World of Warcraft Dramaturgical Approach:
a Drama that Plays with its Own Limits

Victor Cayres & Adolfo Duran

CAPES Foundation, Ministry of Education of Brazil / Federal University of Bahia

Abstract

Video games Dramaturgical models are not thoroughly mapped yet. In this context, even a computer game like *World of Warcraft* lacks dramaturgical analysis. In this paper, we analyse *World of Warcraft* under a dramaturgical perspective. We support that the dramaturgic composition of World of Warcraft is structured in order to allow game expansions. This means that World of Warcraft is dramaturgically built to incorporate new characters and to expand fictional time and space to create new game experiences.

Keywords: videogames, World of Warcraft, MMORPG, RPG tradition

Résumé en français à la fin du texte

Introduction

Dramaturgical models for video games are not yet thoroughly mapped. In this context, even a computer game like *World of Warcraft* lacks dramaturgical analysis. *World of Warcraft* is the most popular Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game (MMORPG) in the World, with almost 7 million current subscribers and more than 100 million accounts created since it was launched in 2004.

There is important research about this game in several fields, such as sociology, anthropology, philosophy, communication and media studies. Hilde Corneliussen and Jill Rettberg (2008) organized a book about *World of Warcraft* with chapters written by several researchers that study *WoW* under diverse perspectives. Bonnie Nardi (2009) unveils the field of a virtual ethnography in *World of Warcraft*, reporting her experience in the world of Azeroth as a Night Elf Wizard. Sébastien Genvo (2006) in his PhD thesis studies the intercultural perspectives in video games and chooses *World of Warcraft* as a game to be analyzed. Maude Bonenfant (2010) uses *World of Warcraft* as a case study to discuss the theoretical perspectives of contemporary studies about games.

In this paper, we suggest that the dramaturgic composition of *World of Warcraft* is structured in order to allow game expansions. This means that *World of Warcraft* is dramaturgically built to incorporate new characters and to expand fictional time and space in order to create new gaming experiences. This kind of dramaturgy has not arisen with *WOW* and this paper identifies relationships between this MMORPG and other dramaturgical strategies in digital and non-digital games. *WoW* shares a set of characteristics with several other MMORPG (*Everquest*, *Tibia*, *Ultima online*) and a great part of these characteristics are already present in Multi-User Dungeons (MUD), text-based multi-user systems that preceded the MMORPG. According to Mortensen (2006), MMORPG currently occupies the same place and have the same social functions the MUD has. What these genres have in common is their game structure based in missions, character development and fictional context. Aarseth (2008) even states that beyond the graphics few things changed from MUD to MMORPG in the last 30 years.

The research presented in this paper is based on a case study. It considers *World of Warcraft* as an emblematic product that uses dramaturgical strategies also present in other MMORPGs, Multi user dungeons (MUDS), digital and tabletop RPGs, and even non-game fictions. We analyse data collected from direct observation of the object. We played *World of Warcraft* with a character of each race available in the game up to level 7 at least (except trolls and gnomes).[1] The first levels of *World of Warcraft* introduce important aspects of the gameplay. This kind of information is available for every player independently of the race chosen. However, each race reframes the game experience with a specific set of narrative information. Besides the race, every character should also have a class (Warrior, Paladin, Hunter, Priest, Shaman, Mage, Warlock, Death Knight, Druid and Monk) and we played with all classes as well. The choice of classes directly affects the game experience defining the skills and functions a character can have. Characters of most races are already linked to one of two factions in the game world. Only the Pandaren can postpone this choice. Much of *World of Warcraft* narrative is based on spatial exploration, and after each character gets out of his birthplace, the rest of world can be explored. Since the world zones are organized by level and they can belong to one of two main factions, be neutral or contested, we also played with one character of each faction until level 90, the maximum possible level in the *Mists of Pandaria* expansion. We also played a few more characters between level 1 and level 64 to analyse some games aspects. In Total, we played with 24 characters for around 700 hours. We analysed the data extracted from this experience in comparison with that of Games Studies and Drama Theories.

