The International Journal of Social Sciences
30th July 2014. Vol.25 No.1
© 2012 - 2014 TIJOSS & ARF All rights reserved
ISSN 2305-4557
www.Tijoss.com

CREEPYGAMING & THE NARRATIVE: A THEORY-BASED POP CULTURE OF 'PLAYABLE' LORE

Dominique Angela M. Juntado, M.A.
Doctoral Candidate in Social & Cultural Anthropology
University of the Philippines Diliman
Email: dmjuntado@gmail.com

Abstract

Having been written for fellow fans of video game creepypastas and students of media anthropology and folklore, this article inspects said form of online lore as well as its complementing interactive media in terms of how experimentation with playable content can effectively deliver not only an understanding of what transpired in a narrative, but more of a meaningful experience of a narrative. In theory, an interactive approach has much to contribute for the breadth of legend complexes.

Keywords: *Creepypasta, ROM Hacks, Lost Episodes, Haunted Gaming, Democratized Production, Nontraditional Storytelling, Slender*

[I. THE WALKTHROUGH (A.K.A. AN INTRODUCTION)]

By now, it would be commonplace to state that there are many people in this date and time who utilize various consolidations of media in their attempts at online storytelling.

Numerous scholars of culture have scribed of the twin roles of film and photography in terms of their complementary relationship with written word --- no doubt for the purpose of giving the illusion of authenticity and truthfulness; but deeper exploration of the interactive forms of media and its relationship with lore has yet to be seen on the part of academicians of anthropology.

To talk about a known, existing contribution which encourages the inspection of netlore and possible variants, Michael Kinsella's [2011] work on internet-based folklore is worth attention for having included guidelines on how legends online could be assessed, the basics of legend-tripping, as well as the importance of knowing how to go about ecologies of legends in general. It is likewise memorable for its ethnographic rumination on the Incunabula papers and Ong's Hat which has previously showcased the potential pertinence of alternate reality games (ARGs) in both the reconstruction as well as promotion of a legend. In his case analysis, Kinsella [2011] spoke more of those participating in the imersion within the legend --- their framing, emotions, and perceptions, as well as their role in the legend's mortality.

On the one end, this discourse is in pursuit of a personal inclination. But to place it in the academic backdrop of the studies of media, it complements the work of Russel Frank [2011] and Michael Kinsella [2011] on the subject of understanding how online lore works and branches out through bringing the subject of video game modification and hacking into the academic theoretical limelight in terms of their potential role in the deepening of netlore.

This article begins with a theoretical dissection of Creepypastas in general, bringing

The International Journal of Social Sciences
30th July 2014. Vol.25 No.1
© 2012 - 2014 TIJOSS & ARF All rights reserved
ISSN 2305-4557
www.Tijoss.com

to light some of its basic similarities and distinctions with and from the average take on the legend narrative.

The discussion proceeds specifically with ruminations on the Video Game Creepypasta, beginning with a theoretical foundation covering a social scientific introduction on the relevance of fear in culture; particularly its influence in setting the fear of technology, characterizing video gaming creepypasta.

There is then a development into how success of a video gaming creepypasta could be assessed. The treatise then proceeds with an analysis of how video game creepypastas with playables could classify as a legend trip. This segment is guided by Kinsella's [2011] guidelines on understanding the structure of legend trips, derived from the second chapter of his book *Legend-Tripping: Online Supernatural Folklore and the Search for Ong's Hat.*

As a practical counterpart to the theoretical ruminations, there is included a concise survey of the existing forms of playable lore which serve as the present genres. This is complemented by a segment discussing classic features to incorporate in the production of a playable pasta as well as brief notes on avoiding cliches.

[II. UNDERSTANDING CREEPYNESS: AN ACADEMIC CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE CREEPYPASTA]

The working definition of Creepypasta is that substantially these are internet horror stories which have been circulated on forums and other sites. A baseline feature to these narratives is that they have been composed with the intention to frighten readers. The term has inspiration from the word 'copypasta', an internet slang terminology pertaining to a body of text which is copied and pasted from one website to another for the purpose of sharing. Creepypastas may have their complements in other media such as pictures, audio, or audio-visual documentation; it has been typical for the collection of media to contain gory, distorted, or disturbing depictions [Creepypasta: 2014].

While Creepypasta is first above all generally classifiable as a body of netlore, it also has some specific characteristics of what Russel Frank [2011] conceptualized as 'Newslore'. This pertains to a complement of folklore in which its objective is to make remarks on current events; as a result, decipherability can affect comprehension if the audience has no knowledge of the current events. Frank has specified that Newslore assumes numerous forms, which when enumerated range from: jokes, urban legends, digitally altered photographs, mock news stories, press releases, interoffice memoranda, parodies of songs and poems, parodies of political and commercial advertisements, movie previews and poster-based parodies, still or animated cartoons, and short live-action Films [Frank 2011: 07].

