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THE RULES OF THE GAME, THE BURDEN OF NARRATIVE: ENTER THE MATRIX

Diane Carr, IOE, University of London

Much of the commercial success that *Enter the Matrix* has enjoyed is the result of its relationship with the *Matrix* trilogy, rather than the quality of play it offers.ⁱ The game was released at the same time as *The Matrix Reloaded* (May 2003) and immediately became the fastest-selling title in its publisher's history.ⁱⁱ The game is part of the *Matrix* franchise, but whatever its allegiances, it is a computer game. More specifically, it is an action adventure computer game. As is typical with such games, the action in *Enter the Matrix* centres on a characterised avatar (the game's playable protagonist). The avatar is viewed primarily from behind as they pass through a series of spaces that are accessed conditionally, and in a particular order, while the player manages a variety of quantifiable resources (health, ammunition) and confronts various obstacles and adversaries. The avatar has a menu of moves – run, climb, drive, throw, shoot, punch, etc. These potential actions are strategically triggered by the player in response to stimuli (acts, events, situations) in the game. The game is made up of levels – sequential chapters, or episodes. Between levels are non-interactive digital animations that elaborate on the game's narrative, relate background information, or set up the next mission for the player and their avatar. *Enter the Matrix* also incorporates short, filmed sequences at various points. These scenes are where the game's close links to the *Matrix* series are most explicit, because they feature supporting actors and sets from *The Matrix Reloaded*. The central characters in *Enter the Matrix* are minor characters in *The Matrix Reloaded*. Similarly, the events portrayed in *Enter the Matrix*, play a supporting role to events in *The Matrix Reloaded*. This suggests that it is possible to trace differences in status between the game and the feature films, at a textual level.ⁱⁱⁱ If these inequities are not acknowledged or accounted for, an analysis of the franchise's enlistment of different media for narrative ends will remain incomplete. The borders between the game and the film trilogy are permeable, blurred by the inclusion of filmed sequences into the game, and by 'game like' qualities in the feature films, as well as by the memories and associations carried by users as they move between these texts. Aylish Wood proposes that 'instead of thinking of *The Matrix* as a conventional film text that tells a narrative with a straightforward hero figure, perhaps it is more useful to think of *The Matrix* as equivalent to working through levels of a video game' (2004: 127) and Sean Cubitt point to the referential structure as less 'the cyberspace of internet than...that of computer games, constantly evoked in the use of mobile phones to guide protagonists through the mazes of the city' (2004: 229). It is one thing, however, to recognise that these texts share ground, and another to assume that this sharing is unproblematic or that the territory in question is uncontested.

ENTER THE MATRIX TELLS A STORY

Questions about the apparently narrative qualities of computer games have led to lively debate within computer game studies over the past couple of years. Broadly speaking, theorists examining narrative in computer games have tended to fall into one of two camps. One set accepts it, more or less as a given, that computer games involve narrative to some degree, and thus they move straight on to asking 'how do games tell or generate stories?' or 'how might

games evolve to tell more compelling stories?’ Examples include Pearce’s ‘Towards a Game Theory of Game’ (2002), Janet Murray’s *Hamlet on the Holodeck* (1997) and Henry Jenkins’ ‘Game Design as Narrative Architecture’ (2002). A second set of analysts discusses narrative (or its absence) in computer games using the narrative theory of Genette (1980) or Chatman (1978). As a consequence, terms such as ‘story’, ‘narrative’ and ‘plot’ have distinct and precise meanings in their work. Examples would include Jesper Juul in ‘Games Telling Stories?’ (2001) Markku Eskelinen in ‘The Gaming Situation’ (2001) and Espen Aarseth in *Cybertext*. (1997).^{iv}

