

Survival Horrality: Analysis of a Videogame Genre (1)

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Introduction

The title of this article is drawn from Philip Brophy's 1983 essay which coins the neologism 'horrality', a merging of horror, textuality, morality and hilarity. Like Brophy's original did of 1980s horror cinema, this article examines characteristics of survival horror videogames, seeking to illustrate the relationship between 'new' (media) horror and 'old' (media) horror. Brophy's term structures this investigation around key issues and aspects of survival horror videogames. *Horror* relates to generic parallels with similarly-labelled film and literature, including gothic fiction, American horror cinema and traditional Japanese culture. *Textuality* examines the aesthetic qualities of survival horror, including the games' use of narrative, their visual design and structuring of virtual spaces. *Morality* explores the genre's ideological characteristics, the nature of survival horror violence, the familial politics of these texts, and their reflection on issues of institutional and bodily control. *Hilarity* refers to moments of humour and self reflexivity, leading to consideration of survival horror's preoccupation with issues of vision, identification, and the nature of the videogame medium.

'Survival horror' as a game category is unusual for its prominence within videogame scholarship. Indicative of the amorphous nature of popular genres, Aphra Kerr notes: 'game genres are poorly defined and evolve as new technologies and fashions emerge';(2) an observation which applied as much to videogame academia as to the videogame industry. Within studies of the medium, various game types are commonly listed. These might include the shoot-'em-up, the racing game, the platform game, the God game, the real-time strategy game, and the puzzle game,(3) the simulation, role-playing, fighting/action, sports, traditional and "'edutainment"' game,(4) or action, adventure, strategy and 'process-orientated' games.(5) These clusters of game types tend to be broad, commonsensical, and under-theorized. In contrast, 'survival horror' seems to mean something quite specific for critics and game academics alike. All videogames, from *Tetris* to *Tomb Raider*, entail some form of *survival*, but the explicit use of the noun implies a fraught desperation of play involving 'surviving rather than thriving'.(6) Survival horror is also a particular kind of *horror* experience. The presence of supernatural or monstrous iconography such as vampires, zombies, haunted houses, gothic castles and demon slayers might make a game horror – as in the *House of the Dead* series, *Doom* franchise or many *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* spin-offs – but *survival* horror involves the transformation of these characters and characteristics in the service of a particular form of gameplay. Game genres incorporate not only what digital texts look and sound like or the narratives they contain, but also, and here theories of genre drawn from traditional media cannot account for the specificities of the videogame form, how they play.

The lack of historical accounts of game genres, particularly horror, is observed by Carl Therrien,(7) yet survival horror is notable for the range of scholarly definitions available, many illustrating the ways visual iconography and gameplay combine to produce a particular participatory horror experience. Bernard Perron distinguishes between the plot level in which 'the hero/heroine investigates a hostile environment where he/she will be trapped... in order either to uncover the causes of strange and horrible events... or to find and rescue a loved one from an evil force', and the genre's gameplay dimensions where 'in a third-person perspective, the gamer has to find clues, gather objects... and solve puzzles.'(8) My own definition, in which 'a typically average character navigates a maze-like landscape, solving puzzles and fighting off monsters with limited ammunition, energy and means of replenishing it'(9) highlights both

the unremarkable nature of survival horror protagonists, and the resource-managing play qualities which make survival such a frantic experience. Matt Fox's videogame guide entry for *Alone in the Dark* (Infogames, 1992) emphasizes audiovisual aspects: 'cinematic camera angles... minimalistic sound effects... 3D items and characters set against hand-drawn 2D backgrounds, and zombies, lots and lots of zombies.' Fox also notes the unchanging structuring narrative situation of the genre. From its (disputable) advent in the early 1990s PC game, the basic premise remains: '... you're trapped in a mansion... or a small town... you're surrounded by horror, and you've got to survive'.⁽¹⁰⁾ In a recent overview of videogame studies, Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al succinctly define survival horror as games in which: 'the player controls a character who has to get out of some enclosed place solving puzzles and destroying horrific monsters along the way',⁽¹¹⁾ indicating the extent to which the genre has achieved canonical coherence and recognition within the emerging field of videogame scholarship.