Satirical creepypasta can exist, and if composed correctly can be perfect entries under the label of Newslore. Further, Newslore contrasts, as the attributes associated with the traditional phenotype and mode of sharing do not apply. That is to say that the question of how long a piece of narrative can last is presumed in terms of a more limited duration rather than generational (or should we say 'classic'); the mode of circulation is also remote rather than in-person, and likely to be a creation where its authors are dwelling in urban or suburban set-ups.

It must be briefly alluded that the last criteria mentioned is to some extent speculative

The International Journal of Social Sciences
30th July 2014. Vol.25 No.1
© 2012 - 2014 TIJOSS & ARF All rights reserved
ISSN 2305-4557
www.Tijoss.com

as it may be running the risk of pulling a grand narrative if the discussion of the existence of newslore is taken into the international setting; this is inevitable since the medium includes the world-wide-web as well as the importance of recognizing the possibility of ever-improving systems of internet connection and mobility reaching the rural.

Creepypastas satisfy the conditions Frank [2011] has scribed, but also do come with a warning label of sorts clarifying that content on their site are purely fictional.

The published pastas are reflections of as well as reactions to popular culture; this latter in turn is recognized to have some degree of relationship with histories and politics as well as conspiracy theories. The subject of longevity of any pasta is dependent on its literary quality (effectiveness of the writing style) as well as the range of familiarity potential readers may have of the topic. As will be discussed later, pasta longevity may also play a role in the production of some other pastas, as well as unify these.

Identifying the Folk & Culture. It can be argued that the original intended audiences of pastas are global netizens who are in their twenties to forties; this is based on the observation that pastas which have popular cultural references at (if not near) their core discourse on references which have defined a certain part of the 80s and late 90s to the early 2000s. Upon impression, the primary reputation of the site was that it hosted stories in which the authors would take beloved memories of locations, artifacts or events from what was assumed as 'common' in the childhood of populations, and utilize these in narratives that would present them in a manner which is completely out of character. In other words, the premise behind Creepypasta authorship also included the business of converting childhood and adolescent fantasies into full-fledged nightmares.

The brilliance of the creepypasta is tied to the fact that it is hosted in a medium which naturally shapes the effectiveness of the stories it comprises of. The Internet is a space ruled by imagination, intuition, as well as fuzzy logic; ideas concerning instant globality of shared thoughts as well as the ability to make and argue meanings set the stage for the intermingling (and on occasions the tangling) of fact and fiction via beliefs and hoaxes. This is what makes the internet conducive for mysteries and the supernatural [Kinsella 2011: 17].

The template of a submission in Creepypasta Wikia is especially structured for storytellers to be able to maximize the promotion of a fake sense of believability. This, for the lack of a better term. This goes into play once the reader is knowledgable of the fictional nature of the site's contents (in which may blatantly be stated in the 'About' page), and yet the reader assesses the quality of the narrative in terms of the linguistic attributes as well as the manner composition which would appear to render the facts as real. Text can be accompanied by photos as well as audio and or video clips through the process of embedding. While these won't 'play' in their same location, these visual thumbnail-type links would take the reader to another page but still within the Creepypasta Wikia. This enables a consistent containment of mood; depending on perspective, mood tends to shift when attempting to access material in a differing location which has other associative properties to it. As with all legends regardless of classification and format, there is the perennial emphasis on the ideal containment of mood.

The International Journal of Social Sciences
30th July 2014. Vol.25 No.1
© 2012 - 2014 TIJOSS & ARF All rights reserved
ISSN 2305-4557
www.Tijoss.com

[III. THE PLAYABLE PASTA: FEAR'S THIRD ART-FORM]

Homo sapiens have a different take on fear compared to other animal species. Deer, mice, and birds have been observed to live in a perennial condition of alertness and fear; they are consistently observant and inspective of their environment, and tend to be alarmed upon hearing any unfamiliar or unexpected noise [Hankiss 2001: 06]. Homo sapiens is said to be anxious and fear-ridden, some even on occasions "hyperanxious" by creating their own reasons for experiencing fear [Becker 1973: 17; Hankiss 2001: 06], and quite amusingly as well being the only race in which there are members who deliberately want to experience fear and recognize it as part of a leisurely activity.

Scholars of the social sciences have acknowledged that fear and its effects have been countered upon the successful development of belief systems, behavioral patterns and institutions which have the purpose of protecting folk [Kinsella 2011: 13; Hankiss 2001: 07]. Even more, there has been the positive conversion of fear into a driving force which assumed a chief role motivating the development of human civilization [Hankiss 2001: 07].

