

Textual Analysis, Digital Games, Zombies

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a contribution to ongoing debates about the value and limitations of textual analysis in digital games research. It is argued that due to the particular nature of digital games, both structural analysis and textual analysis are relevant to game studies. Unfortunately they tend to be conflated. Neither structural nor textual factors will fully determine meaning, but they are aspects of the cycle through which meaning is produced during play. Meaning in games is emergent, and play is a situated practice. Undertaking the textual analysis of a game does not necessarily involve ignoring these points. Textual analysis, like any methodology, does have limitations. The specifics of these limitations, however, will depend on the particular model of textuality employed. These issues are explored through an analysis of the horror survival game, *Resident Evil 4*.

Author Keywords

Methodology, Textual Analysis, Structural Analysis, Intertextuality, Interpretation, Horror, Zombies, Disability

INTRODUCTION

There has been some consensus in the field regarding the limitations of textual analysis, yet papers proposing to define textual analysis, specify how it is done, or describe what it offers, remain rare. [10].

Debates about the difference between games and narrative moved forward when theorists began to use specific models of narrative to make their case [1,15,17]. This suggests that when debating the value, offers and limitations of textual analysis, it would be productive to engage with specific models of textuality. Particular aspects of work on text, speech, writing and language by Bakhtin, Kristeva, Derrida or Ricoeur, for example, might prove relevant.

In this paper, games are approached as ‘playable texts’ and specific theories of structural analysis [3], textual analysis [2,4,5] and inter-textual analysis [6] are referenced. This is not an attempt to drag games into an alternative disciplinary domain. Rather, it is a raid from game studies to alternative fields, in an effort to locate useful tools. The described

procedures are explored through the analysis of a particular section of the zombie infested horror-survival game, *Resident Evil 4* (Capcom 2005).

Produced in Japan, the *Resident Evil* series references horror films (such as *Suito Homu*, 1989) and the enormously influential American zombie movies of George Romero. The franchise spans media (novels, comics, films, games). *Resident Evil 4* is a horror survival game featuring action adventure styled spatial puzzles, and a third person shooter perspective¹. The avatar/protagonist Leon battles his way through a vaguely described European location² while tracking down the kidnapped daughter of a US president.

The undead have thrived in the decades since elements of Haitian culture were selected for misrepresentation in Hollywood’s *White Zombie* (1932)³. Zombies frequently feature in digital games, perhaps because as Krzywinka has argued [20], they provide an ‘ideal enemy: they are strong, relentless and already dead’. Elsewhere Krzywinka [19] has described how horror games play with the dynamic between gaining and losing control, finding that the ‘evocation of hopelessness in the face of an inexorable predetermined force is crucial in maintaining horror-based suspense’ (p 211). Suspense is particularly acute in zombie games, due to the monsters’ shambolic, faltering yet relentless progress. A problem with the zombies in *Resident Evil 4*, however, is that they are not technically undead. The villagers are live people infected by a mind controlling parasite, rather than animated corpses⁴. The rage-infected monsters of *28 Days Later* (2002) suffer from similar problems of classification. In both cases, however, the infected ‘perform the role of the zombie in recognizable patterns’ [25 p 120]. The villagers that Leon encounters are ‘too slow to be serious, but too numerous to stop’ [22 p 203] and they inhabit a game franchise with definite zombie associations [23,20,24].

Background: Textual analysis and digital game studies

Bryce and Rutter [8] have argued that ‘Approaches to gender and computer gaming have been dominated by

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textual and content analysis at the expense of broader understandings of gaming'. The work they cite may be flawed, but much of it emerged from psychology and the social sciences. The forms of 'textual analysis' referred to might not be recognized as such by those based in the humanities. The call for papers for the 2007 DiGRA conference proposed that 'Games are situated in culture and society [and to] truly understand the phenomenon of digital games, it is not enough to merely study the games themselves'. Textual analysis, like any methodology, does have limitations, but it is possible to theorise textual analysis in different ways, and the specifics of each variation (including its limitations) would depend on the model of textuality employed.