The history of survival horror begins either with the text adventure game *Hunt the Wumpus* (Yorb, 1972) on 1970s home computers,⁽¹²⁾ with the Atari 2600's *Haunted House* (1982) or the Famicom's *Sweet Home* (Capcom, 1989) according to popular game websites,⁽¹³⁾ or with *Alone in the Dark* on the PC as both Fox⁽¹⁴⁾ and Jason Whittaker⁽¹⁵⁾ suggest. Yet the term itself was first coined in the original 1996 *Resident Evil* (Capcom), opening with the text: 'Welcome to the world of survival horror'. Since then the title has been retrospectively applied to games predating Capcom's classic, and attributed by reviewers and academics to subsequent games and series. At the level of production and promotion, given the disadvantages in employing too-specific labels to their products, many games subtly weave the words 'survival' and 'horror' into their cover blurbs as a means of signalling their association with the genre. As Tanya Krzywinska observes, *Resident Evil 2*'s (Capcom, 1998) cover challenges player with the question – "Can you *survive* the horror?"⁽¹⁶⁾ Similar discursive signposts appear in *The Thing*'s (Konami, 2002) advice that players maintain control of their military team and 'you might just *survive*', *Clock Tower 3*'s (Capcom, 2003) question 'Can Alyssa *survive* the horror before the clock strikes midnight?' or *Silent Hill 3*'s (Konami, 2003) claim that Heather 'has nothing to do but *survive*', references to the protagonists of *Forbidden Siren* (SCE, 2004) having to 'rely on instinct and fight to *survive*', and *Haunting Ground*'s (Capcom, 2005) assertion that flight and tactics are Fiona's 'only hope for *survival*' on their respective box covers (emphasis mine in all cases). *ObsCure*'s (DreamCatcher Interactive, 2004) claim – 'Survival horror hits the high school' – represents a rare example where the genre is explicitly referenced, here to indicate the unique selling point of the game's location, while the labelling of *Resident Evil 4* (Capcom, 2005) as 'new survival action' followed by the repost, 'Forget "survival horror", this is Resident Evil redefined', indicates the generic change of direction taken by this instalment, noted by many commentators.

As Tanya Krzywinska observes, there are many ways in which horror games are informed by horror cinema.⁽¹⁷⁾ Andrew Weise considers games like *Clock Tower* (Human Entertainment, 1995), *Resident Evil* and *Dead Rising* (Capcom, 2006), as videogame adaptations of stalker and zombie movies;⁽¹⁸⁾ while Laurie N. Taylor discusses survival horror's close relationship to gothic literature.⁽¹⁹⁾ Although this article also situates such digital texts in relation to traditional horror, as Susana Pajares Tosca asserts in her study of *Resident Evil: Code Veronica X* (Capcom, 2000), computer and videogames cannot necessarily be understood by simply mapping theoretical frameworks developed to explain other media formations.⁽²⁰⁾ Accordingly, Weise draws upon the language of videogame simulation⁽²¹⁾ and procedural rhetoric ⁽²²⁾ in arguing that *Resident Evil* reproduces not only the aesthetics of zombie cinema, but more specifically models the experience of being subject to zombie invasion; Taylor's 'ludic gothic' incorporates gameplay characteristics, such as counter-intuitive controls and preferred strategies of flight over combat; while for Krzywinska horror in horror videogames is all about withdrawal of player control. The audiovisual elements characterising the survival horror genre, the multiple media forms

through which its textual surface is constructed, its engagement with political and ideological issues, and the ways survival horror games self consciously comment on their own nature cannot be divorced from the videogame medium in which survival horror is located.

