moment

interaction determines the fate of this couple. Using a keyboard, you can write the sentences you want to speak, and using your mouse you can interact with the couple and environment. You can try to separate the couple or solve their problems.

Façade is the realization of Murray's procedural authorship ideas. The game features multiform plots, chatterbot-like characters, an apartment setting and possible dramatic events all placed inside a frame. Interaction is not simply based on point and click. You can write your own sentences and change the drama. Each play session is different from the former, and these cyberdramas are stored on your hard drive for later replay.

At this point, we have two slightly different author types in hand. On one hand, we have the procedural author, who with the help of AI, creates a system that is able to produce a set of dramatic events using pre-defined plots. On the other hand, we have the game auteur as defined by Aarseth, or a translation of Sarris' auteur, who is an expert of technique, has an individual style and conveys inner-meaning in his/her works, all distinctive features when compared to other game makers. The procedural author uses verbal language, but the other author uses game mechanics. The procedural author is mostly applicable to adventure and RPG genres, but the other author is more broadly defined. The procedural author is also an author in the traditional sense, and by the end of their games they develop a story. The other author creates meaningful game play.

If we take *Façade* and *The Sims* as examples of these two author definitions, the former one creates twenty minutes of drama, but the later creates game play that lasts for hours. The first game is concerned with psychology of characters, whereas the second game only gives an abstract view of psychology (happiness and relationships), instead, focusing on biological and sociological lives. The first game uses simulation to create a short, coherent narrative, whereas the second one uses simulation to create a whole Sims world.

But why should we compare and choose only one approach to the author? Does having different understandings of cinema affect Godard's or Hitchcock's author status? If our main concern is to understand games in an author perspective, rather than promoting some game makers to auteur status, then different author ideas can be taken into account. And there is the possibility of the hybridization of these approaches.

Frasca's "Sims of the Oppressed" example is such an effort. (Frasca 2001, 78) In his hypothetical example, he tries to create more realistic relationships. He dreams about user-designed downloadable characters with different personalities and actions. "Dave's Alcoholic Mother version 0.9" is described like this:

This mother spends a lot of time working and she is very tired when she gets back home. Still, every night she will have to fix dinner and do some cleaning. In order to escape from her life, the mother drinks a lot of bourbon. She can get very annoyed by children and pets and may become violent. (Frasca 2001, 81)

Playing characters with deep personalities in *The Sims* can transform the game into a tool for understanding and changing our daily lives and relationships. This is a combination of *The Sims* and *Façade*. Our lives, relationships, problems and others, -in short the reality of our lives- are becoming a major theme of video games. In Frasca's work, "Video Games of the Oppressed", we encounter a theoretical and practical effort to describe authorship dedicated to our social reality.

4.5 Authors of the Oppressed

Frasca builds his method on the theatre of Augusto Boal: "The Theatre of the Oppressed". This is a mix of Brechtian theatre and Paulo Freire's pedagogical approach "The Pedagogy of the Oppressed". The brechtian side opens the stage to spectator, so that the spectator is an active participant in the play. Freire's pedagogy takes social change and people's daily problems as the center of education. The combination is a theatre for social and personal change, and in blurring the borders between actor and spectator, the spectator is transformed into spect-actor. Frasca describes different methods of "The Theatre of the Oppressed" and applies these methods to video games. The result is "The Videogames of the Oppressed".

The first hypothetical example of this method is "Sims of the Oppressed". Players change game mechanics and add new characters to create socially realistic situations for discussing relationships and personalities. Different players create different characters and then play with them, modify them and replay. The simulation creates different variations of personal problems, and the criticism and discussion gives players both the opportunity to learn the reasons for different behaviors, and the solutions to change these behaviors.

The second example is “Play My Oppression” (Frasca 2001, 88). Players create games to represent their problems and send these games to a forum. Then, other participants discuss the games and send their comments and modified versions. Similar to Murray, Frasca suggests video game primitives for creating these games.

Car racing	Running away from a problem
Pac-Man	Trying to run away within a labyrinth that has no exit
Street Fighter	Fighting between two antagonists
Tetris	A never ending task, like in the Sisyphus’ myth
Space Invaders	A single character is attacked by a group
Centipede	A game in where the enemy is destroyed gradually
Simon says	The player tries to imitate somebody else (Frasca 2001, 96)

In Frasca’s scenario, a person called Peter is insulted by people because of his sexual orientation. To open and discuss his problems, he creates three different games. The first one is “Insults”, based on the *Space Invaders* template. Schoolmates throw insults like the missiles fired by the enemies in *Space Invaders*. But Peter can’t fire back because the problem is he doesn’t know how to reply. The first hypothetical example investigates possible modifications of the game to discuss different methods of overcoming the problem: uniting with other people with same problem, answering with art and not listening. The second game “Who Am I”, is based on the *Street Fighter* template. The player fights his own reflection in a mirror, because he sometimes feel that he is two different people. In the third example, “Society”, the player tries to match gay couples.

The primitives of story, game and simulation are very important for auteur criticism. When analyzing games in an auteur perspective, where should we look for inner-meaning or world-view: the in-game content, the interplay of game elements, or the narrative? Notions of procedural author, auteur of game mechanics, and author of the oppressed give us different ways to find the answer.

Frasca’s author, the author of the oppressed, is actually both the author and the player of the game. A moderator helps author-players to form ideas, build games and participate in others’ games. Frasca breaks the author-player dichotomy and shifts the discussion to the role of games in critical thinking and social change. He is promoting the critical author-player rather than genius auteurs. But also he helps us to remember one of the critical concepts in the origins of author theory: the relationship between reality and art.

4.6 Social Realism in Video Games

The combination of increasingly powerful hardware and games with increasingly higher polygon counts leads to more and more realistic game worlds everyday. Realistic movement, models, images and rules, and realistic actions facilitated by new controllers like Wiimote, are dominating games. But realistic game physics and images are quite different concepts from realistic narratives. When we rush to an enemy base in *Delta Force* we use realistic weapons in a realistic environment. But the realities of war, like torture, rape, abuse, humiliation, starvation, poverty, killing innocent people, and loss of moral values, are excluded from the scenario.

Andre Bazin, one of most important critics of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, wrote about the relations of cinema with reality. For him, cinema is an ideal form to represent reality, because what happens in front of camera is recorded to film. He is against the manipulation of images, and for him the director's duty is to reflect reality without interruption. The director should avoid unnecessary intervention.