Adapting theory involves considering how games differ from other media forms. Game theorists concerned with meaning and interpretation in games have struggled to reconcile rules, representational content, cultural resonance and historical contexts. The critique that has emerged in response to the *Civilization* series is a useful case in point [9]. As such work makes apparent, games are designed; they have rules, and they are actualised through various modes of play. Play is experiential and ephemeral yet embodied, and culturally situated. Theorising game textuality is not straightforward. It matters, however, because such work might usefully inform research into related issues such as representation or interpretation. Theorising interpretation is important to those engaged in games analysis, but it also has implications for those designing the research of less obviously related topics including, for example, games and learning.

As conceptualised in this paper, structural analysis relates to game design and form, while textual analysis relates to signification and to the game as actualised in play. Barthes' work on structural analysis [3], and his later accounts of textual analysis [2,4,5] inform this distinction. Provisionally distinguishing between textual and structural analysis makes it possible to argue that a great deal of existing games analysis is actually structural analysis. The designation 'structural analysis' is not evaluative. Structural analysis makes sense in games studies. Consider how useful structural narratology proved to theorists seeking to demonstrate the differences between games and narrative [1,15,17]. In other work, such as Zagal, Mateas, Fernandez-Vara, Hochhalter and Lichti's paper 'Towards an Ontological Language for Game Analysis' [28] the importance of game structure and its relevance to game design, is recognised:

A deep reading of any one particular game would require an analysis of its representational conventions, allusions and connotations. Our ontology helps position the more formal or structural elements of the game within the game design space; other methods and techniques would

be required to approach representational issues (p 25)

Barthes' later theories of textuality suggest that the textual analysis of games does not necessarily involve a focus on 'the game itself' as if divorced from considerations of play. Barthes' analysis in *S/Z* is designed to reflect the act of reading. Considerations of practice are central to his approach – his focus is on the text *as read*. So, in the context of games studies, and according to this particular conceptualization of textuality, thinking about textual analysis means thinking about the game *as played*. Dovey and Kennedy [14] argue that 'In order to study a computer game we cannot have recourse solely to its textual characteristics; we have to pay particular attention to the moment of its enactment as it is played' (p 6). This is certainly true. However, if I use a model of textuality that incorporates aspects of practice, and that characterizes meaning and interpretation as emergent and situated, then emphatic distinctions between the 'game as text' and the 'game as played' might prove difficult to sustain.

METHODOLOGY

Here analysis is approached via three interlocking and overlapping frames: structure, textuality and inter-textuality. The version of structural analysis is derived from Barthes [3], the model of textual analysis is drawn from Barthes [2,4,5], and the approach to inter-textuality (with a focus on 'reading formations') is borrowed from Bennett and Woollacott [6]. The point of using such models is that it allows for specificity. This is necessary given the confusion in the field as to what constitutes 'textual analysis' and hence its limitations. According to textual analysis as conceptualized here, meaning emerges when the text is actualized or practiced (*read*, in the case of a novel; *played*, in the case of a game). The concepts of 'reading formations' and 'inter-textuality' offered by Bennett and Woollacott offer one perspective through which the exchange between the text and the meaning-making resources of the situated subject may be considered, without moving into alternative methodological domains.

Structural Analysis

Computer game theorists and designers including Salen and Zimmerman [26] have stressed the importance of understanding games as systems, as 'a set of parts that interrelate to form a complex whole' (p 55). In his 1968 essay titled 'How Do We Recognize Structuralism' Gilles Deleuze [12] writes of structuralism's interest in systems. Systems require units, he explains, and it is the relative placement of units within a system - rather than the qualities of the individual units in isolation - that is the defining quality of these units. This, he writes - while making reference to Levi-Strauss' work on playing cards and Lacan's use of ludic metaphors - explains 'structuralism's inclination for certain games' (p 175).