We have observed that the *World of Warcraft* dramaturgical construction relies on four narratives dimensions. In the first dimension the game offers a limited amount of possible activities in a given fictional universe. In this context, the users can construct their own drama. In the second dimension, the software offers to the player a set of scripts to follow through quests and instances. In the third dimension the game offers a serial narrative constituted by the game base and every expansion. Finally, in the fourth dimension, *WoW* is integrated in the *Warcraft* franchise transmedia narrative together with several products like

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[1] Other races in the game include Human, Orc, Dwarf, Undead, Night Elf, Tauren, Draenei, Blood Elf, Worgen, Goblin and Pandaren.

others games, books, comics, videos, etc. Over the next sections we will analyse how these narratives dimensions are expressed dramatically in the game.

Theoretical Background

In this paper, we analyse *World of Warcraft* under a dramaturgical perspective. We support that *World of Warcraft*, like other video games, presents its narrative information in a dramatic way. This means, according to Aristotle (Aristóteles, 1984), that the characters perform the narrative action themselves, similarly to someone playing a role in theatre. Even if we identify the game narrative as drama, we should recognize a strong literary genre hybridization in *World of Warcraft*. Sarrazac (2002) supports that the meaning of the word drama has changed over time especially since the beginning of the XXth century when several theatre dramaturges have written plays based on epic and lyric approaches. This dramaturgical approach does not ignore the ludic dimension of the software.

Our analyses take as reference the work of the philosopher Jacques Henriot (1989) and the game studies researchers who follow his theory such as Sébastien Genvo (2006) and Maude Bonenfant (2010). That approach understands that what defines a game is the relationship between its structure and the ludic attitude of the player. Taking these theoreticians as reference, we understand *World of Warcraft* as a game structure to be played. It invites users to adopt a ludic attitude, and only when they accept this invitation, they are actually playing a game. Henriot`s theoretical approach allows three possibilities for analysis by identifying the three main meanings of the word game (*jeux*): the game material, the game structure and the ludic attitude. Thus, taking this approach into consideration it is possible to choose to do a dramaturgical analysis of the object conceived as game material, in this case, *WoW* as software; the game structures that this object allows, meaning the game rules; and finally the player performance guided by a ludic attitude. It is important to signal that Henriot has made this distinction on a theoretical level, but he alerts that each meaning of word game (*jeu*) exists only in relationship with others. This implies that even if it is possible to obtain a dramaturgical analysis focusing on one aspect of the game, it is important to consider other aspects. Considering this, the present study examines *World of Warcraft* as software designed to invite users to develop a ludic activity and play a game or even several games inside

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certain limits and possibilities offered by a system of rules partially inscribed in software and partially defined by the player's uses.

The first narrative dimension: player performance

WoW proposes a virtual space with specific possibilities and constraints that allows the player to do a great number of activities through the player character (PC). The PC in *WoW* can, for instance, walk, run, jump, speak, whisper, scream, laugh, dance, eat, drink, collect objects, ride animals, mythic creatures and vehicles, fight with beasts, monsters and with other players, and so forth. So, with this set of PC activities, users can create a tellable action, as Klastrup (2003) has shown.

What we find in virtual worlds is exactly performances (people acting) and thus, transposing Ryan's ideas to a multi-user environment, we need to understand "tellability" in a somewhat different light; not as a description of plots that would make good narratives (fictive people's events narrated to a reader), but of real events, realised and performed by players (and subsequent readers) in interaction with each other and the world, which would *retrospectively* make good stories.

We support that more than a "*retrospectively*" tellable action, *WoW* user actions are already fictional actions, they are dramatic actions, in the sense that the characters acts by themselves (Aristóteles, 1984), even if someone plays them. Independently of an external audience, the players, as the actors in theatre, are already spectators of they own actions on the moment of its enactment – and even in a more privileged position because video game players can see the characters that they play. The difficulty of analysing the narrative in games is similar to analysing narrative in theatre. As Ubersfeld (2005) wrote in her work, the *fabula* is a part of theatre that is not dramatic in itself, but its analysis is fundamental to comprehend theatre plays structure. In a similar way, we can say the narrative is a part of video games that is not constitutive of the game, but it is fundamental to understand many games. In the first narrative dimension of *WoW*, the software allows players to build part of its dramaturgy, offering elements to compose a dramatic narrative from a set of possible activities in a given fictional universe.