In all the above examples, the analysts have produced useful, thought provoking theory. However, because the terms at the centre of their analysis are differently defined, their various conclusions are difficult to reconcile. The aforementioned papers by Juul and Eskelinen use narrative theory to argue that computer games need to be understood as games (rather than as narratives, drama, or cinema). Elsewhere, Eskelinen has criticised Henry Jenkins, and Jenkins’ paper ‘Game Design as Narrative Architecture’, for failing to employ similarly specific terminology: “Jenkins doesn’t define the contested concepts (narratives, stories, and games) so central to his argumentation. That’s certainly an effective way of building a middle ground (or a periphery), but perhaps not the most convincing one” (Eskelinen 2002:120). Computer games are not primarily about storytelling, yet narrative theory provides computer games theorists with an arsenal of wonderfully precise models with which to examine the organisation of perspective, event, time and action within a game-text. Yet, in the article concerned, Jenkins is not relying on narrative theory. He describes computer games as spaces in which stories are spun via the actions of the player, rather than told, and he is using a concept of ‘story’ that is based on the work of Michel de Certeau (1984). According to de Certeau, stories are one of the ways through which users customise spaces, and while his use of the terms ‘story’ and ‘narrative’ does not match the definitions proposed by narrative theory, this does not limit the applicability of his concepts to the analysis of computer games and play.

It is easy enough to establish that these various approaches hinge on different conceptualisations of story and narrative. What is more interesting is exploring how these notions might be productively aligned. Because of its declared narrative agenda, its various failings, and its rather servile relationship to a master or embedding text (a ‘matrix’ text, in other words) *Enter the Matrix* is an excellent game through which to explore these ideas.

GAMES AND NARRATIVE

Perhaps the most important part of discussing the narrative aspects of any computer game is admitting that there are sizable differences between games and narrative. Any discussion of the similarities between games and narrative needs to incorporate recognition of their distinct properties. Jesper Juul defines games as follows: “A game is a rule-based formal 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 attached to the outcome, and the consequences of the activity are optional and negotiable.” (2003:35) Play is a self-directed activity undertaken for pleasure or diversion, and games involve measurable outcomes (scores, wins, losses) as well as, to some degree or other, an element of chance. The game has components (chess has its chess-pieces, for instance) of symbolic value that are manipulated by the player. Games have rules, and these rules might involve time (as when the players take turns) or govern the manner in which a component can be utilised - the ways that it can move through space, for example.

A narrative, on the other hand, is “the recounting...of one or more real or fictitious events communicated by one, two or several (more or less overt) narrators to one, two or several (more or less overt) narratees” (Prince, cited by Eskelinen, 2001). Narrative theorists themselves

argue about terms, but according to most, a narrative is made up of two parts: the story, and the discourse. The story is the intangible chain of source events, while the discourse is the expression of these events (the representation of the setting and the characters that enable these events). "In simple terms, the story is the *what* in a narrative that is depicted, discourse the *how*." (Chatman 1978:19, emphasis in original). The narrative discourse is a communicative transmission within a text. It proceeds from a sending position, the implied author (the organising principal within the text), to a receiving position (the implied reader) via various conduits: narrators and narratees. (Chatman 1978:148-150).

According to narrative theory, story-events are only available to us once they have been plotted in time and space and re-presented within the narrative discourse. Thus they have already happened. During play, on the other hand, events are improvised: the player instigates events in the present (Juul 2001). The player may have a hand in the duration of these events, and it may be the player who decides the perspective through which these events are depicted. In other words, rather than receiving a plotted discourse, the player has a hand in plotting events (Aarseth 1997 pp 111-114). In the process, the player moves from the 'sender' end of Chatman's model of narrative as transmission, to the receiving end - from something like the implied author, to something like an implied reader, and back again. Additionally, it is the player who decides which, if any, of these events might be 'saved', and which played over. Narrative theory helps specify the ways in which computer games are 'not narrative' and in the process, somewhat paradoxically, narrative theory proves its relevance to computer game studies.

It is one thing to assert that *Enter the Matrix* 'tells a story', and another to explain how (or how successfully) this particular computer game manages to combine narrative with game-play. In fact, it is possible that *Enter the Matrix's* first job is to facilitate compelling play, and this aim is not helped by its commitment to storytelling. *Enter the Matrix* serves the story arc of *The Matrix* franchise and, as a result, the game's ability to offer gamers compelling play is compromised. The game's narrative commitments overshadow its 'game-ness'. The game wraps its goals in narrative, and then pins these goals to events within *The Matrix Reloaded*. The outcome of this is that the player (in the guise of either avatar, Niobe or Ghost) is left picking up packages, running errands and making deliveries that will allow for 'big' events in the feature film to be enacted by the high status stars.