In Barthes' essay 'Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives' [3] he explores the relations between units in narrative discourse, and the consequences of these relationships for meaning. Faced with the pervasiveness and endless variation of narrative, he proposes that its study should involve the investigation of structure, rather than the cataloguing of individual manifestations. Barthes points to Saussure's work on language, Levi-Strauss' work on myth and Propp's work on folklore as precedents - instances where patterns have been sought and identified, the aim being to extract 'a principle of classification and a central focus for description from the apparent confusion of the individual messages.' (p 80). For Barthes, looking for meaning in structure involves splitting a narrative discourse into various classes of function or unit, and considering the ways in which these units correlate and combine.

Working from Barthes' essay, then, it is possible to argue that the structural analysis of a computer game involves the organization of the game's constituting units and the ways in which these units inter-relate in time and space. The units of the game-as-system are reconfigurable, to varying degrees, and the manner in which they inter-relate contributes towards meaning (just like Barthes' units in discourse). The difference would be that the positions of units in a game, and the relationships between these units, might not be constant, stable or consistent. The scope for movement, alteration or manipulation is accommodated by the game - it is part of the game's organization, and part of what the game-as-system is. Based on this, it might be proposed that aspects of game design, typologies (of rules or genre, etc.), temporality, spatial navigation or the study of event types (ie ludic or narrative) would fall within the ambit of structural analysis.

Textual Analysis

Barthes opens his essay 'The Struggle with the Angel' [4] by commenting that while he will be applying structural analysis, he will also be using a less 'pure' approach (p 126) - that of textual analysis, where 'text' refers to a methodological field, or a site of meaning, rather than a material object. For Barthes, textual analysis 'tries to say no longer from where the text comes (historical criticism), nor even how it is made (structural analysis), but how it is unmade, how it explodes, disseminates - by what coded paths it goes off.' (p 127)

Barthes suggests how to distinguish between structural and textual analysis, while acknowledging that such distinctions should be considered provisional or even tactical. He makes further comparisons later in this same essay, writing that 'textual analysis is founded on reading rather than on the objective structure of the text, the latter being more the province of structural analysis' (p. 131). Again, this suggests that textual analysis relates to practice, while structural analysis addresses the schematic that accommodates these practices. In the context of games analysis, the relevant practice is, of course, play.

This emphasis on textual actualization is useful, but there are problems in adapting this work to games -hardly surprising given the differences between games and literature. For example, to demonstrate textual analysis, Barthes [5] breaks the text into *lexia*. A *lexia* might be a word, a cluster of words, or a group of sentences - 'It is what surgeons would call an operating field' (p 4). These *lexia* are then read, in 'slow motion' (p 4) and the various 'senses' classed and discussed in relation to a set of codes, which can be summarized as:

- Hermeneutic code - which relates to narrative enigma, questions posed, and truths revealed
- Proairetic code - the code of actions, logical sequence, causality.
- Semic code - connotations, themes
- Symbolic code - mythic antitheses and binaries
- Referential code - cultural codes, values

Pertinent as these codes may be, applying them to computer games is not straightforward. For example, would the code of enigma relate to mysteries presented in the back-story, as well as the enigmas (challenges, puzzles, delays and obstructions) presented by the game's ludic elements? What of the enigmas that are the result of player error, such as getting lost? Would the proairetic code refer to the actions in the back-story, the actions called for by the game, or the actions taken by the player - or all of these? Would accidental or unsuccessful actions differ from deliberate actions? Clearly there are issues when adapting theory from literature, to games. These are further explored in the application and analysis section of this paper.