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A subset of activities in *WoW* are restricted to player characters who have reached a certain level. Even spatial exploration is very limited for low-level players. These restrictions encourage players levelling their characters. Players have to do specific activities to obtain Experience Points in order to reach higher levels: kill other characters (neutral or hostile characters, player-characters or non-player-characters), find new zones and accomplish quests. Therefore, the staging of a free dramatic narrative that uses the whole set of activities that players can do directly conflicts with the need, determined by the game rules, of levelling up, by executing the three specific activities that give more experience points to the players.

Questing is the most rewarding activity for players who want to level up their player-characters. According to Caïra (2005), quests were the ideal structure to link a series of combats on the tabletop RPG. The same thing happens in *WoW*. Questing is not just about killing enemies, but when it is, the player is rewarded once for each killed enemy and again with a greater number of experience points when he accomplishes the quest.

Quests are part of the possible activities that can be performed by the player, thus they participate in the composition of the first dimension of the narrative in *WoW*. At the same time, quests propose a kind of independent game structure and they dramatically present information specific to the fictional universe. The quests besides the dungeons and pvp instances constitute the next dimension of the narrative composition in which the software presents possible itineraries to the user.

The second narrative dimension: a script to follow – quests and instances

MMORPGs have incorporated several gameplay elements of digital single player RPG (such as *Ultima*, *Heroes of Might and Magic*, and *Dragon Quest*). Just like single player RPGs, the main activities in MMORPGs are questing, killing monsters and exploring the world. These activities provide experience to the character, which is a quantifiable value used to increase the character's level. Levelling and the idea of progression are very important to understanding this videogame genre. The digital single player RPG is based on tabletop RPGs, especially on *Dungeons and Dragons* (D&D). *Dungeons and Dragons* is, according Caïra (2005), the first RPG to provide a system of level progression based on the accumulation of experience points. It is also the first RPG to structure the game action in

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quests and since *D&D*, the term dungeon became synonym of a kind of area inside the game that concentrates combats in a system based on doors, treasures and monsters, independently if the physically depicted environment is actually a dungeon.

In the last section, we have presented a narrative dimension relatively freely composed by the player's performance in which the main limits correspond to the set of possible activities available to the player-character according to the rules of the game, spatial constraints and a given fictional universe. In the present section, we will present a narrative dimension driven by software more precisely than the first one. The quests are the main units of *World of Warcraft* ludic-dramatic composition. They structure an activity that can be won or lost and at the same time they create a kind of script for the player-character dramatic action.

Questing

The quests system offers a more structured ludic activity on *WoW* and also a more structured dimension of its narrative, as we will demonstrate below.

In most cases quests are available with a Non-Player-Character (NPC) or an object with a yellow exclamation mark.[2] When the player clicks on the figure with the exclamation mark, the game opens a dialogue box in which the quest is presented. The dialog box always presents the same kind of information. At the high-right corner of the box, there is a portrait where we can see the face of the character who is providing us with the quest beside his name at the high-center of the box. In the box's main space there are the quest title, a piece of text that explains the quest, the quest objective and the reward we can obtain from doing this quest. At the low-left corner there is a button in which the player clicks to accept the quest and at the high-left corner there is a button to close the box without accepting the quest.

The text that explains the context of the quest is presented in a dramaturgical form, with replicas and stage directions. It is not epic narrative; the fictional time is the present, the action is described as it happens in the moment of the interaction, dramatically, with the characters acting by themselves. The non-player character can perform some actions like

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[2] There are some exceptions such as daily quests marked by blue exclamations signaling that players can accomplish them once a day.

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greeting the player character and gesticulating while he speaks, but some actions are just in the text. It is a convergence of two ways to represent the drama, the written form and staged form together in the same medium.

This coexistence of written and staged drama can be explained by the fact that *WoW* was influenced by tabletop RPG, text-based adventures and MUD. In tabletop RPG, players say the actions they want to represent. The Dungeon Master, enacting the rules of a mathematic system, informs the player if his action succeeded or not. The DM also plays all non-player-characters. The drama staging in RPG is constituted from replicas and spoken stage directions. In the text-based adventure games like *Zork*, action commands and its consequences are communicated in written texts. Graphic adventure games that came after text-based ones, along with some digital RPG and MMORPG, maintain the coexistence between written text and audiovisual signs.