ORDER ON THE FREEWAY

At one point in the game the player must dodge aggressive opponents while driving on a freeway, with the aim of getting the avatar Niobe and her vehicle close to a truck where Morpheus (in *The Matrix Reloaded*) is duelling with an agent.^v When, after multiple attempts, the player manages to manoeuvre close enough, the mission is accomplished, play stops dead, and lustrous and spectacular images from the film take over from the blocky sterility of the game-world. The pretence is that Morpheus' acts are enabled by our (or at least Niobe's) actions. Thus the player, if they persist long enough to accomplish their mission, triggers a set of events, the culmination of which is an event in the first narrative (the feature film). But Niobe will be there onscreen, on time, in *The Matrix Reloaded*, whether the player persists or not. The knock-on effect of this is that the multiple events of play (the player's various attempts at the level, their particular, personal responses to the game's obstacles) shrink into insignificance.



The freeway scene – Niobe is driving, Ghost is blasting cars out of the way. Morpheus is in the distance, on top of the truck. Screenshot from www.enterthematrixgame.com *Enter The Matrix* (2003) dev. Shiny Entertainment, publ. Atari Inc.

There are alternative ways to reference events across texts. The ‘drop’ made by Jue, the heroine of *Final Flight of the Osiris*, from *The Animatrix*, is directly referred to by characters in both *The Matrix Reloaded* and *Enter the Matrix*. But in this case, the characters are not required to occupy the same points in time and space as Jue: the events depicted in *Final Flight* are referred to, rather than arrived at. Thus the animation is allowed to continue an independent existence. While there might well be discrepancies in status between this short animation and the feature films in terms of budget, medium, or the evaluative perceptions of audience, at the level of the textual, *Final Flight* enjoys a parallel life, rather than a supporting role. The owners of the *Matrix* franchise have an online multiplayer game in development.^{vi} *The Matrix Online* will be set in the time that follows *Matrix Revolutions*, and thus it will refer to events in the *Matrix* series, without having to duplicate or serve them. Unlike events in *Final Flight*, or in the new online game, events in *Enter the Matrix* are bound to sequences in *The Matrix Reloaded*. The multiple and disposable in-game events acted out by the player (in the guise of Niobe or Ghost) cannot compete with the spectacular, expensive, singular events acted out by Neo and Morpheus.

Narrative theorist Chatman has distinguished between “discourse-time – the time it takes to peruse the discourse – and story-time, the duration of the purported events of the narrative” (1978:62). The events in *The Matrix Reloaded* imported into *Enter the Matrix* are unique and singular, in comparison to the concertina style expansion of discourse-time that is a result of the repeated play events. Thus the narrative ‘now’ of the filmed sequences is more coherent than the fractured, kaleidoscopic ‘now’ of game-play. This difference need not necessarily signal a difference in stature. If the game world was as visually compelling as the film’s world, for instance, perhaps events in the game could ‘hold their own’ despite the proximity of filmed events.

There are precedents within narrative theory for the accounting of such hierarchies. Chatman touches on the question of the relative status of events within a discourse, when he discriminates between kernels (pivotal events) and satellites (elaborative yet non essential events). “Narrative events have not only a logic of connection, but of logic of *hierarchy*. Some are more important than others” (1978:53, emphasis in original). A minor plot event, or satellite can be “deleted without disturbing the logic of the plot” (1978:54). The four event strands present in *Enter The Matrix* (filmed and shared with the feature, filmed and unique to the game,

digitally animated, played) take up orbits of increasing distance from the core narrative, *The Matrix Reloaded*. The events that are furthest out (the most disposable) are those that come into being through game-play. These manipulated events might be repeated many times, played over, discarded, re-routed and saved as the player struggles to achieve a particular game goal by staying on the road, dodging agents, or out shooting the opposition. The upshot of the overlapping relationship between the feature film, and the game, is that the player's skills, actions or strategies only have ramifications in the equivalent of a backwater.