Regarding the limits of textual analysis, Barthes [2] writes that 'we must not confuse connotation with association of ideas: the latter refers to the system of a subject; connotation is a correlation immanent in the text' (p 8). Connotation is closely linked to association, but the former is an aspect of the text, the latter would be a property of the reader. No attempt will be made in the analysis that follows, however, to maintain this distinction. Connotation is located in the text in so far as a specific empirical feature (a particular action, image, colour, gesture) is evident in the text. However, I am not sure that I can consider the meaning of said feature, without employing association - in practice these systems appear inextricably entangled. Thus, rather than attempting to distinguish between connotation and association, it will be acknowledged that culturally situated association is part of analysis. For this reason it is necessary to add a third lens to this approach; a means by which it becomes possible to culturally situate the interpretive framework of the player-analyst. Theories of inter-textuality and reading formations make this possible.

Inter-textuality and 'reading formations'

Bennett and Woollacott's work on inter-textuality and reading formations offers a platform to 'think through' the relationship between connotation and association. In their

work in *Bond and Beyond: the Political Career of a Popular Hero* [6] the authors argue that texts cannot be understood in isolation, but rather than proposing a straight switch to audience studies on that basis, they consider aspects of the relationship between text and user, finding that the reading or viewing subject arrives at a text with a set of ‘reading formations’ in place, and these will influence if (or which) aspects of that text will have resonance for that subject.

Viewers and readers will respond to and interpret a text according in part to their reading formations – the social, cultural and historical make up of their interpretive perspective. For Bennett and Woollacott, the term ‘inter-textuality’ refers to ‘the social organisation of the relations between texts within specific conditions of reading’ (p 45). They argue, for instance, that the publicity that surrounds the release of a James Bond film is part of what Bond ‘means’, because this material does not just ‘organise expectations in relation to a particular film but [it also reorganises] the signifying currency of Bond so as to inflect its ideological and cultural articulations’ (p 248). Publicity, for example, functions ‘alongside the other components of a reading formation (systems of inter-textuality, the institutional practices which bear on the formation of reading competencies, etc.), to organise *the relations between texts and readers.*’ (p 248, emphasis in original)

Bennett and Woollacott intend to move past a focus on either ‘the text itself’, or the ‘active reader’, to highlight the ‘cultural and ideological forces which organise and reorganise the network of inter-textual relations within which texts are inserted as texts-to-be-read in certain ways by reading subjects organised to read in certain ways’ (p 249). Various models of inter-textuality or trans-textuality could be used as the starting point for a different discussion addressing, for instance, the relationship between *Resident Evil 4* and other games in the franchise, or the spin-off films. The emphasis here is on the cultural shaping of interpretation.

Reading formations impact on interpretation, and thus they will impact on analysis. Such considerations segue into issues of context, role and social practice. For example, to write this, I’m drawing on particular theoretical perspectives to produce an analysis in the genre of ‘conference paper’ while addressing a particular community. Game scholarship, like games fandom, involves a ‘particular set of critical and interpretive practices’ [16, p 277-278]. Different interpretations will stress different aspects of game-play. Different interpretations will be accorded legitimacy in different contexts. The interpretations performed or produced in different social contexts or communities of practice, may be incompatible.

The actual methods used during analysis were suggested by the procedures Barthes demonstrates in *S/Z*. The game was played once through for pleasure when it was released. It was then replayed in preparation for this analysis. Then, a particular set piece from early in the game was selected as representative. This section of the game was played, paused, and re-played by the author, and notes taken.

APPLICATION AND ANALYSIS

The section selected for analysis occurs very early in the game. Leon has already dispatched a resident. Leon’s advisor, Ingrid Hunnigan checks in via his headset device:

HUNNIGAN: Is everything okay?

LEON: There was a hostile local. I had no choice but to neutralize him. There are still others surrounding the area.