Thomas Aquinas [1265-1273; Gehlen: 1988] has been known to have scribed of how intellect, together with the human hand, compensated for man's deficit in terms of innate and natural tools and weapons seen present in animals, such as claws, horns, or specialized dentition. And while social scientists recall Leslie White [1949] in his quoting of how the story of civilization is a chronicling of how the forces of nature have been controlled through cultural means, technological tropes made infamous via pop culture are shaking this faith to some degree when it comes to premises regarding the supernatural.

Indeed, with the passing of time and the improvement of technologies, peoples' understandings and beliefs regarding the metaphysical are not only able to accommodate, but influence these changes just as well [Kinsella 2011: 06]. This is the case which is true for Creepypastas on video gaming. But how has this happened?

Tracing History: A Pop Culture of Fear. One way to consider the origins of the stereotypical fear behind video games in general is that this feeling emerged from a history of exposure to pop cultural constructs beginning with the idea of television as portal and medium for entities in *Poltergeist* [1982] and memorably in *Ringu* [1998] as well as the American remake *The Ring* [2002], and *White Noise* [2005]. The concept of sinister hardware devices capable of exercising rationality, agency, even some obscure degree of identity was started in Dean Koontz' book-turned-film, *Demon Seed* [1977] in which the story has the subject of home security systems and the computer at its core; while American remake *Pulse* [2006] based on Japanese film *Kairo* [2001] interrogated the possibilities of how the Internet could be used as a medium to channel spirits into the physical world, given the right changes in programming.

The latest link in this evolutionary chain of tech-related anxiety is the film *Stay Alive* [2006] which places the (beta-stage) game ROM as the medium in question. Paramount tropes which have been seen in video game-related creepypastas have possibly been influenced by this film in which it elementally played on the concepts of haunted technology (the ROM or fictional video game), advanced technology unfitting of the present time, and most

The International Journal of Social Sciences
30th July 2014. Vol.25 No.1
© 2012 - 2014 TIJOSS & ARF All rights reserved
ISSN 2305-4557
www.Tijoss.com

significantly the inversion of video game cruelty potential [tvtropes: 2014] where the video game does horrible things to the player in real life. This can be very plausible considering how Creepypasta was born in 2010.

Coverage of the Executable file (.exe) cannot be excluded from a discussion of video gaming and its respective pastas. It may be surmised that this was the first interactive artifact which conditioned the metaphysical impressions seen manifested in interactive media-based creepypastas today. It is with particular reference to the executables from the first editions of today's popular operating systems which had an effect on users, primarily due to the semiotic values and associations made with such. This holds true for those who grew up in the early nineties, stumbling upon (whether accidentally or not) unfamiliar files in the DOS shell or in the Windows session. In the case of discoveries in the form of uncomprehendable lists on DOS, plus the black-white contrast characterizing the system as well as the impersonal, cold conciseness of the system messages and commands, it would exude a menacing feel which may leave a lasting impression on a child. While this also may be used as one explanatory premise setting the foundation of the fear of BSOD in more recent times (this second is more effective because of the element of surprise), this memory may also probably be the case with some of the authors of the creepypasta.

Theory in Practice. The beauty of the video game creepypasta is that it provides a formidable challenge towards the construct of how the House is a symbol of security and order. The basic roles of buildings have been to protect people --- from elements as well as fears; it is maintained that there are imbrications of Promethean and Apollonian strategies behind the construction of buildings. More specifically, Houses are supposed to be seen as shelter against harsh weather, wild animals, intruders and marauders, protective barriers from the outside and the unknown; but should also simultaneously serve as protection from evil entities the unidentifiable [Hankiss 2001: 113-114].

Content-wise, original video game creepypastas assume the same formula in which the persona is portrayed (if not claimed) to have acquired a video game with unusual properties which seem to be out of character with what a game should be. Most often these creepypastas play on the idea that the persona had prior mastery of the game purchased, and that this (re-) purchasing was out of a whim of nostalgia. The amusing element to these creepypastas is how there are the common acts of bringing the game home and playing it at home --- at this point, it doesn't really matter whether or not the persona would play it alone or in the company of his or her friends; attention is paid more on the fact that the item had been welcomed into the persona's secured sense of space.

For readers of the narrative, the zealous seek out a link to a program to download which to an extent promises them a chance at experiencing the same in-game conditions the persona has. What is interesting about this bit is how the links to downloads are present not in the pasta but to an external site, more often in the neutral video-hosting environment, *YouTube*. Upon consultation of guidelines concerning pasta posting, there is a prohibition of posting coded material for computer safety reasons. This raises the question if it diminishes the impact of a willing netlore experience, and on occasions the answer is 'no'. Cleverly written video game creepypastas with playables are able to neatly tie the downloadable in their narratives through online media having in-narrative relevance. *YouTube* has always been the ideal reference for

The International Journal of Social Sciences
30th July 2014. Vol.25 No.1
© 2012 - 2014 TIJOSS & ARF All rights reserved
ISSN 2305-4557
www.Tijoss.com

the uploading of the audio visual as well as the inclusion of links --- which could be directly provided by the author of the video and pasta in the video's description tab, or indirectly in the comment section by (other) users who have claimed discovery of the link. As to which will be the case, this often depends on the written narrative.

