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game rule system representation avatar WoW blessing noob kills demon fact body fight pop's spe ingame PST discussion digital
religion game analysis The Last of Us healing lore religio-scape soul dialo class transition experience with rebirth priest genesis clan wedding
simulation ludology death resurrection funeral runies ritual virtual identity buff priest genesis clan wedding gamer
narrative



Untitled. Photographer: Pawel Kadysz (<https://stocksnap.io/photo/OZ4IBMDS8E>).

Issue 09 (2018)

articles

Introduction to a Special Issue on Video Gaming and Death

by John W. Borchert, 1

Death Narratives: A Typology of Narratological Embeddings of Player's Death in Digital Games

by Frank G. Bosman, 12

No Sympathy for Devils: What Christian Video Games Can Teach Us About Violence in Family-Friendly Entertainment

by Vincent Gonzalez, 53

Perilous and Peril-Less Gaming: Representations of Death with Nintendo's Wolf Link Amiibo

by Rex Barnes, 107

"You Shouldn't Have Done That": "Ben Drowned" and the Uncanny Horror of the Haunted Cartridge

by John Sanders, 135

Win to Exit: Perma-Death and Resurrection in Sword Art Online and Log Horizon

by David McConeghy, 170

Death, Fabulation, and Virtual Reality Gaming

by Jordan Brady Loewen, 202

Introduction To A Special Issue On Video Gaming And Death

John W. Borchert

Abstract:

A critical abstract of the special issue of *gamevironments* focused on religion, video gaming and death.

Keywords: religion, gaming, death, ritual, embodiment, play, virtual reality, materiality, gameenvironments

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Spawn, Die, Respawn, Repeat: this is the life cycle of a game body. Death has been an imminent threat to gamers since the earliest cabinet arcade games, lurking at game's edges and directing negotiations of narrative and play. Health bars, 1Ups, invincibility, potions, spells, shields, countdowns, and armor all defer imminent death. No death-runs, speed-runs, cheats and god-modes all deny it. *You Died, Dead and Wasted* textualize death as event, and respawns respond. Video games demand repeated death and demand repeated failure. Video games in one way are about the constant presence of death, as defining the boundaries of play. After death, games ask players to try again – video games then, in another way, are about overcoming death. Games allow human beings to navigate and negotiate death and dying as and at play by bringing death close. So, what can video games tell us about death?

Any approach to this question entangles three fields – death studies, games studies, and religious studies. Each is interdisciplinary, each expanding their territory along with the digital increasingly embedded in the quotidian. Death studies invests in materiality, subjectivity, and interrelations between the living and the dead to pose

representations of video-game death in popular culture, offering some critical and cultural distance.

Jordan Brady Loewen, in focusing on virtual reality and affect, points to new technologies as reformatting relationships between bodies, play, and death. Adapting philosophies of the virtual to scientific understandings of virtual realities and embodiments, Loewen argues that it is the ability to trigger out-of-body-experiences specifically that can augment how we understand death in video games. Changing perceptions of the body, he goes on to say, will have yet unknown consequences for moral and political receptions and reformations of the body in relation to things like religion. Death and dying here serve as a hinge for understanding the particularities of embodiment in the face of new technologies, and Loewen’s theoretical work creates concepts for thinking on the edge of new mediations.

Joshua Wise offers an eschatological take on of death and games. Presenting Christian theological formations of body continuity and identity across the gap of death, Wise then applies these theories to game bodies and their own continuity across in game death and between game sessions. Wise argues that game-bodies and their continuation across this gap of death is largely tied to human identity, human being, and human continuity. Wise, through his theological work, demonstrates how games offer places not only to think beyond perceived boundaries of what it is to be human, but offer new opportunities to understand how we think of ourselves as such.

Kathrin Trattner offers a critical review of a simulation game based around managing a graveyard, pointing to its indulgence in bourgeois desires of the commodification of death, where medieval motifs and dark humor cloak another instance of managing

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