HUNNIGAN: Get out of there and head toward the village. Take whatever measures necessary to save the subject.⁵

The player picks up the basics of play through a number of small scale encounters. Houses, cupboards and shed interiors are worth searching for pick-ups (gold, medicine, ammunition). Crates are worth smashing (more pickups), and typewriters function as save points. Leon follows a dirt track to the village as instructed by Hunnigan and directed by sign posts. The track terminates at a large, metal gate. There is no way around it. Unlike the wooden, ramshackle buildings encountered thus far, the gate is new and imposing, it suggests institutional power and privacy. The gate is tall, made of studded metal, and marked with an unidentified symbol suggestive of secrets, or cultish ritual. Directed by an on-screen prompt, the player hits the action button. Leon moves through the gate and a new area loads. The gate marks a transition, in various ways. Leon proceeds down the path, and into the village, and the spatial/temporal framing of the action shifts, from a relatively linear, introductory set of events (epitomised by the single dirt track) to a set of possible events subject to player prerogative or strategy, set in the village-as-arena. This is indicative of the game as a whole. Areas are accessed in turn, and each is a spatial puzzle: a particular arrangement of obstacles, enemies and potential damage, balanced by a certain number of resources (ammunition, medicine, etc.). *Resident Evil 4* could be described as a set of inter-locking spatial puzzles linked by a narrative thread.

As the above description of the gate indicates, it would be a mistake to categorise in-game elements as either structural or textual depending on their particular properties. It is more productive to regard each element in the game as potentially viewed through various analytical lenses. Their interpretation will depend on the analytical lens employed (structural, textual or inter-textual, for example). There is no reason to assume that one of these meanings would be

definitive or dominant, although particular interpretations might be more or less likely or appropriate in different contexts.

Leon might carefully survey the village, or he might recklessly plunge into the fray. This variability is an outcome of the player's capacity to manipulate the avatar, and this would be one problem for the analyst attempting to apply Barthes' codes. There is another. Lexia, writes Barthes [5] are 'sieves as fine as possible, thanks to which we shall "skim off" the senses, the connotations' (p 4). Barthes [2] fragments the narrative text to produce lexia, in order to facilitate analysis.

The lexia will include sometimes a few words, sometimes several sentences; it will be a matter of convenience: it will suffice that the lexia be the best possible space in which we can observe meanings; its dimension, empirically determined, estimated, will depend on the density of connotations [...] all we require is that each lexia should have at most three or four meanings (p 13).

It is unlikely that a game fragment could be limited to three or four meanings, once graphics and imagery, sound, movement, player action, commands, the interface and the ludic economy (rules, resources, damage, etc.) have been taken into account. In an attempt to limit the 'operating field' [5] attention is narrowed to the first village-based confrontation between Leon and the locals. The focus is on the clusters of meaning associated with specific elements; similar to that which Barthes describes in *S/Z* as 'connotative signifiers'

a signifier which will occur in several places in the text; it is a shifting element which can combine with other similar elements to create characters, ambiances, shapes and symbols [...] although every unit we mention here will be a signifier, this one is of a very special type: it is the signifier par excellence because of its connotation, in the usual meaning of the term (p 17)

This will involve focusing on units of meaning, or semes, with a binding quality; that form clusters and continuities within, across and beyond the text. For the sake of the necessarily short discussion that follows, I have identified a particular seme on which to focus, and tagged it 'work'. It would be possible to explore other semes in the game, such as ethnicity or masculinity (for example). A full analysis would involve the consideration of these various semes as they emerge and combine during play.

Work

Prior to entering the village, Leon has an opportunity to observe the occupants. They are working: shoveling, pushing wheel barrows, carrying buckets of water. Once

Leon enters the area, they lumber towards him armed by picks, pitchforks and axes. Now their job is to kill Leon. The villagers' employment and their use of tools sets them apart from Romero's zombies, who tend to be uninhibited, unemployed and autonomous [24]. In a sense, the possessed farmers of *Resident Evil 4* are throwbacks to an earlier era. These villagers are in service, and they recall the zombified workers of *White Zombie*, a film about control, sex, possession, drone-like labour, race and slavery. Deleuze and Guattari [13] describe zombies as 'good for work' (p 335), while the 2004 British film *Shaun of the Dead* features an image of the 'mobile deceased' working in supermarkets. The notion of the zombie as worker, and workers as zombies, has continuing cultural salience.