The effectiveness of the video gaming creepypasta depends the degree of cultural neutrality it exercised; that as it assumes the modern legend format, it illustrates a certain shift in terms of the definition of what counts as 'supernatural' as well as a re-specification of the target audience of a story. According to folklorist Carl Lindahl [1986], those in contemporary circulation rivet on insupposable events which are not excogitated as supernatural at all. The modern can be compared with the traditional in several instances. Narratives composing the supernatural content in modern legends are not always based on the belief of a group, and is considerably religiously neutral by excluding any parts which may count as indirect reference to or about a certain religion. It has been true for majority of the existing video game creepypastas that there hasn't been any cases of "Priesting" [Brady: 1995] which would involve consultations of religious authorities regarding supernatural occurrences and for resolution to such. English is also the language used for better international reach and neutrality; and figuratively speaking, the inclusion of references to consumption which can be understood universally as a language itself as well. While there have been some whose made references to dated pop culture, the stories are also enjoyed by today's youth on count of its potentially historical value. The subject of the identity of the storyteller is also obscure, but for the purpose of face, identity is tied to profile in a social network or social media sharing sites with membership.

Legend Tripping from the Comfort of Your Own Home: Connecting the Creepypasta to Kinsella's [2011] Criteria for a Legend-Trip. According to Kinsella [2011: 28] in verbatim, "A legend-trip involves a journey to a specific location and/or the performance of certain prescribed actions that, according to local legend, have the potential to elicit a supernatural experience." It would commence with the recitation of one or more legends which would establish a particular location as haunted or defining a method with which supernatural powers could be invoked [Kinsella 2011: 28]. While this definition was designed bearing actual sojourns to physical places in mind, it is of interest to determine the extent of its conceptual applicability through assessment of whether or not actual playable video game pastas could count as a form of legend tripping.

Kinsella [2011] has also mentioned that there is a single prerequisite which must be met for a legend trip to be called ---- there must be belief in the possibility of the legend being more that just a fictional story "...however improbable" [Kinsella 2011: 28]. The essential fragement 'possible, however improbable' is precisely the case with effectively written video game creepypastas, eliciting 'what if' comments and ruminations from readers. Others simply have an unexplainable faith in the content. It must be mentioned that this is also likely the rationale behind the development of the theories category of pastas.

The video game creepypastas satisfy the first attribute structuring the legend-trip where the narrative is in the form of legendry. These all recount series of previous events from players who have survived (or not), more popular ones in the form of journal logs chronicling occurances which happen within and during

The International Journal of Social Sciences
30th July 2014. Vol.25 No.1
© 2012 - 2014 TIJOSS & ARF All rights reserved
ISSN 2305-4557
www.Tijoss.com

gameplay as well as the game's impact and supposed psychological effects on the player crossing over into the player's real world through alternate reality perception. The in-game occurances written in the accounts are interpretable as indirect walkthroughs, and serve as a cyber counterpart of the specification of actions to be conducted so as to elicit the supernatural elements associated with these locations.

In the case of the playable video game creepypasta, it is somewhat tricky to determine when exactly the legend-trip proper begins. Kinsella states that it could initiate through either one of two means: 01 - travelling to a particular location concerning the legend; or 02 – undergoing some preparation for the conduct of a specific ritual. Experience of the interactive form of creepypasta through video game first requires download. This could qualify as the second type of legend-trip start, as with downloading there is the associated act of extacting files to make the program ready for execution. But once this is accomplished, 'entering' the game through either an unnamed persona via first-person perspective or third-person through a recognizable avatar would make the first legend-trip start instance applicable; there is a sense of conceptual flow. The question of whether or not this is acceptable is best left for debate among proper folklorists of the urban.

The third element in the basic structure of a legend-trip is that a successfully conducted procedure would elicit reactions and engagment with the supernatural. Understanding what constitutes success in a playable creepypasta-based legend trip requires comprehension of its binary opposition.

In an ideal playable, there would be a considerable amount of free will in terms of making in-game decisions, and this should just about affect chances of meriting success and failure. In theory, this would also assist in the growth of participation in developments of the legend itself through an unauthorized collaborative storytelling. This is not only perfectly valid in the case of online lore, but also encouraged for its theoretical and practical significance. The literal act of keeping a post alive online is dependent on the amount of traffic it receives. The collaborative storytelling is a product of ostensive participation which add dimensions to the legend encouraging exploration, developing the reality of the legend as a social phenomemon [Kinsella 2011: 147]. However, in the first instances of playable creepypastas, the authors did not entertain so much the idea of incorporating explorative properties. This is for the more obvious reason that they prioritize a canonical approach althroughout, likely due to the rationale that they wanted consistency for all their reader-players. Not only was it a question of consistency throughout gameplays, but also loyalty to the written narrative.