Horror

Like the films Brophy describes, survival horror might be considered a genre ‘whose primary aim ... is to generate suspense, shock and horror’, founded on experiences of ‘tension, fear, anxiety, sadism and masochism’, the pleasure of which is ‘getting the shit scared out of you – and loving it’.(23) In terms of narrative, settings, images, characters and player challenges, survival horror games draw upon familiar generic staples. The *Silent Hill* series takes place in a mist shrouded ghost town, while the many adversaries encountered by *Haunting Ground*’s heroine include a massive but dim-witted hunchback, a beautiful but insane cyborg woman, and an evil alchemist driven by the desire for eternal life. The streets of *Silent Hill* are named after horror and suspense writers like Bloch Koontz and Eldrich; the library of *Eternal Darkness: Sanity’s Requiem* (Nintendo, 2002) is full of Poe, Lovecraft and Blake; while *The Thing* is directly based on the Carpenter’s 1982 body horror classic. The presence of chain saws, shotguns and flame throwers throughout these games recognize the contemporary horror hero’s arsenal, although more traditional holy water, herbs and magically-endowed weapons may also feature. As well as western horror, many of these Japanese games reflect elements of Japanese horror cinema, together with more traditional Japanese culture. Ruth Goldberg writes of the ‘*bukimi-na haha-mono*’ or ‘“Uncanny Mother” film’, a cycle which features ‘the nightmare mother who has a special link to madness or the supernatural’.(24) This figure is clearly evident in Dahlia Gillespie, leader of the cult of *Silent Hill* who tries to burn her own daughter, Alessa Gillespie, to death, and Alessa herself, an arcane mother figure straight from the pages of Barbara Creed’s *The Monstrous Feminine*.(25)

Various reasons suggest an affinity between the horror genre and the videogame. Brophy underlines the low cultural status of a genre concerned with ‘engaging the reader in a dialogue of textual manipulation that has no time for the critical ordinances of social realism, cultural enlightenment or emotional humanism’.(26) Such is the common perspective on the videogame medium. As James Newman(27) emphasizes in the opening chapter to his recent book, the medium shares horror genre associations with juvenilia, lack of sophistication and delinquency, the provision of easy automatic pleasures, a dumbing and numbing of the senses, and claims of senseless violence, misogyny and sadism. Fred Botting observes, there are similarities between attacks on eighteenth century Gothic fiction and criticism of contemporary videogames;(28) and many survival horror titles have significant parallels with this now-respected literary genre. *Silent Hill*’s mad woman in the basement of Alchemilea Hospital, *Haunting Ground*’s medieval castle setting and narrative investigation of its heroine’s family history, and the fragmented multi-character story of *Eternal Darkness* betray certain Gothic influences. The horror genre, with its rich and easily-identifiable aesthetics, suits perfectly what Henry Jenkins calls the ‘generic atmosphere’(29) or ‘environmental storytelling’(30) of space-centred videogames. The two-dimensional characterisations Andrew Lloyd Smith considers a convention of Gothic fiction(31) also serves well a medium in which, according to Andrew Darley, narrative and characterisation are subordinate to the kinaesthetic performance of game playing.(32) Tania Modleski(33) argues a form of ‘*anti-narcissistic identification*’ is produced between horror audience and the shallow unsympathetic characters who exist solely as chainsaw fodder. This arguably corresponds with the necessary under-engagement required between videogame player and avatar – the figure controlled by the gamer – who inevitably repeatedly dies throughout the course of a game’s completion.

However, despite survival horror’s generic labelling, Perron points to the fact that as in cinema, few videogame titles have actually horrified. (34) In an earlier paper, Perron suggests games of the

psychological variety might be more appropriately labelled ‘survival *terror*’ given the sense of dreadful anticipation these games generate. (35) Furthermore, notwithstanding claims made about minimal videogame characterisation, the playable protagonists of survival horror videogames are comparatively well-developed. They exist as characters within a narrative, defined by a combination of techniques discussed by Lankoski, Heliö and Ekman,(36) such as cut-scenes - brief non-participatory digital sequences employing Hollywood narrative techniques - avatar animation, game goals, and the reaction of other non-playable characters to protagonists. Jenny, the waif-like heroine of *Rule of Rose* (SCE, 2006) who creeps from room to room wringing her hands in distress, seems clearly designed to convey experiences of agitation inflecting upon player’s engagement with her circumstances. Without such detail, the videogame’s ubiquitous sense of survival has no horror.