Like the village itself, the consecutive zones that Leon encounters in *Resident Evil 4* are frequently places of work. He fights zombies in grim offices, grimy labs, farm yards, quarries, sheds, barns and mines. Leon's entire mission is work related. He is on the job. He works his way up, killing a series of bosses, each of increasing seniority within an organization. He carries an attaché case, rather than a backpack or satchel.

Both Leon and the villagers are armed by the tools of their trades. Thanks to his headset, Leon is online; linked up with the formal and bespectacled Hannigan, who communicates strategically valuable information in a brisk tone using military language. In contrast to Leon, the villagers might be regarded as either offline (the village does not have much in the way of modern technology), or as being online in the 'wrong way'. They are linked-up via biology rather than technology, and directed by a feudal/religious order, rather than technologically advanced/military order. Neither Leon nor the villagers could be considered autonomous. Leon's headset is an augmentation that slots him into a particular chain of command. As such, it mirrors the infestation that facilitates the arch villain's control over the villagers. One form of augmentation is constructed as positive or advantageous. The other is constructed as a disease or deficit. In each case, augmentation has ramifications for role, work and identity⁶.

By definition, a horror game should provoke discomfort, fear and anxiety. In *Resident Evil 4*, these sensations are associated with the identities and bodies of the infected villagers. Theorists frequently discuss zombies in terms of ambiguity (un-alive, un-dead), contagion and inefficiency [22,27]. Despite a repeated focus on damaged bodies, the explicit associating of zombie-hood with disability is very rare in zombie literature. Paffenroth [24] for example, describes Romero's zombies as fallible and uncoordinated (p 15) and as 'slow, clumsy imbeciles who can barely stand up' (p 17). He does not discuss these points in relation to representations of disability. Lauro and Embry [21] however, note that

without consciousness and without speech, the zombie recalls the mentally ill or the language impaired, such as those with aphasia. Even the lumbering gait of the cinematic zombie, which probably is meant to reflect rigor mortis and advanced decay, looks like a muscular disorder. (p 103)

Furthermore, Lauro and Embry point out that, as a metaphor, the ‘zombie reveals much about the way we code inferior subjects as unworthy of life’ (p 87). Considering Leon’s and the villagers’ labouring bodies, their online/offline status, and their augmentations in relation to notions of ability and disability, suggests a way to think about the anxieties potentially evoked by *Resident Evil 4*, without resorting directly to the psychoanalytically-informed accounts of abjection that have proven so influential in horror analysis [18,11]. It suggests an alternative or additional frame of reference; one that owes more to Foucault than Freud, and that imagines the ‘return of the repressed’ played out in social rather than psychoanalytic terms.

This alternative account of ‘horror’ still centres on issues of ambiguity, identity and the body. However, instead of exploring horrific anxiety through psychoanalysis, this approach considers such anxieties as they relate to social policy and discourse. As Branson and Miller [7] record in their history of the pathologizing of deafness, the 19th Century rise of bureaucracy (empire, army, education) saw the measuring and recording of difference (racial, physical, sexual, etc.) become increasingly prevalent. Measurement and institutionalization became instruments of control and order. Of course this had (and continues to have) profound ramifications for those classified as deviant. It also has implications for those subjects who are culturally positioned to experience their identity as normal. For these subjects, it is possible that deinstitutionalization (or the collapse of categorization) potentially ‘threatens not only their identity, especially when faced with the everyday presence of those formerly hidden away, but also the disciplined and orderly nature of their environment’ (*ibid*, p 52).