WoW's RPG lineage is not the single reason to this coexistence. The technical reasons are also important in this case. It is not reasonable to do such a huge game like *World of Warcraft* staging all the actions with animation techniques. There are more than five thousand NPCs in *WoW*. Thus, it is more productive to animate just general actions like walking, running, gesticulating, laughing, crying. These general actions are occasionally performed while the quest dialogue boxes are open and some specific actions (for instance, search some kind of document) is described like a stage direction. The coexistence between staged and written dramatic action are an important strategy to make it possible to create a giant world that can expanded even more like *World of Warcraft*.

The dramaturgical text written on the quest dialog boxes represents replicas and actions of the NPC. The PC answers are left for the player to complete with his imaginations and game actions. This dramaturgical introduction to the quest can be used by the player to give a dramatic narrative sense to the game actions that will be presented as quantifiable terms in the quest objective. Analysing the quest objectives in game we can verify that most of them ask players to kill other characters, to collect items and/or transport something to someone. The dramaturgical construction of each quest has thus an important role in collaborating to transform repetitive actions in singular experiences. More experienced players can

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accomplish some quest without reading a line of its text or reading just the objective. Still, the player will access narrative information through the drama he is performing. In an opposite sense, the player can even read more than what the quest itself presents to him and learn that the quest is inside a greater narrative context. A part of the narrative information in these texts is lacking, in order to stimulate the player to search for more information about the fictional universe in *WoW* itself, in other Blizzard products or even in some content developed by another player or Warcraft franchise fan.

Once the player accomplishes the quest objective, a yellow interrogation will appear on the head of the NPC who the player should interact with to finish the process. When the player clicks on this NPC, a new dialog box opens to finish the quest and give the player his reward. Again, the face and the character name will be on the box, below the quest title and a text composed with replicas and stage directions and finally the button the player can use to finish the quest. In a great number of quests, the dramaturgical text in the final box of each quest, the NPC will recognise the importance of the player character's action and communicate to the PC that there is something yet to do at the same place or at another one. Quests present a certain degree of totality (with a beginning, a middle and an end) but they are not closed in themselves. Several quests are linked in a chain, which is not necessarily a narrative sequence of quests with an action unit (even if it is possible), but a chain in which a quest should be accomplished as a prerequisite to do another quest or other quests. Even when a quest can be performed without the need to accomplish another one earlier, each quest is related to each other through sharing the same narrative elements. There are quests related as a part of a certain dramatic totality around a specific PC goal, and narrative sequences of quests that present a tragic or comic non-player-character trajectory. In *WoW*, there are several ways to relate narrative sequences, quests chains and the game environment. A unique action or the actions of a unique character can be dispersed in several quest chains and several game areas. A quest can present a complete narrative action without a narrative link with another quest and participate of a quest chain. A quest chain can also present quests that compose several narrative sequences. In summary, the software offers to its users the possibility of establishing relationships between quests through dramatic enchainment or epic episodes, and the player's experience and choices will define the sense of this relationship between quests. The player's participation is like a line that sews patches in a giant narrative patchwork.

Instances

Quests also help structuring the instances. Instances are copies of a limited zone of the game environment to be shared with a group of players who can act collectively on it. In *World of Warcraft* there are two kinds of instances: Player vs Environment Instances (PVE Instances) – dungeons, Raides, Scenarios – and Player vs Player Intances (PVP Instances) - Battlegrounds, Ranked Battlegrounds and Arenas.

Dungeons are the most common PVE instances. Like in tabletop RPG it is a kind of environment inside the game that concentrates combats using a system based on doors, treasures and monsters, independently if this specific environment is an actual dungeon. Under the generic name of dungeons there are dungeons themselves, caves, forts, palaces, monasteries, tombs and even open air places of the environment where one can enter to accomplish special missions and to kill stronger opponents (elite) in order to obtain items more powerful than regular ones, earning justice points, which are used to purchase specialized items to combat computer-controlled opponents.