Textuality

As this discussion of game characters suggests, story is a significant component of survival horror textuality. However, issues of narrative are extremely problematic in videogame scholarship. Early attempts to theorize the form seemingly divided academics discussing videogames as games, from those emphasising their relationship to traditional narrative media, mobilising frameworks drawn from film and literature. Central to this debate is the issue of whether videogames can be considered texts,(37) and therefore whether they might have ‘textuality’. Such early disputes still reverberate through the emerging discipline, evident in this article’s opening distinction between gameplay and audiovisual design as factors in videogame genre. The ludology/narratology debate incorporates a range of seemingly-antagonistic elements of the medium: game and story,(38) abstraction and representation,(39) interactivity and reading.(40) Survival horror videogames largely privilege the latter over the former – through cut-scenes, photorealistic locations, and written text. In *Fatal Frame* (Tecmo, 2001) Miku Hinasaki investigates the haunted Himuro Mansion searching for her lost brother. The game’s sense of horror emerges from the avatar’s construction as a psychologically-motivated protagonist in a desperate situation within a recognisable - if supernaturally-transformed - location, and the story she gradually uncovers. Narrative dimensions are foreground through publicity, trailers and videogame box blurbs. Promotions for *Silent Hill*, for example, largely prioritize character, narrative and visual design, over gameplay, action or puzzles.(41) Moreover, these games are full of texts for protagonists and players to read: diaries, newspapers, notebooks, inscriptions and documents, revealing past horrors and suggesting future perils. Santos and White argue that players of *Resident Evil* or *Silent Hill* are frequently situated as detective, deciphering a narrative from the fragments the game environment provides. (42) *Forbidden Siren* features a number of protagonists at various points in time, trapped in a village patrolled by the living dead, the player informed that ‘only by piecing together their experiences can a reason for the nightmare be unearthed.’ This fragmented narrative, not dissimilar to that of traditional Gothic fiction, is a feature of survival horror textuality.

Visually, the survival horror videogame has much in common with horror literature, cinema and television. Two aspects Perron argues produce the sense of dread associated with survival horror include the use of darkness, mist and other techniques to obscure creatures within the hostile game space, and the flashlight which restricts the player’s view to immediately in front of the avatar.(43) Like horror B movies, survival horror distinct aesthetics are a consequence of scarce technical resources. This play of concealment, corresponding with a similar dialectic Dennis Giles observes in horror cinema, (44) suits the graphical limitations of a medium where every frame is drawn in real time, ensuring that what is visible can be realized in crackling detail. As a popular review of *Silent Hill 3* reads: ‘The visuals are beautifully detailed, except that doesn’t sound right when we’re talking about baths that overflow with sticky black blood, walls covered in seething flesh and lockers that swing open to reveal flayed torsos.’(45) Like horror films, survival horror games ‘remain exceptionally lovely to look at even when their point of view

is gloomy and their material sordid'.(46) Survival horror videogames traditionally view space through a series of fixed virtual cameras which pan and cut as the avatar moves through a defined route. Graphically illustrating the extent to which videogames use cinema as a medium template of realism,(47) the horror of survival horror requires an impression of verisimilitude rooted in a kind of 'camera reality'.(48) The restrictive 'cinematic camera angles'(49) through which the survival horror world is seen also create suspense and shock effects by withholding and controlling players' view of game space, as Perron(50) and Krzywinska(51) observe. A final textual feature of the genre is the unsettling suggestion of horrifying events through gamespaces, featuring bloodstained walls, wrecked furniture, or dismembered corpses. Places in survival horror tell of past events, like the house of *Silent Hill Homecoming* (Konami, 2009) which narrates a tale of sibling rivalry, patriarchal control and domestic abuse. Being rich with concealed or implied stories, such spaces differ from the explicit horror movies considered by Brophy as 'showing' as opposed to 'telling',(52) returning to the more suggestive horror the critic identifies in previous eras of horror filmmaking.