In 'Entertainment and Utopia' Richard Dyer has written about the relationship between narrative and non-narrative sequences in film musicals. Dyer argues that the two modes, in combination, evoke and then respond to the yearnings of their audiences. Musicals are utopian, not because they necessarily feature perfect worlds, but because they present "what utopia would feel like" (1993:273). For instance, a depression era musical might involve a narrative of struggle, want and aspiration, and then counter this with non-narrative interludes, 'big numbers', where various glittering excesses (of legs, sequins, stairs, and energy) churn in an outpouring of decadence and plenty. Dyer's analysis demonstrates that non-similar portions of a text can suggestively co-exist, and it is arguable that some computer games have managed to incorporate narrative segments in a manner that compliments game-play. In such cases the game's least variable aspects (including the pre-plotted narrative content) echo the most variable events (those that are choreographed by the player in real-time). The *Tomb Raider* series, for example, prioritises the penetration of new spaces: puzzles are solved, resources gained and monsters despatched, all so that Lara Croft can continue her journey. The player's perspective is quite confined (the 'camera' hovers in space behind Lara as she runs along). Space is rationed. This is balanced in the cut scenes, when real time animations reward the player by swinging the 'camera' on great swooping arcs through the scenery. In other games, such as *Baldur's Gate*, temporal factors (turn taking, strategic pausing) are central to game-play, and these are complimented by narrative themes related to time: fate, doom, destiny. However, *Enter the Matrix*, in part because it answers to an external primary text, is unable to establish any such bond between its various strands.

SAVING BANE

Other problematic aspects of *Enter The Matrix* can be examined via the narrative theorist Genette's term 'focalization' (1980 p 186, 189-211). Focalization involves the manner in which a narrative discourse positions or describes a narrator's perspective - perspective in the sense of 'what they see', and what they know. An analysis of focalization involves asking "who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective" (p.186, emphasis in original) and what, if any, are the limits of their vision or insight.

At one point in *Enter the Matrix* the avatar character (and by extension, the player) is compelled to rescue Bane. According to *Matrix Reloaded* – which, it is fair to expect, the player has seen, Bane is a psychotic traitor. The player cannot act on this information. On the contrary, the player is obliged to ignore what they know. As the imperative tone of this walkthrough ('walkthroughs' are game guides, written by players and distributed online) makes clear, the player who wants to progress through the game, must protect Bane. "Once these cops are down, the real battle starts. You now have to protect Malachi, Bane, and Ballard on the centre walkway from the advancement of the SWAT team...Remember that if one of the rebels dies on the walkway, the mission starts over." (Sajban 2003). It is true that there are cases where a narrator within a conventional narrative form might 'know' less than the implied reader. For instance, if the narrator is a naïve child, the reader might be expected to recognise the adult intrigues as they filter through the child's innocent version of events. In a satisfying game however, information is central to strategy, and the player acts, exercises their prerogative, and

witnesses the ramifications and outcomes of their choices.^{vii} Yet in *Enter The Matrix*, the player has information that they are not allowed to use.

It would be wrong to assume that either the player or the avatar takes a position within the game-text that is equivalent to that of the narrator within a narrative discourse. A major reason for this is that within models of narrative, such as that espoused by Seymour Chatman in *Story And Discourse* (1978:151) the narrator is not in an orchestrating position: the narrator does not plot or generate events, as much as describe and enact events from within the narrative discourse (under the direction of the 'implied author'). The player controls the avatar (within certain parameters), and thus they have the power to instigate events, and influence their duration: to plot, at least to a degree. For this reason, it is more probable that the avatar and the user provisionally combine to occupy something like a narratee/implied reader position (when they are the recipients of 'told' events) and swing to something like a narrator/implied author position (when they instigate events). But what happens to this mobile bonding of player-with-avatar, when the player (who has seen *Matrix Reloaded*, as well as the filmed scenes implicating Bane included in the game) is privy to information, of which the avatar must act blissfully unaware? How is the player supposed to feel about their mission to safeguard Bane? The crucial purpose of information in a game is that it will enable or arm the player. In this particular and peculiar case, the player must ignore what they know and proceed with the mission: the outcome of this is that the player is momentarily reduced from instigator to dupe, from strategist, to patsy.