Alexander Galloway brings this reality question to video games. He makes a distinction between "Realisticness" and Social Realism. (Galloway 2006, 72) He first shows the common distinction between construction of real life and fantasy worlds.

... SOCOM is about the real Navy Seals, The Sims Hot Date is about real dating(one assumes), and Madden NFL is about the real National Football League, while games like Final Fantasy, Grand Theft Auto, and Unreal Tournament transpire in fictional worlds with fictional characters and fictional narratives. Thus games are generally either realistic or fantastical. (Galloway 2006, 72)

The problem here is that the origin of the game defines the reality category of the game. But if we compare *The Sims* with *Madden NFL*, *The Sims* is a representation of our daily life whereas *Madden NFL* imitates TV broadcast of football games, and does not represent a football player's life. *Grand Theft Auto* represent the dirtier sides of city life but *Unreal Tournament* is a combat game, with weapons and a realistic 3D game engine. And it's also possible that a fantasy game has a more realistic love story with different characters that create realistic problems, but in a fantasy world. The dichotomy is a false one.

Galloway returns to Bazin and Neo-Realism to find the origins of the reality question. For the author perspective, this question is also important in deciding which qualities of authors and games will be important for author criticism: aesthetics of the medium, the author's responsibility, or both?

Andre Bazin defined realism in the cinema as a technique to approximate the basic phenomenological qualities of the real world. And he knew well that "phenomenological qualities" did not simply mean realistic visual representation. It also means real life in all its dirty details, hopeful desires, and abysmal defeats. Because of this, realism often arrives in the guise of social critique. (Galloway 2006, 74)

The social critique is a powerful tool in the author's hand. Neo-Realist authors used this tool to show the post-war problems of an Italy in shambles. Frasca has started a project in the field of games, Newsgames are games about real news events. At the end of this work, I will try to criticize his games *Kabul Kaboom!*, *September 12* and *Madrid* in author perspective.

If we compare Aarseth's author search with the ideas of Frasca and Galloway, we see a difference between approaches. Aarseth is looking for existing auteurs in the industry, but Frasca and Galloway are suggesting an authorial way of game making. Without a clear and valid description of the game auteur, auteur search can only open possibilities around names. But converting these ideas about authors into a critical methodology can be more fruitful. Here I am trying to contribute to the existing literature around games and authors. To do this, we have to face one of the problems in games: the players' role in games.

4.7 Auteur Player or Agency

In Murray's point of view, player authorship is derivative. The player's actual position is having agency in game while navigating, problem solving, acting, competing and constructing. She also believes that the player's performance is a kind of authorship, but she defines it as derivative authorship.

In electronic narrative the procedural author is like a choreographer who supplies the rhythms, the context, and set of steps that will be performed. The interactor, whether as navigator, protagonist, explorer, or builder, makes use of this repertoire of possible steps and rhythms to improvise a particular dance among

the many, many possible dances the author has enabled. We could perhaps say that the interactor is the author of a particular performance within an electronic story system, or the architect of a particular part of the virtual world, but we must distinguish this derivative authorship from the originating authorship of the system. (Murray 1997, 153)

But what if all the characters in the system are player characters, and the entire environment is built by these players and they can set their own rules and goals? Then derivative authorship is transformed into originating authorship. Also, in the history of authors in cinema, there are some actors who have been called auteurs. In games, players can be actors and authors at the same time. And while playing together they are spectators of the others' play. If we return to the origin of games, there is no solid boundary between a game's author and players. And now with MMOs this boundary is becoming meaningless. As players are increasingly given more and more capabilities, the authorship ideas of old media no longer fit this new participatory medium. These possibilities are defined by Murray as agency.

Contemporary critiques are attributing authorship to interactors because they do not understand the procedural basis of electronic composition. The interactor is not the author of the digital narrative, although the interactor can experience one of the most exciting aspects of artistic creation—the thrill of exerting power over enticing and plastic materials. This is not authorship but agency. (Murray 1997, 153)

A further discussion of agency is outside the scope of this thesis, but I will define another view of the player auteur in the perspective of social criticism. If we combine social realism and a critical approach with auteur theory, then we find that the author-player dichotomy is not just over-simplified, but altogether meaningless. Frasca and Galloway were the first to use this approach. If the new auteur is based not on genius artistic creativity, but on criticism of our daily lives, then it's not necessary that the author is part of the game development team.

In this sense, Anne-Marie Schleiner is an auteur player. In creating *Velvet-Strike*, she transformed game play into political action, thereby criticizing militarism. Her anti-militaristic graffiti in *Counter-Strike* becomes a part of games universe. If meaning production is inseparable from players' actions, then players can also create meaning in the game. This concept is quite different from Sarris' notion of inner-meaning. But games are not only audio-visual experiences where spectators use only their eyes to see, ears to hear and brains to

interpret. For the first time in history, consumers are also operators of the system and creators of meaning. Moreover, their experiences are a result of their own efforts.

Richard Bartle categories players into four types, and Aarseth adds a fifth “cheater” type. The auteur player can then be viewed as a sixth player type.

Socializers	The players who play to enjoy the company of other players
Killers	Players who enjoy preying on and harassing other players
Achievers	Players who like to win and triumph
Explorers	Players who enjoy discovering the game’s secrets and hidden mechanics, including discovering and exploiting programming errors.
Cheaters	Players who use cheat codes and walkthroughs (Aarseth 2003, 4)
Auteurs	Players who play the game or use game mechanics and game tools to configure the game and build new game content for critical thinking

Modding and level creation is the other face of this auteur player behavior. The more the player is involved in the creative process, the more his/her behavior shifts from playing to game making. Especially in more ambitious mods, everything in the original game changes and sometimes the developer even buys or internalizes these projects to distribute or sell as an expansion. *Counter-Strike* is a good example to show this transformation of player activity.