Morality

The politics of survival horror are best situated within the context of videogames in general. Survival horror games are undoubtedly violent and gory, however in most examples of the genre this is a violence which is largely done to, rather than perpetrated by, the protagonist. In stark contrast to the popular stereotype of videogames which involve indiscriminate blasting and zapping,(53) or the kind of macho 'militaristic masculinity' rightfully criticized by Kline *et al*,(54) the focus of survival horror is much more strategic, driven by resource management, stealth, and the comparatively meek tactics of hiding and running away. If the imperialistic impetus which King and Krzywinska note informs the *Tomb Raider* series involves exploring exotic spaces, destroying exotic inhabitants and plundering exotic treasures,(55) such colonising characteristics are largely absent in survival horror. Instead, survival horror play commonly takes place in a familiar space, a shopping mall (*Silent Hill 3*), a family home (*Silent Hill Homecoming*), a school (*Obscure*), which has itself been invaded by monstrous creatures. As such, the player is positioned as the victim of colonisation, rather than its champion. The absence of sufficient weaponry, leading many game strategy guides to advise fleeing over fighting,(56) encourages a 'potentially more methodological attitude' towards combat.(57) *Clock Tower 3* offers only splashes of holy water as combat items which temporarily subdue pursuers, and requires players to evade adversaries by hiding behind curtains or in bathroom cubicles. While hardly pacifist in disposition, and certainly expressing an individualist dimension to their survivalism, these games are far from the violent bloodbaths commentators might suppose. Game endings, with many titles offering multiple closing sequences, frequently fail to restore the status quo, a component of games' political conservatism observed by Bolter and Grusin.(58)

Concerning moral elements more pertinent to Brody's essay, if 'pleasure in witnessing the Family being destroyed' is a key component of horror texts like *The Exorcist* (Friedkin, 1973), *The Amityville Horror* (Rosenberg, 1979) and *The Hills Have Eyes* (Craven, 1977),(59) such pleasures are only partially present in survival horror games, which often enact a more conservative process of familial reconciliation. Alissa is searching for her lost mother throughout *Clock Tower 3*, achieving idyllic reconciliation at the end, while reuniting various familial spirits along the way. Families in many survival horror remain spheres of horror – incest, murder, insanity and child abuse – yet in others, the family remains a privileged institution. *The Suffering's* (Midway Games, 2004) protagonist, Torque, is a condemned prisoner convicted of killing his wife and children. Throughout the game, apparitions of Torque's dead spouse and children appear as physical and spiritual guides, suggesting a moral authority to the family unit which persists even beyond the grave. Embodying the conventional good/evil dualism Krzywinska observes inform both horror games and horror cinema,(60) at various points throughout *The Suffering*, players are

presented with ethical choices, often to help, kill, or ignore various imperilled characters. These actions impact on the appearance of the family photograph the protagonist carries. Insofar as good actions ensure a clean Polaroid, while consistently bad actions turn the picture black and bloodied(61) the family functions as an index of moral gameplay.

The world view of survival horror fits closely with Andrew Tudor's description of post-1960s 'paranoid horror' cinema – contrasting with the more 'secure horror' of previous eras. These games are characterized by unreliable authorities, malicious officials, and despicable institutions. The army are never coming to the hero/ine's rescue, Raccoon City Police Station is a nest of zombies rather than a source of security, and the Umbrella Corporation, implying protection and safety, is ultimately responsible for hell on earth. Like the films Tudor discusses, survival horror games present 'a victim-orientated world in which embattled individuals and groups struggle for survival'.(62) Threats are internal rather than external, resulting from unscrupulous corporate bio-engineering, institutional cruelty, or familial repression. Like the contemporary cinema Peter Boss explores, survival horror also expresses 'concern with the self as body'.(63) The third person playable protagonist visibly present on the screen frequently registers the physical damage incurred through a limping, bleeding or bloodied avatar. Expressing a preoccupation with the discursive positioning and categorisation of the human experience within medical institutions; hospitals, asylums and medical centres are common settings of survival horror, and sites of torture, wrongful imprisonment, cruel and unusual treatments. A public announcement in *Silent Hill Origins* (Konami, 2007) apologises to patients for disruption caused by renovation work, while a confidential staff notice reveals imminent cuts in patient care. The note warns: "unless they're dying in your arms, don't book 'em in!" while assuring staff that the recreational budget will not be affected by this mismanagement.(64) As such, these games express a cynical perspective towards institutional authority consistent with the horror cinema Brophy and contemporaries discuss.