PLAY, STORIES, PRACTICE

As the above suggests, the game's narrative commitments compromise its playability. The game must work against itself, in order to serve the storytelling agenda of the master text. To examine the ramifications of this, of the game's 'supporting role', we turn back to Henry Jenkins' article, 'Game Design as Narrative Architecture'. More precisely, we turn to the theory that strongly influences Jenkins' use of the term 'spatial stories' – Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984). Throughout this book de Certeau describes a dynamic, generative partnership of non-equals. On the one hand are the sanctioning, legalising and delineating discourses of empowered institutions and producers. On the other, are the proliferating, ephemeral and transient practices of consumers. These practices, in fact, reposition consumption itself as a form of production. While this resistance involves a kind of empowerment, the practices are the symptom of an unequal distribution of power, and this inequity is not itself overturned by these practices. This notion is enlarged upon through various analogies.

Legal discourses describe a rented apartment, for example, but the recouping and personalising practices of the inhabitant generate a form of conversion, when they "furnish (it) with their acts and memories". Speakers make a language 'their own' through personality, prerogative, idiosyncrasy or accent (i.e. through the act of speaking) while the grid of the modern city is remade through the uses and practices of pedestrians (1984:xxi). For de Certeau, stories are one of the ephemeral practices that convert plotted place, into dynamic space. This distinction between place and space is important. A place is "an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability" whereas "A *space* exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables...In short, *space is a practiced place*. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers. In the same way, an act of reading is the space produced by the practice of a particular place: a written text" (1984:117 emphasis in original). Places are identified, whereas spaces are actualised. Place is associated with static and ordered clarity, and thus with a denial of temporality (because time infers motion, change, transience). Spaces involve trajectories,

tactics, motion and operations. In other words, space, in contrast to place, hosts dynamic change and temporality.

Throughout de Certeau's analysis, power is associated with production, demarcation and the clarity achieved through reduction or distance, while spaces are equated with immediacy and improvisation, wit and resistance. Viewed from the top of a skyscraper, the grid of the city is an ordered plan: a place. From the perspective of the wandering pedestrians crossing paths at street level, the city is a practice: a space. Stories, suggests de Certeau, have the power to convert inert place, into the 'other': into space. Stories "carry out a labour that constantly transforms places into spaces or spaces into places" (1988:118). As this indicates, de Certeau's concept of story clearly differs from that of narrative theory; not least because he seems to use the terms story and narrative interchangeably. It should also be clear that it would be a mistake to discount his thesis because of this. It would also be a mistake to draft the two planes of narrative theory, straight onto the two kinds of phenomena detailed in de Certeau's essay – to associate plot and discourse with production and demarcation, and story-events with ephemeral practices, even if it might be possible to argue that there are analogies between the concepts.

What might be more productive, is imagining how de Certeau's concept of 'practice' relates to game-play within a digital game, while his account of place, might more resemble those plotted elements within the game. As the player proceeds through a level of *Enter The Matrix*, they generate (via acts and practices) a trajectory. This trajectory through the game's space is not a singular, unwavering arc. It will vary from player to player, and from play session to session. Events are repeated, or repeated only to be altered by chance. The repertoire of the avatar's motions are played with, actions are duplicated, new potentials uncovered, and the player's level of skill increases, an alteration that will be reflected in the increased speed, accuracy or agility of the protagonist. A trajectory is dropped and resumed and repeated until that leg of the journey is completed, the mission accomplished, or the goal achieved. At which point, having attained the state demanded by the game at that moment, another piece of storytelling is unleashed with an animated or filmed slice of narrative. Play is experiential, a chain of non-static events. Narrative segments, on the other hand, are non-interactive, relatively static and pre-ordered. What this suggests is that at least within the context of this computer game, play is closer to the resistant and ephemeral tactics of the consumer, while narrative parallels the plotted strategies of the producer. And what this in turn suggests is that by harnessing the in-game narrative to an extra-gamic cinematic narrative, the authority of the determining producer-definer is amplified, while the authority of the playful consumer-producer decreases in ratio.