These mods can be considered the result of game making processes rather than the result of player behaviors. But only when players incorporate critical meaning into a game – that is, elements not only meaningful for game play, but also elements referring to the issues outside the game world – can they be called auteur players. Second Life protests like the “Avatars Against the War” demonstration against American occupation in Iraq give us useful examples to analyze. (RootsCamp 2007)

This reconceptualization of auteur play as activism has its roots in writings by Bazin and Wollen in film studies, Frasca and Galloway in game studies. The qualities of Godard’s counter-cinema, developed after the New Wave movement, is a useful source for the author perspective in game studies. Galloway reconceptualized Wollen’s formulas for counter-cinema as counter-gaming. The formal differences between conventional video gaming and counter-gaming are described by Galloway in a list:

- 1. Transparency vs. foregrounding.** (Removing the apparatus from the image versus pure interplay of graphics apparatus or code displayed without representational imagery.)
- 2. Gameplay versus aestheticism.** (Narrative gameplay based on a coherent set versus modernist formal experiments.)
- 3. Representational modeling versus visual artifacts.** (Mimetic modeling of objects versus glitches and other unexpected products of the graphics engine.)
- 4. Natural physics versus invented physics.** (Newtonian laws of motion, ray tracing, collisions, etc., versus incoherent physical laws and relationships.)
- 5. Interactivity versus noncorrespondence.** (Instant, predictable linkage between controller input and gameplay versus barriers between controller input and gameplay.)
- 6. Gamic action versus radical action.** (Conventional gaming poetics versus alternative modes of gameplay.) (Galloway 2006, 124-125)

These six commandments of counter-gaming can be a useful reference both for game auteurs and auteur players. The last point in particular is dedicated to auteur players. We can say that these avant-garde ideas have had little impact in games design as of yet. But as a critical methodology, counter-gaming can be applied to some games, authors and actions. Newsgames, serious games, indie games, art-games are the first applicable areas, but commercial games can be analyzed in this way too.

The rule-breaking tactics of avant-garde games, such as foregrounding, aestheticism, visual artifacts, invented physics, noncorrespondence and radical action, need a clear understanding of the aesthetic variables of games. Here we see narrative possibilities, game primitives, and player tools, but there is something else we need to analyze. Games often use verbal language instrumentally, but there is also the possibility of a formal grammar unique to games. This grammar can be defined as “ludographic elements,” a collection and categorization of game mechanics and game elements. To understand the meaning of a single game event, we need to analyze the components of the event.

4.8 Aesthetics of Game Elements

Differences in style between game authors can be identified with a critical analysis of games. A game system is a working machine with game elements, but we can also interpret game elements as symbols of different meanings. An avatar is a character, not only a 3D model or sprite. A progress bar can be a symbol of historical ideology, not only a visualization of a

game variable. Also, game elements can be interpreted with different uses in different games, the interplay of these elements can change from game to game. Therefore, an author's design and programming choices create his/her style. The absence, existence, appearance, importance, and expectation of a game element, as well as the differences and correlations between game elements, can change their meaning entirely.

An author film critic concentrates on *mise-en-scène*, aesthetic variables, lights, actors, make-up, costumes, direction, stage, camera movement and others elements. An author game critic can concentrate on “*design-en-scène*²” by using the narrative elements described by Murray, the game primitives described by Frasca, and also the elements of the game system. If we compare games and movies side by side, a theory of game elements can be inspired by the montage theory of Sergei Eisenstein. Meaning is produced using the primitive elements of the form. But games are different than movies because reality is constructed in simulation and not just represented. There is no need for taking sides, like the Cahiers' denial of montage. Stage, characters, mimetic aspects and also abstract forms are used in the composition of game elements. Both 3D units in a real time strategy game and 2D information panels are a part of the game system. There is no reason to object to the manipulation of the image because game image is created from scratch using codes, algorithms, sprites, 3D models and sound, and not from the “pure reality” of photographic film.

The author critic can combine principles of design with game elements to understand the qualities of a specific game: balance, harmony, rhythm, dominance, unity, proportion, contrast, and so forth. This effort can transfer game elements from the domain of science to the domain of art. While players learn the inner structure of a game during game play, inner structures like inner meaning can reveal the author's personality and worldview. Some design choices are made for the sake of balanced game play and the game system, but other choices symbolize obsessions, biases, priorities and ideologies. Thus, the dynamics of the system are not outside of our scope.

Aki Jarvinen's work on game design, *Games Without Frontiers*, is a useful and new reference for understanding game mechanics and game elements. “Applied Ludology” (Jarvinen 2008, 24) is not only important for analyzing games, but can also tell the critic where to look for

² Concept used recently for 3rd International Design and Cinema Conference 2008
<http://www.designcinema2008.org/>

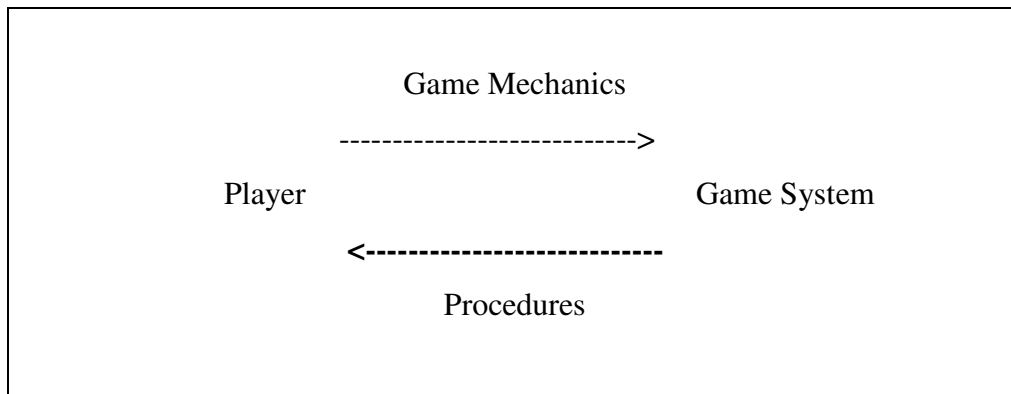
author's signature in the game. Jarvinen categorizes game elements into three categories: systemic elements, compound elements and behavioral elements. Systemic elements include components and environment. Compound elements include the ruleset, game mechanics, themes, interface and information. Behavioral elements include players and contexts.

Here I will borrow Jarvinen's terminology, but not his methodology. I accept that his method for analyzing rules and mechanics attached to goals can be used to understand the game system and player emotions. But to understand game authors' intentions, we have to attach these mechanics to authorial choices and not systemic choices which are governed by the needs of a working machine.