Hilarity

The 'perverse and/or tasteless' humour Brophy identifies in recent horror cinema,(65) is largely absent in the videogames discussed throughout this article. While there are horror videogames with comic or cartoonish aesthetics, such as *Zombies Ate My Neighbours* (Konami, 1993), *Gregory Horror Show* (Capcom, 2003) or *Plants vs Zombies* (PopCap Games, 2009), these games are far from survival horror in gameplay or design. Overlooking the unintentional humour generated by poorly-presented cut-scenes, survival horror and comedy do not appear to mix. Although the generic clichés and borrowings of the videogame genre reflect the "postmodern" self-consciousness and pastiche Tudor observes in recent horror films,(66) the games' investment in realism means these aspects are rarely foregrounded or presented as humorous. References to *Silence of the Lambs* (Demme, 1991) in the newspaper headlines of *Silent Hill* (Konami, 1999), the presence of Mushnik's Flower Shop or Berger Street subway station from *Little Shop of Horrors* (Oz, 1986) and *Jacob's Ladder* (Lyne, 1990) are obscure shout-outs to horror fans, or signs of the games' location within establishment horror, which do not conspicuously undermine the verisimilitude of the scenario. The *Silent Hill* series contains some moments of bizarre humour. The UFO ending, present in several episodes, where the protagonist is inexplicably abducted by aliens, constitutes the conspicuous comic book intrusion of one fantastic genre into another. Many games allow players the opportunity to dress up their avatars in alternative costumes; re-playing Fiona incongruously dressed as a frog, or Travis as a masked wrestler. Notably these added extras are accessible only after the game has been completed. Having once solved all puzzles, defeated all enemies and uncovered all narrative enigmas, on second play the sense of horror is already significantly less, the game perceived more as a ludic challenge than a narrative experience.

Brophy labels horror ‘a genre about genre’,(67) and it is possible to read many survival horror titles as commentaries on horror media. The Borley Mansion in *Silent Hill 3*, positioned in a corrupted theme park, is a horror simulation within a horror simulation which reflects upon the horror genre in general and the horror videogame in particular.(68) The setting is in this respect appropriate. There are many intriguing parallels between descriptions of horror spectatorship as a carnival or roller coaster ride,(69) and comparisons between videogame and theme park experiences(70) suggesting a correlation between the three. This parallel is reflected in stages of *Resident Evil 4*, when the protagonist finds himself on a ski lift or a railway cart shooting the various zombies that appear while remaining immobile, a literal embodiment of the ‘on rails’ gameplay of the *House of the Dead* action series. If the survival horror videogame ‘foregrounds the issues of vision and power’, aspects as central to the digital medium as Jeffrey Sconce argues they are to cinema,(71) such preoccupations are evident in *Forbidden Siren*, which requires players to ‘sight jack’ into nearby zombies, viewing the surrounding area from their point of view in order to escape unseen; or *Silent Hill 4* (Konami, 2004) which frequently interrogates power issues pertaining to subjects and objects of the gaze, most dramatically in a level set in a grizzly panopticon.

The same interrogation of spectator, or gamer, identification is evident in *Haunting Ground*, a game which explores the relationship between player, and avatar. Throughout the game, various villains seek Fiona’s body for their own purposes. The groundskeeper, Deblitas, clearly has designs on Fiona, an early scene equating Fiona’s body with a toy doll which he discards in favour of the more animate model. The maid, Daniella, has a fascination with Fiona approaching sexual desire. Riccardo is the steward who has captured the heroine and imprisoned her in the castle she spends the game trying to escape. Fiona’s ambivalent status as videogame avatar is reflected in numerous inanimate figures recurring throughout the game: a nursery full of dolls, a mummy on a sofa, a marionette room full of puppets, and a manikin neatly placed in a projection room where Fiona discovers she has been secretly filmed throughout her experiences. During the game Fiona interacts with non-playable characters in a similar manner as players interact with her own body. The dog Hewie can be ordered to retrieve objects, stay put, or attack adversaries, and a series of golems are directed through mazes using plates embossed with instructions (left, right, right, left) just as Fiona is controlled through manipulation of the joypad. Daniella, the maid, is herself an artificially-created woman whose obsession with Fiona stems from something within the heroine’s body but lacking in the non-playable adversary, something termed ‘azoth’ within the alchemic world of the game, yet analogous to the humanity players add in their cybernetic interfacing with the videogame avatar. Periodically the relationship between player and avatar is rudely ruptured through ‘panic modes’ activated if the heroine encounters an antagonist. Here the player momentarily loses control of Fiona, whose movements become erratic and involuntary, falling down stairs and running into walls. A strong trend Brophy identifies in 1980s horror cinema is ‘the fear of one’s own body, of how one controls and relates to it,’(72) a theme reflected in the dynamic of having, then losing, control which Krzywinska(73) sees as central to the horror game’s disturbing affect. While provoking a reaction more of hysteria than hilarity, such elements indicate further continuities between survival horror and more traditional examples of the genre, in their self reflexivity, interrogation of the form, and anxieties about the body.