According to de Certeau, all consumption (whether it is of a narrative, a television show, a religion, or an apartment) involves creative reformulations by users. While this proviso should halt our descent into paranoid rhetoric, there is at least one other way that the producers of *Enter The Matrix* appear to have deliberately plotted for the recouping of 'practices' commonly enjoyed informally by player-consumers. The game, in a nod to aspects of *The Matrix*, includes a mode called 'Hacking' on its menu. The player is invited to hack in to discover 'just how deep the rabbit hole goes' and thus unlock variation on levels, access different weapons, etc. In other words, the hacking mode, takes the place of 'cheats'. Within gamer culture, generally speaking, cheats are discovered and gleefully swapped by players over the Internet or through friends. Cheats involve informal, social, consumer practices of creative resistance; they are a tactic for reclaiming the text, for rezoning a space within the text and seemingly outside of the apparent jurisdiction of its producers. By formalising the 'cheat', the suppliers of *Enter the Matrix* effectively re-colonise it, shifting it from an alternative practice, to a sanctioned procedure.

Conclusion

Enter The Matrix contributes to a cross-media narrative franchise, but it does so only by downplaying its media specific potential: by making play events answerable to narrative events. Many action adventure computer games do this, to one degree or another, when they incorporate backstories and narrative qualities and storytelling inserts. The difference is that not only do the play events in *Enter the Matrix* culminate in static segments of plotted discourse, but that these segments are minor events played out by minor characters in the primary narrative: an expensive and spectacular feature film. *Enter the Matrix* is not an independent sibling-text, existing in an open relationship to the narrative of *The Matrix Reloaded*. On the contrary, the events recounted in *Enter the Matrix*, are bound to the 'main event' of the first narrative: the primary, embedding narrative, the 'now' from which other events are ordered. If different media contribute to a trans-media narrative, does it matter if the various contributing texts are granted equal status? If, as argued here, these texts do not enjoy equal status, what are the ramifications for the bodies onscreen in those texts? What does that say about the status of players, relative to readers or viewers? Game-play, as an ephemeral, proliferating and creative act, is suggestive of the resistant practices described by de Certeau. Perhaps, in part, this explains the necessity of containment: play acts are bracketed by the in-game narrative events. These in-game narrative events, in their turn, serve the master narrative. It is valid to ask these questions, but there are also various assumptions that should be avoided. In opposing game-play to narration, for instance, this argument runs the risk of reductively misrepresenting narrative as 'closed' and games as 'open'.

Consent is central to play, and playing *Enter the Matrix* involves negotiating with rules, invariables, controls and commands. The game's environment, although it appears in 3D, actually funnels the player in quite specific directions. Only some doors will open. Only some rooms offer action. Only some actions are effective, and not all acts have outcomes. Action adventure computer games in general tend to feature fairly extensive plotting. The player, as well as manipulating events themselves, is confronted with narrative material (pre-set events that are related to the user) and characterisation. Usually the bulk of this narrative is slotted between levels as animations. *Enter the Matrix* is not unusual in this regard. But *Enter the Matrix* has real trouble reconciling its various parts. Even the relationship between the various real time segments is problematic: Some are digital animations. Others are on film. The overlap between the in-game events and the film feature's narrative events undermines any potential coherence between *Enter the Matrix*'s different elements. In order to 'work' as a whole, the mechanics, physics, limits and possibilities of the game-world, would need to establish a degree of productive tension with the non-interactive full motion (animated, or filmed) segments.