Game Mechanics Library (Jarvinen 2008, 273)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accelerating / Decelerating • Aiming & Shooting • Allocating • Arranging • Attacking / Defending • Bidding • Browsing • Building • Buying / Selling • Catching • Choosing • Composing • Conquering • Contracting • Controlling • Conversing • Discarding • Enclosing • Expressing • Herding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information-seeking • Jumping • Manoeuvring • Motion • Moving • Operating • Performing • Placing • Point-to-point Movement • Powering • Sequencing • Sprinting / Slowing • Storytelling • Submitting • Substituting • Taking • Trading • Transforming • Upgrading / Downgrading • Voting
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Procedures are as important as game mechanics. They are the materialization of the rules of a game system. Game mechanics are player driven operations whereas procedures are system driven. If we place the auteur at the center of game making, the game system and procedures are the primary area in which to look for authorial choices. But if we are trying to identify the auteur status of players, their use of game mechanics gains importance. (Jarvinen 2008, 72)



Jarvinen places game elements into three categories. Events are “game mechanics and game system procedures according to ruleset”. Agents are “players and game system agency via ruleset”. Objects are “components, environment, information, goals as stated by the ruleset.” (Jarvinen 208, 62) This categorization gives us the subjects, actions and objects of the game world. In some cases, different objects can be interpreted not only in terms of their importance for game play, but also in terms of their relationship to the context and theme. Player actions are not necessarily logical in a “win or lose” perspective. The game system, as a machine, can be reassembled in a critical sense as a meaning producing system.

The provocative idea is that “the player” is a game, and that the author is the player of this game. The real game is a language system, where procedures are game mechanics for the author to control the players, where game mechanics are the procedures of this “player system”, and where the objects are the players’ present reality. This perspective can reveal the ways that an author can control. The author can win the player or lose the player. But win/lose conditions are not necessarily just satisfaction/frustration conditions. Much like each player creates their own in-game goals, different authors can evoke different emotions and impressions. The true power of the game auteur lies in how competent he/she is in playing this meta-game. And in this upside-down perspective, the auteur has to grab players’ social reality, daily life and problems in order to establish an honest relationship. Only then can social critique find a base.

5. GONZALO FRASCA AS AUTEUR

5.1 Auteur Criticism

Auteur criticism is a method of criticism grounded on the concept I already explained in “The Game Auteur” chapter. Differently from other game journalism and game criticism approaches, my focus in this thesis is on the game auteur instead of the game. In the existing field of game criticism, critics and reviewers most concentrate on the technical aspects: The quality of visuals and audio, the power of the game engine, playability, platform, etc. New content, unique features are included in the genre or series. New weapons, buildings, characters, spells and much more depending on the game genre are objects of game criticism. The language is mostly subjective and judgments are mainly based on impressions. This kind of genre criticism or reviewing is strongly connected to the development of games, the reception and commercial purposes.

Actually, what we encounter is reviews and previews not serious criticism. Generally when we think about game criticism mostly reviews with scoring system for different aspects come in mind. Game reviews are similar to car reviews and car testing articles. Games also have engines, but that does not mean games are only machines. Impressions should be based on facts and features of the game. Furthermore game technology is only one dimension of this medium. Both a game review focused on game technology and a film review focused on visual effects could be a column in journals and web pages, but only serious criticism can change the development route of games. Serious criticism for serious games can be the motto of auteur critique.

I define auteur criticism between game journalism and game studies. It utilizes concepts of game studies but depends on interpretation. I define it between science and art. It is based on methods partly borrowed from game studies and film studies, but at the end the text you read has an aesthetic taste. It is somewhere between film studies and game studies, because it takes a concept dedicated to the film medium and re-conceptualizes it for games. I define it between narratology and ludology, because it does not define games as “telling stories”, but the game form can be used to narrate. I see auteur criticism between the traditional methods of auteur theory and auteur as reading strategy, because it denies the concept of the genius as author, but accepts the existence of the subject of history.

What kind of games can be the object of auteur criticism? First of all games of known designers or programmers, because possibly some of these game makers earned their reputation with their innovative and creative ideas. We can investigate reflections of these ideas on game style. We can find rich resources like biographies and design notes of these game makers to support our criticism. Also some games started with a conceptual idea belonging to someone, can be the object of criticism. In some cases like Sid Meier's *Civilization* these conceptual ideas determine the final game and this situation give us the chance to bind the game to game maker's personality. In some cases co-authorship can create a unified whole, we can take well working programmer-designer couples into account. The collective world view and style of co-authors, also their contradictions can be investigated. The games with rich narrative elements and also art-games are mostly acceptable. In former cases we can identify the relationship of narrative elements and game elements. In later case we can check the juxtaposition of aesthetic and ludic elements. And some non-game simulations, hypertext adventures and interactive stories are close to our focus. Using methods of procedural authorship we can identify different possibilities of auteur concept. Newsgames, serious games, indy games fit into the model because avant-garde ideas are always close to aesthetical approaches. Games with political engagements, personal concerns and comments are included too. In these cases we can compare the rhetoric on surface with authorial choices. And last but not least games which center critical thinking and our everyday reality, as well as games which deal with class, race, gender and identity problems are most delighted examples for auteur criticism. As I defined in "Auteur and Authorship" chapter, we can identify "authorship as a technique of self" in these cases.

The value of a particular written auteur critique depends on the object of criticism, the comprehensiveness and deepness of the work, the understanding of the qualities of auteur and his/her body of art works, the inter-textual relationships, and the choice of methods and tools of critique. But the real value of auteur criticism can be seen after applying it from different sides and with different motivations to many titles and auteurs. These efforts can reveal different styles, different uses of techniques, and aid the development of games for a broader audience, which can create a categorization from an art perspective different then genre categorization for commercial purposes.

Here I will take Gonzalo Frasca as auteur example, not only because I expect the final value of my criticism will reveal that auteur criticism is a fruitful approach, but also Frasca fits the criterion of auteur criticism. He has games he individually designs and programs, he is technically competent, his body of work shows a distinct style, he has his special point of view for games. His games are a good source to look for the inner-meaning. Because of he believes video games can be used for critical thinking and debate, it should be understandable to look at his games from this perspective. Concerned with his body of work, I will reference his body of written work to find keys to unlock his expressions reflected within game design.