The Format of Games in Interactive Netlore. Discussing netlore in general, the first game genre employed in the promotion of a particular narrative was the alternate reality game (ARG). The first ARG which garnered international fame was the 2001 reference *Majestic* which was inspired by the "Majestic 12" documents allegedly written by some highly secretive insider group with access to information concerning US government relations with UFOs [Kinsella: 2011]. ARGs are an immersive type of game which have the common formula of incorporating genuine, operative websites in its gaming narrative. These sites would showcase (well-)developed audio and/or visual materials fictional in nature which are designed to be absorbed into the narrative to give

The International Journal of Social Sciences
30th July 2014. Vol.25 No.1
© 2012 - 2014 TIJOSS & ARF All rights reserved
ISSN 2305-4557
www.Tijoss.com

the impression of truth and authenticity. In this instance, the usage of the term 'game' is in more of its general sense. The excitement is thought to be tied to the activity of unraveling and discovering facts pertinent to the case in-narrative. The advantage to this type of design is its fluidity, where the author of the lore can connect more potentially pertinent materials which can deepen the narrative. This contrasts to the fixedness which characterizes today's full-fledged video games which come in download packages.

The first attempt at ARG-based lore in the embodiment of the Majestic was unfortunate, as it wasn't so well received. This had primarily to do with the timeframe of the creative project, specifically in terms of the era that it was released. Back in 2001, unlike the present, it may be surmised that the Internet did not have the same level of acceptance from academic circles when it came to being a reliable source of information. There have been impressions where information gathered from online did not count as legitimate conduct of research. There was still the carryover of the prioritization of the traditional library as the hub of all knowledge authentic. Back then electronic academic materials has not yet become a significant buzzword at school nor at home. During that time, the Internet was not much of a necessity; its purposes and explorability was considerably limited, emphasized chatting programs and bulletin boards, as well as basic low quality content. Further, there was the questioning behind the authority of available information; questioning the credibilty of a *geocities* page. The year 2001 in the subject of the cyber did not have the same reputation which people know of the Internet today --- a heterogenous space where so many sources of fact and fiction are mixed. This aspect is what the ARG depends on in terms of achieving viability. This play on fact and fiction shapes the dynamic of the ARG, promising to a degree the assurance that a lore will stay fresh for as long as there are people debating on meanings using different perspectives.

Since an online dichotomy of fact and fiction didn't officially exist within the 90s to the early 2000s, it can be said that the first ARGs were interpreted more as viral marketing campaigns and as publicity tactic.

Given today's privileges in terms of domain access and content uploading, an attempt at constructions of ARG-based lore today can succeed provided that the lore is anchored to an online mechanism which can guarantee a successful promotion of it, without giving away (too much) information regarding the author and source.

The second phenotype in playable lore are the MOD and the ROM hack. This is a genre exclusively popular in the video game creepypastas. Its effectiveness is based on a twisted jesting of video games which may have a sentimental value. Further, it toys with the element of predictability, as gamers may already have a mastery of the original game through countless re-playthroughs; thrills and scares are achieved through comparisons of details on the modification or hack which are out of the ordinary, and even on occasions misplaced.

ROM (or on occasion cartridge) hacking pertains to the editing of components of existing games according to personal preference. There are numerous reasons behind such an activity. Some pay homage to the game by attempting to develop their own versions of it through modification; others question the levels of difficulty available and either up the ante through the alteration of certain numerical values; and

The International Journal of Social Sciences
30th July 2014. Vol.25 No.1
© 2012 - 2014 TIJOSS & ARF All rights reserved
ISSN 2305-4557
www.Tijoss.com

there are others who may feel that modfication is their close to making their own game. Its growth in popularity to non-technical gamers stems from the practice's infamy in video game creepypastas.

However, compared to the ARG, ROM hacks require a great amount of mastery of how particular games operate as well as mathematical skills. It may be surmised that the authors of ROM hack pasta which have the program are programmers or all-around video game enthusiasts with the respective artisan skill. But then it would likely be more realistic for a pasta author to work in partnership with one who has such knowledge.

MODs on the other hand refer to the creation of a game using an existing game that has a special customization software which is either bundled with it or available (on some occasions for free) from the publisher online. But it must also be pointed out that MODs are dependent on their original game in order to run. Therefore, writing creepypasta about MODs also mean writing for a more specific population who could relate to the game being discussed in the narrative. MODs differ from ROMs in the sense that the latter were more relatable to a larger part of the reader population who (related to) a cartridge and compact disc dynasty --- and this meant a freer sense of unmonitored shareability.