Groups for dungeons can be formed through invitations between players or be arranged by a game device called dungeon finder which groups together five players who execute the three basic functions needed to perform this type of challenge. In order to complete a dungeon, the group generally consists of: a player who plays the role of tank, that is, one that tries to concentrate all or most of the damage generated by opponents; three players with the function of causing damage to the opponent, but that, in general, could not withstand their attacks directly for a long time; and a healer, someone who has the task of healing the injured players in general, but mainly to ensure that the tank endures all the damage that he might receive.

With the expansion pack for *World of Warcraft, Mists of Pandaria*, scenarios and individual instances were also made available. Scenarios are simpler instances intended to be performed by three players. Scenarios are located using a specific tab in the dungeon finder window.

The individual instances are, so far, the culmination of a Blizzard initiative to provide activities for more casual players. The player goes alone through this kind of instance, and when performing some tasks, he relies on the aid of one or more non-playable characters. The

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individual instances also emerged specifically in patch 5.2 (*The Thunder King*, the second one bound to the expansion pack *Mists of Pandaria*). To access this type of content, the player must follow a specific sequence of missions until a NPC offers him a individual instance with a mission that can be accepted or not, but it opens unexplored parts of the game in which the player can find new quests and can follow a more detailed narrative of the game.

The Raid Dungeons are more complex and difficult to perform. They are only available to players on higher levels in the game (at least level 60, which was the highest level when *WoW* was launched). They require the establishment of larger and better planned groups, the raid groups, since: they are longer and can last for hours; they have their most powerful opponents inside themselves, which currently demands 10-25 players to face; therefore, it requires a more elaborate and strategic behaviour than in ordinary dungeons. Their missions are more sophisticated and their bosses are often more intelligent than the average computer-controlled opponents, leading to a more complex behaviour of the coordinated group beyond simply fulfilling the three basic functions, though they are still demanded. These groups tend to be planned in advance, firstly, to allow availability of players to stay connected throughout the whole time needed to accomplish such challenges, secondly, because it is important that everyone has the necessary information on how to beat the bosses. However, these groups can also be formed through the dungeon finder, a specific tab exclusive to Raids.

Player vs Player (PvP) activities are another direct consequence of the interaction between the players provided by a MMO game besides collaboration. Players in *World of Warcraft* are necessarily divided into two factions due to the agreements and disagreements between the major races of the fictional world of Azeroth. Despite the war in the fictional dimension, players can choose to enter into a realm (server) that might allow the confrontation of players in an area of the scenario or not. In a PvE realm, the main activity is the clash against computer-controlled characters. The battle between opponents is restricted to areas intended for such purpose, or cases in which the player opts to enable PvP and finds another player belonging to the opposite faction who has also enabled this feature. Players of opposite factions with the activated function PvP have their names displayed in red in the same way as computer-controlled enemies, while players of any other faction who have disabled this

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function have their names displayed in blue. Allies with active PvP have their names displayed in green, such as the non-player characters (NPC) allies.

In a PvP realm, a player can attack any character from another faction found throughout the game, not mattering whether the PvP function is enabled or not. Enabling or disabling the function PvP only indicates a predisposition to fight, but does not prevent an attack from another player. There are areas of exception, called sanctuaries, where the fighting between factions is prohibited and also neutral cities in which it is possible to attack another player, but where local guards (computer controlled) punish the fighter with death. A win in a fight between players grants honour points to the player, which serve as currency for specialized equipment in PvP.

In PvP realms as much as in PvE realms there are specific instances for PvP activity. This PvP instances are: the battleground (BG); the ranking battleground (RBG); the arenas; and the war games. The battlegrounds are structured scenarios for a PvP type of activity in which two groups from 10 to 15 players face one another disputing a game with specific rules. Including the *Mists of Pandaria* expansion pack, there are 10 battlegrounds in *World of Warcraft*. In some of them, players compete for controlling scenario features such as mines, farms, smiths and towers. In others, each faction must steal or retain control over symbolic artefacts such as flags and gems. There are still some others in which one must conquer the enemy base(s). The first battlegrounds are available to the player when his character reaches level 10. According to the level progress other battlegrounds become available. In order to join a battleground it is necessary to use a system similar to the dungeon finder. It searches for PvP activities and automatically groups the player. The player wins additional honour if he gets in line for a random battleground instead of choosing a specific one. As it is expected, the winning team earns greater honour bonuses, but the losing team also earns some points. In addition, each player earns honour bonuses according to the number of opponent deaths in which he participated. Both, the RBG and the Arenas, also offer domination points. However, Arenas are completely different from the previous ones. They are closed scenarios where direct fights between groups of 2, 3 or 5 players take place. The winning group is the one that kills all members from the opposite team. Players who die cannot be resurrected until the end of the arena game. Finally, the war games are a way to establish challenges between similar