Frasca's ludography contains more titles than I choose to criticize here. On his website www.ludology.org he presents 6 titles: *Kabul Kaboom!*, *Howard Dean for Iowa Game*, *September 12th*, *Cambiemos*, *Madrid* and *Big Fat Awesome House Party*. I will pick *Kabul Kaboom!*, *September 12th* and *Madrid* from the list, because these three games show similarities in style and message. *Howard Dean for Iowa Game* and *Cambiemos* are made for political campaigns, one for USA the other one for Uruguay presidential elections. *Howard Dean for Iowa* co-designed by Ian Bogost and produced by the Powerful Robot team. Unfortunately *Cambiemos'* web-site and game is not reachable at the time I write my critique on Frasca. So I decided to exclude these two games. I also exclude *Big Fat Awesome House Party*. The reason is not that this game is a commercial product or a collaborative work. *September 12th* is also a collaborative work. The three games I picked fit his ideas about "videogames of the oppressed" to a certain degree. But his earlier writings has effect on my decision. So here I focus on the examples where his expressions are at a high level. I want to present not only an application of my theory, but also a tasteful critic. The games I picked give an idea about Gonzalo Frasca as an auteur and frame necessary qualities of his games, It's always possible to apply auteur theory to all games of Frasca. And surely a more comprehensive work can reveal more details.

I will change the language and the form of my text to show an auteur critique both as method and as form. I will start with the name of the auteur and account for the ludography and then begin to elaborate my ideas on the auteur and his works. The next part of my thesis should be evaluated in this perspective.

5.2 Gonzalo Frasca as Auteur

Gonzalo Frasca: The Auteur of the Oppressed, Lord of the Dichotomies

By Kerem Yavuz Demirbaş

Ludography: Kabul Kaboom!(2001), Howard Dean for Iowa Game(2003), September 12th(2003), Cambiemos(2004), Madrid(2004), Big Fat Awesome House Party(2006-2007)

Other games with Powerful Robot team: Lucha Caliente, Sand Castle Hassle, Robotic Birthday, Ho Ho Ho Mojo Jojo!, Stadium Matic 3000, Scuba Jojo, Ballet Parking, KND Operation R.a.i.l, Fight to the Finish³

Gonzalo Frasca, the auteur of the oppressed, gained his popularity with innovative concepts, provocative works and creative ideas. He can be considered as one of the founders of newsgames, serious games, ludology and we also know him from his idea of “videogames of the oppressed”. His works on “war on terror” influenced not only game circles, but also newspapers and magazines carried his comments to the public: *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Guardian* and *Wired.com*, etc. The response of players and people can be confusing and mixed. Pleasure and frustration are two faces of the picture. His works are the target of love and hate. His two fronted war in the field of games and society is the reason of these reactions.

At first sight, his games seem like being outside of classical game definitions, any player can feel or sense that something is wrong in his works. The first impression is always important, but not for judgment, only for getting some clues about personality. These clues can be the key of a charming experience or a nightmare. A good game like a good novel, carries a mystery inside, you cannot know what is waiting on the other side of the door, without unlocking it. Frasca’s choices for goals and win/lose conditions are one of the keys to enter the depths of his games. Also being acknowledged about his early writings can give the necessary tools to understand his body of work.

³ Ludography of Gonzalo Frasca taken from www.ludology.org and www.powerfulrobot.com

Madrid and *September 12th* are examples of the newsgames genre, the transformation of political cartoons to the field of games. They are responses to political events, more than retelling the actual events. Their focus is on quickly delivering a comment. They belong to online magazines and newspapers, so this situation creates a certain limited game medium. Games have to be designed in short time, in certain size and length, with easy playability and clear messages on the surface. Using advanced programming techniques, 3D models and engines is too time consuming for this purpose. These limits can be interpreted as restrictions against creativity, but also they create some codes and standardizations to be used for artistic purposes.

The clear messages on the surface can satisfy our expectations and we can think that looking further is not necessary. But the games of Frasca contain different levels of depth like many art works, and they are multi-dimensional. The effect of Augusto Boal, Bertold Brecht and Paulo Freire, the necessities of the genre, the themes chosen and his own ideas on game design create richer games than they look like. Also the interference of these elements shows a gold mine for a game critique.

We encounter similarities in three games of Frasca: *Kabul Kaboom!*, *September 12th* and *Madrid*. A superficial examination can reveal that all three games are single player games. That can be because of the limitations of the broadcasting channels and newsgame genre. But as we will see later in the *Madrid* example, even this choice can be used as an expression. Also in *September 12th* the contrast of the alive and active Middle East city with its people, and the solitude of jet pilot cleverly strengthen the moral question. Again in *Kabul Kaboom!* the mother with her baby shows the loneliness of the human being in her struggle for survival under war conditions.

Madrid and *September 12th* use mouse as interface but *Kabul Kaboom!* uses keyboard controls. In *Kabul Kaboom!* horizontal movement of the mother figure is controlled by two keys: left or right arrows. Win or lose, bombs or food, left or right, shoot or not shoot, civilians or terrorists, to be or not to be, these dichotomies are repetitive elements of Frasca's body of work. They are the given questions of reality, not forced choices of Frasca, and in his work we see a dissatisfaction about those dichotomies. This dissatisfaction creates a search for meaning, the real meaning of a terrorist or civilian, the reality which creates the action of

throwing bombs and also food aid. Furthermore, the strong relationship of the two sides, two possibilities of these dichotomies - at some points inseparability - bring us to a different explanation of the phenomena.

If we return to interface choices of Frasca, the change of keyboard to mouse in the latter two titles is bounded to the theme and game mechanics. In *Kabul Kaboom!* we are the target of bombs, in the environment of the capital city of Afghanistan, our problem is bombs falling from the sky. We dodge the bombs and catch the food with the maneuvering game mechanic using the keyboard interface. But there is no end of these efforts, there is no winning condition of the game. So the problem is not to avoid touching the bombs or catching the bombs, but ending this endless bombardment of jet planes. In *September 12th* we are the jet pilot who throws the bombs in a Middle Eastern city environment, so we are acting now, we have a target and mouse controller as interface and a aim&shoot game mechanic fitting for our act. Again there is no winning condition, our endless effort to kill terrorist causes all the civilians to transform into terrorists. The reasons of our moral problem and the solution of this hopeless action is laying somewhere else, not in the desert but in our homeland. In *Madrid* we are in a western city environment, in the memorial of the Madrid attack, again we use the mouse as interface, but this time as operating game mechanic to brighten the candles in the hands of people to give them hope. At the first time in Madrid there is a winning condition, or at least we hope there is one. So the change of interface, mechanics and theme in three games show us the pieces of a sequence, from result to reason, from target to source, from despair to hope. The insolubility of the problems around dichotomies in Frasca's work leads us to another level every time. And with every change we discover a deeper question. The use of the repetitive and slightly different elements in Frasca's game reveals his style as a game auteur.