MODs supposedly have better means for custom textures and content to be imported into a project, which is unlike the case with ROMs where part of the journey includes looking for the best program to enable authors to do as they need in the easiest way possible.

The recent banning of future video game creepypasta submissions ushered in the praxis of a third, more scare-effective alternative --- a variation of the augmented reality game. Augmented reality in video games involves a degree of blurring the boundaries between fantasy and reality; there is a sense of superimposition of the artificial with the real world.

The difference this has compared to the ARG as well as the ROM hack has to do with the fact that these are playables which are without a precedent narrative (the pasta) and these unfold during gameplay. In terms of substance, they can be anchored to creepypasta if these are playables inspired by existing pasta.

As unofficial creepypasta, in the absence of a video which covers a "let's play" of specific augmented reality game, in theory everything about the program --- from observations during download as well as instances prior to running the program to the conduct of the play itself --- should be observed. The absence of a preparatory narrative personalizes the experience of gameplay as it places the player in the customizable shoes of the persona. This is what it truly means to be in-game, to be unguided. On the part of the author, this is the perfect opportunity to explore the extents of in-game free will in which prospective players can exercise. This has the potential to deepen the context of the narrative because of the various possible experiences players can have in-game based on their own decisions and lapses of judgment.

Augmented reality games in a creepypasta-like context picks up from old pastas the philosophies of imperfection which come with game design, modding, as well as hacking, but uses this as a device for a realistic feel. On the surface, these imperfections come in the form of crashes but the intention behind this is to

The International Journal of Social Sciences
30th July 2014. Vol.25 No.1
© 2012 - 2014 TIJOSS & ARF All rights reserved
ISSN 2305-4557
www.Tijoss.com

heighten paranoia of damages happening to the computer.

Initial impressions towards augmented reality games which assume a creepypasta tone to them have often established associations with viruses, though this is not necessarily the case. Known characteristics of creepypasta-type augmented reality games include the act of automatic file creation as well as the appearance of specific system messages which are not native to the operating system. Latest forms even incorporate a sense of 'auditory haunting' even after the game has been 'closed'. Auditory haunting, for the lack of a better term, involves some code being activated after closing the creepypasta-type game. While the players thought they had ended the session, there may be some function which would call that event for activation.

There is no doubt that the creation of a working creepypasta-type augmented reality game is an ultimate exemplification of all-around game production skills. This format is most ideal for the production of creepy playable narratives as it enables and encourages the options for repeated and multiple playthroughs; again, depending on the mathematical skills the author has employed in programming.

Depending on the type of player seated at the computer, it may not immediately occur to them that true for both viruses and video games (regardless if original or modified) the common denominator is that these are still both a well-crafted collection of code. The effectiveness of a pasta designed in the format of an augmented reality game depends on how immediately the player gets to comprehend the artificiality of the entire narrative. The author(s) of the game would usually combat this by going the extra mile in the creation of websites which prove their plight, thus discouraging future players from paying any point of interest in the game; these would be spoken of by the author-player in comment sections. Not only this, but if diligent enough they can also create faux accounts reinforcing the lethality of the program; and if zealous, there is also the choice to monitor extent of sensationalism through checking for let's plays conducted by those who have stumbled upon a copy of the game.

Creepy-stereotypes in Creepygaming: Distinguishing 'Classics' from 'Cliches'. Prior to ROMs and mods, there was much attention placed on the nostalgia of video gaming classics from the first years of Nintendo and Sega. As mentioned previously, nostalgia is a significant driving force in the development of events in video game-related creepypasta. There were some who had in common the fragment where personas would regret having parted with their old amusements and have resolved to re-acquire them some "X" years later at second-hand game shops or garage sales. True enough, the attempts are successful; little do the personas know the amount of trouble they are about to subject themselves to. The common plays in the subject of "the second-hand" are themes which have long existed, implying the potential effects of residual energy
certain items have from their previous owners being purchased along with the item. This is an expression in-pasta of existing anxieties in real life, and has been proven to some extent. For a matter of related media, a *Ghost Lab* [2011] experiment conducted by Brad Klinge proved that energy could be left behind depending on the severity of the emotion. This is taken into the creepypasta which implied that the item in the second-hand store was of immense personal value to whoever parted with it. Other authors would increase scare factor by mentioning the possibilities that the former owner is deceased,

The International Journal of Social Sciences
30th July 2014. Vol.25 No.1
© 2012 - 2014 TIJOSS & ARF All rights reserved
ISSN 2305-4557
www.Tijoss.com

implying the possession of a haunted game in the hands of the persona.