Conclusion

This article has explored key aspects of the survival horror genre in relation to Philip Brophy’s notion of ‘horrorality’, a neologism with enough permutations to afford an overview of key characteristics of the videogame cycle. Throughout there has been an emphasis on continuities between new and old articulations of horror, parallels existing between *Resident Evil*, *Silent Hill*, *Fatal Frame* and *Haunting Ground*, and 1980s slasher movies, Gothic literature, and Japanese horror. The textuality of horror

videogames involves an emphasis on story, representation, and reading. Central to survival horror's horror is the psychologically-defined protagonist negotiating a recognisable environment, incorporating fragments of written text which tell of diabolical past events. The use of mist and darkness, and the frequent presence of the flashlight provide survival horror's distinct textual aesthetic, as does the conspicuous use of simulated cameras. While survival horror titles are undoubtedly violent, they are not characterized by the militaristic, colonial, confrontational qualities associated with much videogame culture. A destruction of the family is unevenly evident across these games, which often position the institution as moral centre or site of redemption. Nevertheless, survival horror exhibits a sense of contemporary 'paranoid horror' in which persecuted individuals are besieged by the malignant consequences of unscrupulous organisations concerned with the regulation and categorisation of bodies. While the hilarity of many slasher movies is largely absent – notwithstanding alien abduction endings – there is a postmodern self-reflexivity about horror videogames which frequently comment upon their own processes, or exhibiting the same preoccupations with vision and the body observed in horror cinema.

As Jonathan Lake Crane observes, something in the nature of genre criticism imposes order, coherence and simplicity where there is chaos, incoherence and multiplicity.(74) A necessity of this article therefore has been an emphasis not only on connections between 'new' and 'old' media horror, but also on continuities across the amorphous collection of texts which might be labelled 'survival horror'. The videogame genre which has been the focus of this paper may well be one in decline, anticipated by the action-orientated turn of the *Resident Evil* franchises. The fashion for non-linearity, multiplayer capability, user generated content and expansive visual effects, do not fit the linear, single-player, author-dominated survival horror genre, reliant on atmospheric graphics, restricted vision, and a subtle sense of disquiet. *Silent Hill: Homecoming* retains the environmental storytelling, sickening graphics and narrative of familial betrayal, common in the series and genre, but in losing the fixed camera and becoming more action-orientated significant elements of the genre's aesthetic and gameplay have been compromised. Whether survival horror as a historical moment in videogame genre history will retain academic attention remains to be seen. Despite trends in console development, there is much to suggest an enduring partnership between the videogame medium and horror. Perron observes the extent to which the horror genre has been described in gaming terms.(75) Horror films' reference to previous horror texts or horror media, S. S. Praver writes, expose how 'makers of the macabre film like to play all sorts of games with their audiences'.(76) Botting observes a postmodern 'playfulness and duplicity' in eighteenth-century Gothic writing(77), just as John C. Tibbetts argues 'the spooks that haunted old dark houses played a game with their readers'.(78) And Brophy himself considers horror 'a mode of fiction, a type of writing that in the fullest sense "plays" with its reader', spectatorship being 'a game that one plays *with* the text'.(79) While this game-like contract between text and reader might be an element of all popular genres, the regularity with which it is emphasized in such accounts indicates a close relationship between horror and the ludic intriguing for scholars of horror and of videogames alike.

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