When we put Frasca's intentions in the context of "the war on terror", we clearly see his position is critical. His works carry foresight compared to other games which are spreading the hate after 9/11. In the blindness of both hatred and information bombardment, his games are blossoms opened in the desert. His critical position in the field of games reveals that how much we need the responsibility of artists these days. The left-wing tradition critical art still keeps his power for social change.

The real difference of Frasca's works can be identified only through a close look at his games. After explaining general concepts and elements in his games we should look deeper into them.

Kabul Kaboom!

On April 26, 1937 Nazi planes launched a bombardment to a small city, Guernica in Spain. It's one of the critical moments in history, because it is the first time this kind of massacre comes from the air. That had happened when the civil war emerged in Spain, and the reason was to support fascist dictator Franco to take over the control of the country. Pablo Picasso expressed his thought and feelings with his painting "Guernica", as a response to this bombardment. Picasso stated on his work:

The Spanish struggle is the fight of reaction against the people, against freedom. My whole life as an artist has been nothing more than a continuous struggle against reaction and the death of art. How could anybody think for a moment that I could be in agreement with reaction and death? ... In the panel on which I am working, which I shall call Guernica, and in all my recent works of art, I clearly express my abhorrence of the military caste which has sunk Spain in an ocean of pain and death. (Tóibín 2006)

On October 7, 2001 USA planes launched a bombardment to Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan. Like every war, the so-called "war on terror" has cost the lives of many innocent people. This time the war technology was more developed and the damage of the bombardment was enormous. The president of the United States George W. Bush started a series of invasions outside the US and media strengthen the terror paranoia inside the US. Gonzalo Frasca responds to this development with his game *Kabul Kaboom!*. He states about the reason and the creation for his work:

If there ever was a political event that triggered the development of hundreds of amateur online games as a form of expression, that was 9-11. I was on a United flight with my wife on that day, and the next time that I had to fly I decided to create a game as a way to deal with my fear. By that time, there were many anti-Osama online games but, as much as I dislike Osama, I decided to focus on another event. The US was engaged in the war in Afghanistan, and was both bombing the people as well as throwing food and help packages from planes (many houses were actually destroyed by help packages). I was disgusted at seeing how the most powerful country on Earth was bombing the crap out of one of the poorest, so I created this game. I wasn't expecting much when I posted it

online, but after a few days it had several thousands players from all over the world and this encouraged me to keep using videogames as a form of political expression and experimentation. The game has incredibly crude graphics and gameplay, but keep in mind that it was fully coded and produced on a coast-to-coast flight. (Frasca)

Two years later, on February 5, 2003, the copy of Picasso's *Guernica* on the wall of the United Nations building in New York City was covered with a blue curtain, when Colin Powell gave a press conference in front of the copy. *Guernica* as a reminder of terrors of war was not visible to TV cameras, in the dawn of a new war. 2 months later the invasion of Iraq started.

The theme of *Kabul Kaboom!* is the bombardment of Kabul in Aghanistan. We control a civilian in the game. We are trying to catch the food or help packages symbolized with McDonald's burgers thrown from US airplanes and at the same time to avoid touching bombs. In the background we see mosques but the black and white figure from *Guernica* which we control is in contrast with this background. This emphasis reminds the reference to Picasso's masterwork, so we cannot consider this work without its inter-textuality.

Its not surprising that Frasca chose "the mother with her dead baby" figure as a "component of self" in the game. As a response to "war on terror", his work reminds us of the result of bloody and dirty wars. This shines in the surface of his work. The dichotomies win/lose and food/bomb in this game are used cleverly. An endless game without happy end, winning is bound to survival, satisfaction of the daily basic requirements like food, but this is just the delay of solving the real problem. In the game we have no chance to stop the bombardment, the war, but this despair forces us to thing about the reasons, which create the reality of humanity in war conditions.

To catch the food and dodge the bombs we move the mother figure to the left and right, we survive or we die. The harmony of the movement of foods and bombs creates a feeling that these two distinct components are a part of a different problem. The abstraction of these components brings us to help/attack, and as international organizations we can substitute this dichotomy with UN/NATO. So the NGO/State dichotomy can be the second candidate in national borders. The help and peace organizations and war mechanisms of western capitalism

can be seen as the embodiment of the same value systems. Here I do not want to elaborate this socialist critic but to point it out as a possibility.

The second dimension of food/bomb opposition is that it is not an actual opposition. In reality food packages destroyed some buildings in Kabul, like a bomb. Also Frasca symbolizes help packages with Mc Donald's burgers. Mc Donald's is a symbol of imperialism and American values. The US way of democracy and its values falling from the sky as bombs. This represents a doubt on help, is it at all possible to establish a democracy with bombs? How can humanitarian help be a war? Is accepting the American style of life the solution of our oppressions? I believe that Frasca wants to deal with these rightful questions, in his work we see clear signs of it.

The game over screen as "information" element in game, shown when we "eat" a bomb instead of food and then we hear an ironic voice: "Yummy!". The phrase in the text in the opening screen, "'humanitarian' war" is also an irony, and we can say that irony is a dominant element in his game.

September 12th

Frasca states that *September 12th* is aiming to show the effect of the "war on terror" on the life of civilians. The game is prepared in three months and related to the Iraq invasion of the USA. When the game starts, we see a Middle East city with many civilians, buildings and some terrorists. Civilians shown as man, woman, children in traditional clothes and even some dogs exist in the game. Terrorists can be separated with their uniforms, rifles and white covers. We are sitting in the seat of a jet pilot and seeing this city from the sky. We fire a missile or we do not. This is up to our choice. This scenario creates a moral question to ask ourselves.

