Narrative, history, and fiction: history games as boundary works

Helyom Viana Telles & Lynn Alves

Abstract

This work arises from the reflections generated by a post-doctoral study that investigates how history games can contribute to the production and dissemination of representations, pictures, and imaginaries of the past. We understand history games to be digital electronic games whose structure contains narratives or simulations of historical elements (Neves, 2010). The term notion of "border works" is used by Glezer and Albieri (2009) to discuss the role of literary and artistic works that, standing outside the historiographical field and having a fictional character, are forms of the dissemination of historical knowledge and approximation with the past. We want to show how, under the impact of the linguistic turn, the boundaries between history and fiction have been blurred. Authors such as White (1995) and Veyne (2008) found both a convergence with and identification between historical narrative and literary narrative that interrogates the epistemological status of history as a science. These critiques result in an appreciation of fictional works as both knowledge and the dissemination of historical knowledge of the past. We then examine the elements of the audiovisual narratives of electronic games (Calleja, 2013; Frasca, 1999; Jull, 2001; Murray, 2003; Zagalo, 2009) in an attempt to understand their specificity. Next, we investigate the place of the narrative and historical simulations of electronic games in contemporary culture (Fogu, 2009). Finally, we discuss how historical knowledge is appropriated and represented by history games (Arruda, 2009; Kusiak, 2002) and analyze their impact on the production of a historical consciousness or an imaginary about the past.

Keywords

History; narrative; electronic games

Introduction

The reflections presented in this study resulted from a post-doctoral study I developed with the Virtual Communities Study Group associated with the Graduate Program in Education and Contemporaneity at the State University of Bahia (Universidade Estadual da Bahia -UNEB) under the supervision of Dr. Lynn Alves. The project was financed by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel/Bahia Research Foundation (CAPES/FAPESB). Generally speaking, the objective of the study was to discuss the relationship between history, social memory and electronic games.

In the history of the Virtual Communities Study Group, examining the topic of the relationship between history and electronic games occupies an important place because the purpose of the study group is not only to investigate the electronic games phenomenon but also to invest in their production. For example, the Tríade (2008) and Búzios (2010) games have been developed with the purpose of stimulating the learning of history contents, such as the French Revolution and the Revolt of the Tailors.

The present study contributes to expanding the understanding of the relationships between history, narrative and digital games. This discussion is important because studies on history teaching and electronic games in Brazil paradoxically tend to basically problematize the relationship between simulation, or virtual reality, and history, ignoring narrative elements. However, any discussion of history necessarily evokes the narrative dimension. Additionally, the final discussion in the present study regarding the relationship between narrative models, game styles, and historical conceptions is central for understanding how historical knowledge can be disseminated through electronic games.

Narratives and electronic games

The term narratology was introduced by Tzvetan Todorov in "Grammar of the Decameron", published in 1969. As a field of study, the objective of narratology is to analyze narrative systems to describe their internal patterns and to compare these systems to each other, a project that dates back to the pioneering work of Propp (2010), who formulated the concept of narrative structure with the publication of "Morphology of the Folktale" in 1928. Propp defined narrative structure as being composed of functions that occur in a temporal succession of actions whose association produces a totality. In turn, Todorov's (2004) objective was to develop a grammar capable of classifying the narrative structures that underlie all narratives. Todorov used the anthropological postulate of the psychological unit of humankind to expand the notion of grammar from the level of language to the entire symbolic life of human beings in general:

> "The study of Decameron's novels, for instance, led to the observation of only two types of history in this type of book. The first (...) could be called 'the avoided punishment'. Here the complete trajectory is followed (balance-unbalance-balance); in turn, unbalance is caused by the transgression of a law, an action that deserves punishment. The second type of history (...) is called conversion (...) and starts from the state of unbalance to reach the final balance (...). It could be argued that, as such, the narrative is not actually explained but instead general conclusions are drawn from it. However, the actual state of narrative studies implies that our first task is to elaborate a descriptive apparatus: before being able to explain the facts, it is necessary to learn how to identify them." (Todorov, 2004: 146)