This suggests the possibility of thinking about anxiety in terms of difference and control, and loss of control. From this perspective the zombie operates as a disabled escapee, trailing riot, impropriety and disorder. Zombies feed on the normals and convert them in the process. From this angle, the anxiety provoked by the monstrous in *Resident Evil 4*, is not just about the monster’s ability to transgress boundaries – it’s about classification, and the potential for reclassification. It is about differentiation, as well as difference.

In *Resident Evil 4*, work is connected to the body and identity. Work determines what is worn and the weapon that is wielded. Work and identity are associated with an

augmentation that is either advantageous (in Leon’s case) or impairing (in the case of the mind-controlling parasites). Leon is online in the ‘right way’ and he fits into a particular chain of command. Leon is occupied, whereas the villagers are possessed.

This examination of the single seme ‘work’ in *Resident Evil 4* suggests that the game provokes, plays with and teases the player with anxieties of classification, ambiguity and differentiation. The game responds to and soothes these anxieties by offering the pleasures of exactitude and precision. Precision – structured into the game as the efficient use of weapons and accurate targeting - is an absolutely central aspect of the game-play. Ammunition is rationed, but combat is a strategic necessity. Precision offers relief. It enables Leon’s survival, but the shooting in *Resident Evil 4* also serves a function similar to filing: Leon does not kill the villagers so much as resolve their status. Once they are properly dead and emphatically classified, the ‘neutralized’ villagers neatly exit the game-space.

CONCLUSION

There may be a temptation to conclude from the above that *Resident Evil 4* is a reactionary text that involves the emphatic dispatching of an Other for the sake of social neatness. However, to return to the discussion of methodology at the centre of this paper, producing a situated interpretation, is not the same as producing an account of how the game ‘positions’ the player. Consider that the villagers are possessed and remotely controlled, but so is Leon. He is an avatar. It might be assumed that my role ‘as Leon’ renders me more susceptible to the ‘naturalised’ values of the game-as-text, but such assumptions are extremely problematic. Crucially, any account of ideology in games that failed to conceptualise either interpellation or subject position (or some other mechanism to explain how it *worked*) would be incomplete. In fact, this is one of the positive outcomes of spending time thinking about how theories of textuality apply to games. The process can help to expose conceptual holes in accounts of game interpretation.

The methodology discussed in this paper is adapted from literary studies. The theories used are not a perfect fit. What they offer, however, are tools that make it possible to articulate the differences between game textuality and game structure. These theories offer a basis for exploring the relationship between text and play. They allow for the production of an account of methodology that renders aspects of the analytical process (and its conceptual underpinnings) explicit. These procedures allow for the close examination of a game’s ‘conventions, allusions and connotations’ [28], and they suggest a framework through which it is possible to theorise interpretation itself. These are some of the offers of textual analysis.

Notes

1. Screenshots: <http://www.capcom.com/re4/gui.html>.
2. The location of the village is not stated, although it is 'sort of' Spanish – Maybe it's Andorra? The game is set in 'Europe, 2004' but the currency is pesetas (not Euros). See also <http://www.wiiliving.com/resident-evil-4-racist/> and 'Resident Evil 4: Zombie Cult or a Tragic Result of the Language Barrier?' (by C.De Las Casas, 2007) at http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/314563/resident_evil_4_zombie_cult_or_a_tragic_pg2.html?cat=19.
3. Visit zombierama.com for a list of zombie movies from around the world.
4. In this interview at IGN.com, RE4 producer Hiroiyuki Kobayashi explains that 'They're not villagers. They're not zombies. They are these things': <http://uk.cube.ign.com/articles/515/515402p1.html>
5. From 'Resident Evil 4 Game Script', by The Headcrook (2005) online at <http://uk.faqs.ign.com/articles/674/674283p1.html> accessed July 2009. Helpfully the protagonists suggest the importance of 'neutralizing' the hostile other in order to safeguard 'the subject'.
6. Later in the game this natural order is corrupted: Leon becomes infected with a parasite, and the villains highjack his headset to send him nasty messages.

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