The strange thing is we do not see terrorists in terror acts. What makes them terrorist is not so clear, they are not attacking somewhere, and they are not killing people. They are only holding weapons and running around, but could this be an evidence to target them as terrorist? Is it enough to fire our missiles?

The crosshair component controlled with the mouse interface creates the look of a first-person-shooter (FPS) or flight simulator. This code invites us to click the mouse button and send a missile. At first we do not care about the consequences of firing a missile. If this is a game about shooting terrorists, we should fire our missiles and kill them. But right after we fire our first missile, we see it is nearly impossible to kill only the terrorists and keep the civilians alive. Missiles have no rationality to choose the correct target and our action ends with some civilian casualties. At this point we see the clear message of bombing a city ends with the death of many civilians. This is one of the facts of “war on terror”. This message is staying on the surface of the game.

Right after we kill some innocent civilians, other civilians come and sit for mourning and then suddenly they transform to terrorists. So killing civilians is not the only effect, but the hatred created by our action causes more terrorist than before. In that sense, if we keep going with this hopeless effort, at the end the whole city will be against us, ready to do terror attacks. If we wait and do not shoot for a while some terrorists will transform back to civilians. Hatred causes hatred, “war on terror” causes more terror. So the moral question is related to a consequential problem. “Shoot/Do not shoot” dichotomy raises us to the second level of consideration. Are we here in the desert because we want to end the terror, or are we the source and reason of the terror? Again the solid border between terror and “war on terror” is melting, the one between terrorist/civilian too.

The definition of terrorist changed through time and the term used by governments to find “reasons” to invade other countries. The distinction between a rebel and a terrorist is not so clear in these days. Also the paranoia about terror strengthen and mislead suspicions. It is almost impossible to define what is suspicious or not in our everyday life in fear. An innocent guy, Jean Charles de Menezes killed in London on July 22, 2005, because he is suspected as a terrorist preparing to bomb the metro. The fear and paranoia after 9/11 costs lives not only in Middle East but also in western countries.

In *September 12th* Frasca uses these dichotomies again to question terrorism and terrorist behavior. When we do not fire our missile as a jet pilot, probably we will find ourselves in the court in our countries, because denying an order is not an acceptable behavior in the army. So will we be inside anti-militarist cause, will we share our experience with people or will we

keep silent? This is up to us. But one thing is clear, Frasca points out the solution of the problem is somewhere else and the solution is something different than bombing cities.

Madrid

Madrid is designed in two days after the actual event, the bomb attack in Madrid on March 11, 2004. Again the terror and “war on terror” context is central in the game. We are not controlling a character who takes part in the actual event, instead we find ourselves in an action after the bombing. We can consider this scene as a memorial, the people in the screen look like a crowd surrounding the flowers after the loss of loved ones. But the candles in the hands, the faces, the t-shirts with the names of the cities all around the world imply that its a presentation of an action, a protest, which started as a memorial but turned to a different situation, like the atmosphere of the funeral of the assassinated Armenian journalist Hrant Dink from Turkey, when 200 thousand people silently marched, this was a protest more than a memorial.

The people in the frame hold one candle for each city, for their own cities. We use our mouse to click candles. We understand that from the different sizes of the flames of the candles. We cannot win the game with clicking to only one candle, for instance your cities candle. All the flames of the candles have to shine brightly. The flame of the candle shines more bright when you click, and it fades because of the wind if you let it a while. We should click all the candles one by one quickly, a progress bar as game component shows the luminance of all the flames. But the total brightness is increasing as a linear function as a game procedure, at some point it gets balanced with the power of the wind, no matter of how quickly we move and click from one candle to another. We cannot pass the limit of the progress bar, we cannot win. Frasca plays with the expectation created by this progress bar, with the effort and the result of this effort of player to win the game. It is assumed that there is a winning condition for the game, but sorry as a normal human being without super powers I cannot be as quickly as Lucky Luke to shoot my shadow.

If we consider the total brightness of the candles in the hands of the people is equal to the sum of each candle, and if these candles are symbols of hope, social change and peace, is then the players only gain a loss with honor in this struggle? Is the important thing to struggle and not to win in this long walk? “Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail

better!” Is this a mark about the importance of the continuity of struggle and the necessity of resolution? But the history of social movements shows us, the power of united people is more than the sum of the power of each individual. Then maybe we can say that the progress bar of Frasca does not show the reality. A better presentation can be an exponential function for the increasing power of candles. But this is a single player game. It is not possible to play on the Internet with other people, there is no one else to click the candles with us. In that case this game is only a presentation of our effort, and it is possible to think that this game shows the reality. We cannot win this game alone. We cannot manage that all the candles shine bright enough. We need other players.

This situation can be presented like this in a single player game: Either the progress bar will increase exponential or each candle will summon an additional cursor guided by AI in the name of that person, the new cursor will help us to click candles. One click will summon 2 mouse pointers, the clicks of two new cursors will summon four and so we again get an exponential function at the end. But this is a happy picture like a classic Hollywood happy end. After catharsis we can feel alright again. In this way we get the solution without real effort. But Frasca did not choose this.

He forces us to think about the setup of the game. It is impossible to win the game with the rules given by the game. Yes, its a game, we are not in a passive reading process, we do not only interpret, we also manipulate. This leads to the result that our position as player is more active then the reader of a book naturally. We are in action, but are we activists? Without going deep into the discussion of differences between reader and player, we can simply say, that the difference of these two positions is not so significant in this actual situation. Not the active player but the activist player can make a difference. Only the player who resists the rules, who invites other players to game and who merges his game with others play session, the one who creates his own rules can win the game. Without developing a critical understanding it is hard to understand Madrid.

Again dichotomies like win/lose, despair/hope, player/activist guided us to a different question. We cannot solve our oppression only with homage to the people died in Madrid. Frasca invites us somewhere else.

Videogames of the Oppressed

In the the writings of Frasca we can see the effect of “Theatre of the Oppressed” of Augusto Boal. All three games remind us of the theatre of Boal and the hypothetical game examples of Frasca his early writings. In the “Theatre of the Oppressed” spectators watch the game and participate in the events on stage. They decide how the actors will behave, they start the play again or they play again in the place of the actors. At the end a social or personal problem questioned with the processes of rethinking and replaying arises around the reasons why the people in the scope of play are oppressed. The continuity of the discussion, the critical thinking is more valuable then to find the answers. His games are a reflection of the “Theatre of the Oppressed” in the field of games. Both the “Theatre of the Oppressed” and “Videogames of the Oppressed” inspired by “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” of Paulo Freire. His pedagogy encourages the people to educate themselves, around their daily problems with the help of other participants. The reflection of this in theatre and games is a participatory art mentality. We can claim that Freire, Boal and Frasca belong to the same tradition.