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groups, independently of their relationship with a faction. Therefore, it is possible that two groups of the same faction or even in the same guild challenge themselves on a battlefield or in an arena. This can be chosen by agreement between the players or through the gaming system. This type of PvP activity does not offer rewards beyond those that are intrinsic when winning at any game, like social status, pride and sense of power.

PvP or PvE instances, such as quests and narrative sequences of quests, have a certain totality and unity to their dramatic action composition. Instances dramatic action structure is organized in the previously presented narrative quest sequences; their particularity is their spatial organization in limited copy available only to a relatively small group of players. Quests determine the dungeons' goals and contextualize the action through dramaturgical texts with replicas and staging directions. When there are multiple quests with multiple goals, they generally converge around one bigger main goal. Even if quests can only be accomplished once, a player can repeat the dungeon however many times he wishes. A player can deliberately choose to not read the text and when he repeats the dungeon the quest will not be available, but as in simple quests, in the dungeons the player always acts on a dramatic narrative staged in game. The player or the groups of players are the protagonists or play a necessary support role to resolve a plot, generally associated with killing a Boss or elite character groups (in Scenarios). The dungeons are also related to the RPG tradition of digital and non-digital games. Ever since *Dungeons and Dragons* tabletop RPG there are these kinds of limited and closed space that presents a door-monster-treasure-based challenges and it was also widely adopted by RPG video games genre, including MMORPG. PvP Instances is variation of this kind of challenge based on door, monster, and treasure. Other players substitute monsters. Thus, PvP instances are spatial copies of a limited virtual environment where two players groups combat each other taking a more or less structured narrative goal.

Beyond game experience: the third and fourth narrative dimensions
The third narrative dimension of *WoW* makes the plot progress uniformly with no direct player interference. This dimension constitutes of a narrative series, which begins with the base game and progresses with every expansion (or even with some patches).

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This narrative dimension is dramatized in game using quest replicas, cutscenes and spatial signs that denote some narrative events happened in the past. The low level ally human quest *Extinguish Hope*, for instance, provides narrative information about the serialized storytelling of *WoW*. Before asking the player to extinguish the flames in her vineyard, The NPC Milly Osworth explains that the Cataclism (a fictional event that took place in an expansion pack with the same name) opened a pathway on a mountain and Black Rock orcs have entered Northshire Valley and destroyed her vineyard. Milly also talks about how she almost misses the Defias, a bandit group that used to steal from her before the Cataclism.

The quest *Extinguish Hope* demonstrates the passage of time caused by the increase in number of patches and expansion packs in the game while also contrasts the current situation of the present instalment of the "Black Rock" and its relationship with the previous one, in which the Defias, group of human bandits, torment Milly. The Defias that Milly mentions are not part of a past external to *World of Warcraft*, they were present in this region of the game before the cataclysm and the mission that Milly offers in previous expansion packs required the player to save part of her crop from bandits that had invaded her vineyard.

The most important events of this narrative dimension can be found in Raids. It is possible to fight against the most powerful characters that threaten Azeroth in this kind of instances (Fire Lord Ragnaros in Molten Core, Illidan Stormrage at Black temple, the Lich King at Icrecrow Citadel, Deathwing at the Dragon Soul or Garosh Hellscream, for instance).

Even if the players are allowed to participate in the actions of this narrative dimension, they are not entitled to alter it. Take for instance the example of a player who participates in an incursion to slain the Lich King. From the point of view of the first dimension of the narrative, everything that takes place in this incursion, including whether it reaches its goal or not, will compose part of the individual narrative of the player. His defeat or victory is also relevant in the second dimension of the narrative, which presents to the player a script to be followed through missions and instances. On the other hand, at the serial level narrative, it is known that in *WoW*'s chronology, the Lich King dies in the *Wrath of the Lich King* expansion.