As narrative progresses, there aren't necessarily any clues which determine the cartridge as a cursed game. In cases where the cartridge was the possession of an individual who is then deceased, this usually opens the narrative to events connecting the supernatural with the persona through in-game interaction. While by now this would be a considerable cliché, it is still worthy of academic, theoretical glory. The idea of the haunted cartridge is a contemporary take on the concept of the Memorial. Memorialization includes inheritance or purchase of the cartridge in its exact condition after it has left the hands of the initial owner. Realizing a memorialization could begin with a recognition of the existing saved files in the list of loadables, and more so the name of the player in each save slot.

The scare factor proper (characteristic of a creepypasta) manifests when the memorial takes a menacing turn; this is characterized by sudden unauthorized changes to the list of saved games, and especially in the conduct of gameplay where events and actions are significantly differing from the original game --- ranging from absent or out of character characters, missing or distorted textures, and questionable audio. It is most extreme, there are attempts at communication with the persona in-game by the spirit attached to the media.

When more authors began experimenting with MOD creation and ROM hacking wares, some were able to effectively practice their skills in semiotics. This is often accomplished in the alterations of known in-game backgrounds and sprites. Experimentations on textures and colors only become cliché if they play on the rationale of going hyperrealistic --- this has been long played in the form of narrative even prior to the conceptualization of playables in general.

What is genuinely classic is the inclusion and even the absence of audio in a playable. The sense of sound and the ear's intelligence enable the connection between the player and the game at its most basic level. Authors of playables have to be sure that their audio content is enough to trigger reactions in the player.

In-game audio typically assumes three forms, some of which may or may not be present in a playable: 01 – soundtrack; 02 – auditory clues; and 03 – ambient sounds. Creepypasta playables having to do with existing games in real life have long banked on a psychological mechanism called *evaluative conditioning*. Evaluative conditioning is when sound stirs about emotion due to familiarity; as it has been heard repeatedly in a particular setting, this leads to an association between sound and the setting [Juslin 2009: 12; Amplifon: 2014]. This may appear to work as a complementary to *episodic memory*, definable as the rousing of a memory through having heard a particular piece of music or sound [Juslin 2009: 14; Amplifon: 2014]. The latter reproduces the nostalgic value of audio content, while the former may be used as a deceptive device to lull players into an impression of comfort, reacquainting them with what at first glance appears to be references to their childhood amusement. This would be effective provided that the switch to an alteration of the content is properly timed,
and this would tend to bring about a (pleasant) sense of shock dubbed as *music expectation*. Also connected to experiences with music, this is where unfamiliar modification on a standard note progression may startle players or even cause feelings of astonishment and curiosity [Juslin 2009: 14; Amplifon: 2014]. A psychological mechanism which appears to be consistently

The International Journal of Social Sciences
30th July 2014. Vol.25 No.1
© 2012 - 2014 TIJOSS & ARF All rights reserved
ISSN 2305-4557
www.Tijoss.com

alert throughout gameplay of creepypasta would be the *brain stem reflex*. In-game, this would usually be triggered after confirmation of the music expectation mechanism at the start. Most of the examples had this in effect, but of course, future playables may come to differ. An innate mechanism, the brain stem reflex is when the brain picks up data from sound which refer to its acoustic characteristic. It analyses this and signals a that there is a "potentially important and urgent event", causing the player to heighten awareness along an instinctive level [Juslin 2009: 13; Amplifon: 2014]. Some playable pastas may even make use of *visual imagery* through in-game auditory clues, permitting players to run unsubdued, irrationally with their thoughts in anticipation of what may await them on the other end of their screen. The more formal conceptualization of visual imagery is where people would process the structure of a piece of music in accordance to their imagination [Juslin 2009: 13; Amplifon: 2014]; this has been exemplified in the 1940s Walt Disney film, *Fantasia* and the 1999 sequel *Fantasia 2000.*

The first two of these mechanisms are part of what successfully shape reactions to MODs and ROM hacks; the rest are common fixtures to ARGs and Augmented Reality Game designs. There also have been those which play on the paranoia brought about by complete silence. The most basic premise behind a fear of silence is that the genuine object of agitation is the unknown which exists in that silence, highlighting the perennial need to be cautious. After all, advancement in-game greatly depends on not 'dying' --- due to player mistake, of course. There have been playable creepypastas which involve the scripting of death as part of the narrative.

Audio content in a playable creepypasta is classic in the sense that it naturally appeals to the in-game instances of the fight or flight response. As it can make or break a playable, it would only turn into a lame cliché if the content has tones which do not suit the game in any way; as there is little room for the bathetic in a full-fledged playable creepypasta.

[IV. SOME FINAL NOTES]

The reason behind encouraging the development of quality playable narratives involves the prospect of being able to explore facets to them which would not usually be available in traditional media; even more so with the textual narrative.