Frasca’s early writings give us the clues to understand his games from a different perspective. After examining ludographic elements in his games we should look at his games again with the help of his own ideas on games. I already mentioned, that dichotomies in his body of work make us questioning the oppressions and the effects of the war and terror in our lives. But it will make the picture clearer when we find the reasons to design games in this particular way.

I should say that his ideas about game primitives have an effect in his games. He formulates “Videogames of the Oppressed” as games which are easy to produce by players for other players to start a discussion around the daily oppressions of the people. He believes only art and games cannot change the world but these can encourage people for social and personal change. So game primitives, templates of already designed games can be used to design different games to represent the oppressions of the people. *Pac-Man*, *Space Invaders*, car racing or *Street Fighter* are his examples to redesign and represent more complex situations like a problem which you cannot escape, a single player who is attacked by a group, running away from a problem and a fight between two antagonists. (Frasca 2001, 96)

Kabul Kaboom! is using a primitive like *Space Invaders*. In his examples he used this primitive to question the oppression of a person with a different sexual orientation. Other

people are insulting this person and he does not know how to respond. In that sense this situation is represented in the *Space Invaders* primitive with a “gay” in the place of the spaceship and people in the place of the alien ships. People are firing insults instead of missiles but “the gay” cannot fire anything back. The participants of the “solve my oppression” session discuss representational changes to be made in game, to represent the solution. In *Kabul Kaboom!* he uses this primitive to represent the oppression of the civilian in a city under bombardment. We are in the place of participants, but instead of designing counter games, we can only critically discuss the event and thing about solutions.

September 12th represents the oppression of being a jet pilot. We are oppressed because of we have to kill terrorists but it is impossible to keep the civilians alive. The moral question, of our conscience creates the oppression. He is using a primitive similar to *Cabal*, an old shooting game. He changes the enemy with civilians and terrorists. We cannot solve the oppression with the mechanics given by Frasca. Again because of we are not playing the game to redesign it for solving the oppression, we only question the game and imagine the solutions.

Madrid represents the oppression of a citizen who is living in a city which is a target of a terror attack. Frasca choses a primitive similar to *Cabal*, but this time there are no enemies to kill but only candles to click. The same situation exist about the oppressions and solutions.

Frasca’s game primitives are an important part of his style and the dichotomies are the key of the meaning in his games. His writings and games are inviting us to question our everyday reality, to be author of our lives and not just spectators of the events. Is he an auteur in the field of games, or not? I want to answer this with the repetitive element in his games: Certainly this last dichotomy will guide us to a different problem again. Instead of announcing him as a game auteur, I can say that he is one of the best examples to criticize from an auteur perspective. So I hope the oppression of the author of this text will guide you to question other problems of our everyday realities.

6. CONCLUSION

Video games are not only commodities and the purpose of game makers is not only to entertain players. There are few but good examples of how games can be used for education, art, propaganda and criticism. While the development level of the medium increases both new entertainment methods and also new expressive capabilities emerge. Similarly with independent cinema, art collectives, small companies, indy game makers and game auteurs try to establish new creative formulas, expression forms and alternative distribution channels. Additionally game criticism has a responsibility to understand and to be susceptible to different perspectives emerging in the field of games.

One of the ways game criticism can progress is by re-examining old but useful theories which were born in similar conditions and for similar purposes. Auteur theory used to criticize and praise films as art works, which were considered as entertainment products earlier. The establishment of film language, form and aesthetics and the auteur as film artist changed the perception of games. Auteur theory contributed to the perspective on films as art works. Now video games is a relatively young medium and the artistic value of games are generally underestimated. I believe serious criticism can change our expectations and contribute to the development of games. Game auteur criticism is one of these attempts.

Auteur criticism has its own benefits and handicaps. While we try to apply it to video games, we have to choose good examples which fit our criterion. With the existing production methods, industry control and role hierarchy, locating “the artist” of a game is not an easy task. We have to accept that game making is a collaborative effort. In some cases it is possible to find a certain artist with his own style and world view, but in many cases it’s hard to distinguish the game auteur in game development that dominates the process and puts his intentions to content pipeline.

Secondly the theory itself has problems, because it’s very easy to create game maker superstars when we start with false motivations. When the commercial purposes come to the foreground, criticism loses its power. The real power of auteur game criticism is to expand the tools and the criterion for understanding games. The auteur critique should always keep in mind, that critical thinking is the core of the method. Instead of using ready-made tools, we should use new concepts provided by other theories.

The limits of the theory begin with conventional games. It is nearly impossible to criticize games like chess, tic-tac-toe, backgammon etc. with the auteur perspective. Also digitalized versions of these games are out of the reach of the theory. Auteur game criticism is for multiple games belonging to a later period, the time after the establishment of game worlds and representational spaces. Adventure, RPG, MMO, strategy, story driven FPS games are rich sources for the theory. But as I show in Frasca's example, all representational games can be criticized to a certain degree.

The creation of a new and emerging dimension of games is one of the benefits of this theory. Reconsidering or rethinking the games we already know will expand the richness of our game knowledge. Certainly this will affect the art world in a positive way. And some of the mature players will appreciate to see serious game criticism in game magazines. This development is a long term process. This development could also have an effect on the game industry and create the incentive to produce different games to supply this mature and developing demand. At last but not least auteur criticism will contribute to the creation of a new game language, far from engineering terms and possibly give a different meaning to game elements.

My main goal was to show that video games can be analyzed with the concepts of auteur theory. Because my work is one of the first in the field, which uses the auteur concept and applies it to games; I have tried to suggest some ways in which the concept can be used.

I applied auteur game criticism to the games of Gonzalo Frasca. My results are satisfying to a certain extent. But because I based my criticism on three core examples of Frasca, an extended analysis of his other games is necessary to complete the picture. To identify the applicability of the theory to different genres and auteurs, and to see the limits in opposite conditions, further analysis is necessary.

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