Besides quests and dungeons, the cutscenes are fundamental to delimit the advance of the narrative in the third and fourth dimensions in *WoW*. The cutscenes might be defined, according to Salen and Zimmerman (2004), as any narrative intervention from the game, in which the player has little control or none at all. There is a special kind of cutscene called cinematic which uses cinematographic resources. In *WoW*, the cinematics are 3D animated films associated to episodes in the third and fourth narrative dimensions of the game, while other cutscenes cover other more secondary events.

The cinematics are used in Raids, dungeons and even in the middle of missions that surround the main events that take place in *WoW* to control the narrative development in terms of the main conflicts of the game. It is in a cinematic that the destiny of the Lich King is displayed at the end of each battle against him. Through the cinematic the player is informed about after defeating the Lich King that the suffering of the ancient paladin prince Arthas Menethil has come to an end and that he may finally disconnect entirely from the domain of the Lich King that manifested himself through his body.

The amplest narrative dimension is the transmedia storytelling integrated in it. Each *Warcraft* franchise product takes a part in this narrative dimension. There are several dramaturgical strategies to integrate WoW fictional universe with other Warcraft franchise products: narrator interventions, cutscenes, spatial information that evokes narrative events (Jenkins, 2004), quests that show us other points of view from another product narrative event or bring new information about it.

It is possible, for instance, to relieve the episode of the *Culling of Stratholme*, present in *Warcraft III* through another perspective in *World of Warcraft*. In this episode the prince Arthas Menethil decides to kill all of the citizens in the city of Stratholme after discovering that it is infected by a plague that turns people undead. In *Warcraft III* the player controls Arthas himself. In *WoW*, this episode is relived in a dungeon in which the bronze dragons, responsible for the equilibrium between past, present and future, ask the group of players to fight in order to guarantee that the *Culling of Stratholme* remains unaltered, since some sinister force is trying to change the course of facts in the past and provoke unpredictable consequences for the present and future.

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As the *WoW* serial narrative dimension, its transmedia aspect progresses without the player direct interference, however, one needs to articulate the *Warcraft* franchise to understand its narrative as a transmedia storytelling.

Final considerations

We observe that the described four dimensional dramaturgical composition in *WoW*, which are grouped in pairs, constitutes a fundamental dramaturgical strategy to the continued process of expansion of the game. On one hand, the first two narrative dimensions offers the player a high degree of interactivity and playability, in a way that he can construct a highly complex and personal dramaturgy. This is possible through strictly roleplaying, characters' performance and also through the choice of which quest to do. On the other hand, *WoW* builds a parallel dramaturgy in which the player cannot change the course of events. This second pair of narrative dimensions in the game is less interactive and playable than the first. With the organization of narrative information into these two pairs of dimensions, the developers manage, at the same time, to allow the player to participate actively in the action, which is essential in a software that is designed as a game, and, at the same time, allow for the conduction of the main narrative of the fictional universe to be completely under the developer's control. This ultimately allows for the gradual expansion of the game.

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Victor Cayres is a rechercher at Univerty of State of Bahia (UNEB). He receive his Ph.D in Scenic Arts at Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) researching about World of Warcraft dramaturgy. His research interests are videogames dramaturgy, Game design and educational games.

Adolfo Duran is a researcher at Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), where since 1994 he also serves as an analyst of information technology in the Superintendency of Information Technology. He received his Ph.D. in Computer Science from the Federal University of

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Pernambuco in 2005. He is member of the Graduate Program in Computer Science at UFBA and his research interests are focused on Formal Methods in Software Engineering, Software Verification, electronic games, and support tools for teaching.

Résumé

Les modèles dramaturgiques pour les jeux vidéo ne sont pas assez cartographiés. Dans ce contexte, même un jeu comme *World of Warcraft* attend toujours que sa construction dramaturgique soit examinée. De ce fait, ce travail envisage une analyse du jeu à partir de ses procédures de composition. D'après nous, le jeu est structuré de façon à permettre son expansion. Autrement dit, sa construction dramaturgique est conçue de telle sorte que de nouveaux personnages puissent y être intégrés et que le temps et l'espace fictionnels s´élargissent, ce qui crée de nouvelles expériences de jeu.

Mots-clés : jeux vidéo, World of Warcraft, MMORPG, tradition des jeux de rôle

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