The Matrix Reloaded overshadows *Enter the Matrix*. The proximity of the master narrative limits the sense that the player's actions have demonstrable or alternative outcomes. This in turn limits any sense that the player is exercising their prerogative and making meaningful choices - prerequisites of compelling play experiences. The scale of the master narrative shrinks the player's sphere of influence. In other words, the manner in which the *Enter the Matrix* has been drafted into the story arc of the *Matrix* cycle is detrimental to its ability to function as a game. It could be argued that by stretching the *Matrix* series over a range of texts and media, the producers have allowed for a variable and fertile array of spaces, which the consumer/audience can dip into, rework and explore. According to de Certeau consumers will dive through any text, appropriating and refitting it, whatever the strategic intentions of its producers. But we have not been focusing on the many different potential acts of users, nor has any attempt been made here to document the paths taken through the series by actual players. These paths can be transcribed, collated or recorded, but de Certeau warns that any such data might only refer to "the absence of what has passed by. Surveys of routes miss what was: the

act itself of passing by". (1984:97) What has been under consideration in this chapter are the indications that *Enter The Matrix* is host to hierarchical patterns (of temporality, events and plot). Tracing these patterns is a form of textual autopsy, not a form of fortune telling: what these texts become in use, to their audiences, is another story.

ⁱ This online review by Mugwum at *Eurogamer* who rated the game 4/10, is fairly representative of the reviews for *Enter The Matrix*.

Let's be fair: *Enter The Matrix* has almost its fair share of good bits. The hacking mode is a bit of a laugh, the combat can be quite fun (and if you haven't played *Max Payne* you'll probably enjoy it even more), it's reasonably lengthy (more than the seven hours we've seen quoted elsewhere, especially if you play it on Normal and go for both campaigns), it has slow-motion sniping and some madcap running-away-from-agents rooftop chases, and it plugs some of the gaps in and poses more brain-teasing questions about a storyline that has most of the world hooked, but it is blighted on so many levels by the blundering stupidity of its malformed stillborn design that recommending it is beyond us. The blue pill never looked so tasty.

Online at <http://www.eurogamer.net/article.php?article_id=52134> accessed May 2004

ⁱⁱ *Enter The Matrix* was developed by Shiny Entertainment, and published by Atari. Players and gaming magazines attribute some of the game's rough edges to its being rushed to meet this simultaneous release date. "I think the production was rushed and because of this there were a couple bugs left..." (Justin Lee, 18.7.03) Or "I like the matrix. I like everything about it except this game. You can tell this game was rushed to the shelves. There's glitches everywhere (*sic*)" (Kyle, 11.7.03). These player reviews are from www.videogamereview.com (Thanks to Andrew Burn for bringing this site to my attention). The gaming press made similar statements: "No doubt some of these technical shortcomings are down to the game having been rushed out in time for the film's May 15 US release (though it was in development for three years). (It shows) signs of having been put together at the last minute." (Edge issue 125 p 95)

ⁱⁱⁱ Looking at differences in status between the *media* (games and films) would be a separate question. Also it should be noted that I am not looking at the positive values or status attributed by fans of the *Matrix* to the game precisely because of its links to the franchise. I am not looking at the status of the Wachowski brothers as 'authors', what their involvement with the game means to their fans, or to the game's promoters. Nor am I analysing relationships between 'original' and subsequent texts. These are all valid questions, but they cannot be adequately addressed in a single chapter.

^{iv} Within computer games studies circles, this debate has been differently framed, and dubbed 'narratologists vs. ludologists', see Frasca (2003). For more on computer games and literary theory see Kücklich (2003)

^v Players go through the game either as Niobe, or Ghost (or one, then the other). For a complete walkthrough of the game, see <http://faqs.ign.com/articles/403/403763p1.html> *Enter The Matrix* FAQ/Walkthrough by Irish (Matt Sajban) accessed May 2004. Interviews, trailers and screenshots are available at the game's official website www.enterthematrix.com

^{vi} see <http://thematrixonline.warnerbros.com>). The online game is still in development at the time of writing, and so it does not feature in this analysis, and as *The Matrix Online* will be an online game (where users play in a shared world) it will significantly differ from *Enter The Matrix*.

^{vii} In the game design and analysis manual *Rules of Play*, Salen and Zimmerman (2004) write that "understanding choice in a game can be extremely useful in diagnosing games design problems. If your game is failing to deliver meaningful play, it is probably because there is a breakdown somewhere in the action > outcome chain." (2004:65) Salen and Zimmerman point out that for the game to work, the players' choices and actions should result in "meaningful outcomes" and that the player needs to receive clear indications that their actions have ramifications (2004:66)

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