Playables should also not have any time restrictions so that players have the chance to process audiovisual information which would otherwise be overlooked in cases of time pressure; the player would consider these in how he or she would relate to these information, as well as their effect on their gameplay and their perception of the narrative. This enables the flourishing and contention of meanings once discoursed upon in an open online space.

Playables therefore open up debates on different frames towards narratives, becoming meaningful for all who are willing to share. As Alan Dundes [1987: vii] has mentioned, the life of a narrative is dependent on the amount of transmission which is likewise determined by whether or not it is of value; there is value when it means something to people.

[BIBLIOGRAPHY]

1. Amplifon. *The Impact of Sound on the Brain.*
2. Amplifon Company Website. Accessed

The International Journal of Social Sciences
30th July 2014. Vol.25 No.1
© 2012 - 2014 TIJOSS & ARF All rights reserved
ISSN 2305-4557
www.Tijoss.com

07/22/2014. URL www.amplifon.co.uk/resources/playing-with-your-mind.

3. Becker, Ernest. *The Denial of Death.* New York:The Free Press, 1973.
4. Brady, Erika. "Bad Scares and Joyful Hauntings: 'Priesting' the Supernatural Predicament." Barbara Walker, ed. *Out of the Ordinary: Folklore and the Supernatural.* Logan: Utah University Press, 1995. 145-88.
5. Creepypasta Wikia. "What is Creepy pasta? Creepypasta Wiki. Accessed 06/12/2014. URL http://creepypasta.wikia.com/wiki/Creepypasta_Wiki:What_Is_Creeypasta%3F_____. "Site Rules". Creepypasta Wiki. Accessed 06/12/2014. URL http://creepypasta.wikia.com/wiki/Creepypasta_Wiki:Site_Rules
6. *Demon Seed.* Directed by Donald Cammell. 1977 Metro Goldwyn Mayer. 04-08-1977.
7. Dundes, Alan. *Cracking Jokes.* Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 1987.
8. *Fantasia.* Directed by Various. 1940. Walt Disney Productions. 11-13-1940.
9. *Fantasia 2000.* Directed by Various. 2000.Walt Disney Pictures; Walt Disney Feature Animation. 06-16-2000.
10. Frank, Russel. *Newslore: Contemporary Folklore on the Internet.* USA: University Press of Mississippi, 2011.
11. Gehlen, Arnold. *Man: His Nature and Place in the Universe.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.
12. *Ghost Lab.* Directed by Sumithrin David & Benjamin Wolf. 2009-2011. Discovery Channel.
13. Hankiss, Elemer. *Fears and Symbols An Introduction to the Study of Western Civilization.* Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001.
14. Juslin, Patrik N. "Seven Ways in which the Brain Can Evoke Emotions from Sounds" in *Sound, mind and emotion: Research and Aspects.* Sweden: Lund University (The Sound Environment Centre), 2009. URL www4.lu.se/upload/Ljudmiljo/rapport8_sound_mind.pdf
15. *Kairo.* Directed by Kiyoshi Kurosawa. 2001.Toho Company. 02-10-2001.
16. Kinsella, Michael. *Legend-Tripping Online Supernatural Folklore and the Search for Ong's Hat.* Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2011.
    _____ "The Performance of Legend-Tripping." in *Legend-Tripping Online Supernatural Folklore and the Search for Ong's Hat.* Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2011.
17. Lindahl, Carl. "Psychic Ambiguity at the Legend Core." *Journal of Folklore Research* 23:1 (1986).
18. *Poltergeist.* Directed by Tobe Hooper. 1982. SLM Production Group. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. 06-04-1982.
19. *Pulse.* Directed by Jim Sonzero. 2006. Distant Horizons. 08-11-2006.
20. *Ringu.* Directed by Hideo Nakata. 1998. Toho Company Ltd. 01-31-1998.
21. *Stay Alive.* Directed by William Brent Bell. 2006. Hollywood Pictures; Spyglass Entertainment; Endgame Entertainment; Wonderland Sound and Vision; Stay Alive Productions 03-24-2006.
22. *The Ring.* Directed by Gore Verbinski. 2002. DreamWorks Pictures. 10-18-2002.
23. Thomas Aquinas, Saint. *Summa theologiae*

The International Journal of Social Sciences
30th July 2014. Vol.25 No.1
© 2012 - 2014 TIJOSS & ARF All rights reserved
ISSN 2305-4557
www.Tijoss.com

I. 76, 5. (original work written 1265-1273).

24. White, Leslie A. *The Science of Culture. A Study of Man and Civilization.* New York: Grove Press, 1949.
25. *White Noise.* Directed by Geoffrey Sax. 2005.Gold Circle Films Brightlight Pictures. 01-07-2005.