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Playing in the Paracosm: Imagination, Hyperreality and the Video Game Experience (video essay)

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ABSTRACT

Playing in the Paracosm: Imagination, Hyperreality and the Video Game Experience
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In a time of so-called “post-truth,” constructed experiences like social media and Disneyland can convince individuals that a “hyperreality” of imagined symbols, landscapes and characters are more idealistic and convincing than lived realities. Jean Baudrillard’s writings on simulated realities today have great significance, especially with video games as a highly popular form of interactive hyperreality worldwide. Links between hyperreality and the imagination are well-established from research into paracosms, or complex imaginary worlds. Whilst the benefits of imaginary play on children’s psychological development and popular literary works have been expressed, in paracosm studies, sound is unusually minimised compared to other senses. I propose a “Paracosmic Multimedia” whereby immersive paracosms extend into individuals’ simultaneous receptions of sound, character and environment between video games and other media, shaping their thoughts and actions with the virtual and real. Here, I analyse the blurring between real and constructed projections caused by the depiction of simulated worlds based on sonic representations through voice, soundtrack and noise. By combining research on game music, media, psychology and self-analytical gameplay, I present the initial stages of a new theoretical model focused on the sonic associations of video game simulations and ways in which they extend and develop between texts.

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Biography

Raymond is a composer, pianist, drummer, writer, associate lecturer and current student in the PhD pathway in Music at Goldsmiths, University of London. His present research concerns the simultaneous receptions of video game music and concept of character when experienced by gamers and viewers alike across several media platforms, a phenomenon known as transmedia. Raymond's academic focus has broadened within and beyond video game music to encompass major popular musical works and political expression in music. Recent research includes examinations on transmedial sound and parody of the *Batman* franchise within Level 2 of *The Simpsons Game* and the argument for politicised speech as a form of popular music. Alongside his research, Raymond has released albums which focus on ambient sound textures and the acceptance of 'mistakes' and wrong notes during improvisations.