The narrative perspective in the approach to games is indebted to Laurel (1999), Ryan (2001), and Murray (2003). The latter proposes imagining games as generative narratives with multiform plots. In the attempt to understand the impacts of the computer on the field of literary narrative, the author claims that the high media capability of computers has enabled the development of a new type of fictional narrative. Set in digital spaces, this narrative acquires singular properties, such as interaction and the execution of tasks in navigable fictional environments with high data storage capacity. The aesthetic experience produced by this type of mediation is based on the sensations of immersion

or participation in a different place, the pleasure of acting and causing changes in this fictional reality, and the possibility of experiencing continuous transformations.

Murray (ibid) calls these new narrative models produced by the computer "multiform histories" because they present multiple, contradictory, and authentic possibilities. This non-linear narrative structure is aligned with the relativization of the absolute character of space and time offered by the theoretical constructions of the physics of the 20th century, in the sense of imagining the flow of reality based on the simultaneous coexistence of multiple parallel possibilities. This narrative model alludes to the paradoxical setting of the literary text "The Garden of Forking Paths" by Borges, in which the reader is inserted in the collision of numerous simultaneous occurrences of possible variations of the same story:

> "The multiform narrative attempts to give a simultaneous existence to these possibilities, allowing the consideration of multiple and contradictory alternatives (...). The kaleidoscopic power of the computer allows individuals to tell stories that reflect with greater authenticity our turn-of-the-century sensibility. We no longer believe in a singular reality, a single and integrative view of the world, or in the reliability of a single angle of perception (...). The solution is the kaleidoscopic screen, able to grasp the world as it is presented from different perspectives..." (Murray, 2003: 158-159)

In general, the narratological approach to electronic games consists of analyses of their narrative structures. That is, the analyses are attempts to place a certain game into a narrative structural model. For instance, when analyzing the *God of War* (2005) game, Cassar (2013) considers that, as a function of their organization into levels, digital games tell stories in parts and pieces, with each step releasing a certain type of information to the player and producing a spatial type of narrative (Dovey & Kennedy, 2006). This characteristic, along with the characterization of the avatar as character, juxtaposes the videogame narrative and the narrative structure present in traditional forms of storytelling, such as the folktale and Campbell's monomyth, "The Hero's Journey". Cassar also notes that the narrative sequences present in the game follow the three-act dramatic scheme defined by Aristotle (2005) in the "Poetics". Thus, it has a beginning, with the articulation of a conflict; a development; and a satisfactory conclusion. This scheme structures each level or phase of the game and the game as a whole. Hence, the gaming experience consists of a continuous repetition of this narrative structure.

Stobbart (2013) finds inspiration in Gérard Genette's (1995) study to analyze the narrative structure of *Assassin's Creed II* (2009). According to Stobbart, this game has a complex narrative structure that contains multiple temporal levels, specifically, the narrative of the character Desmond Miles, which is understood as the main narrative, and the narrative of the character Ezio Auditore da Firenze, which is a secondary narrative. Although Ezio's narrative occupies most of the game, it is framed by Desmond's narrative. It is therefore a story within a story, an example of what typically occurs in the structure of a fable. Based on this narrative structure, numerous resources, such as the

visual interface of the game, acquire meaning as the level of immersion and interaction with the game is expanded and as certain information that endows the game with meaning (maps, characters, reanimations, etc.) becomes available inside, not outside, of the game world. According to Stobbart, this resource, which tends to reinforce, not problematize, the experience of adhesion to the discursive universe of the game, is made exponentially more powerful by the mediatic characteristics of electronic games.

A discussion of the narrative level of a videogame can also lead to an interrogation of the dynamics of the interaction between narratives and digital simulations. With the objective of distinguishing between them, Frasca (1999) claims that, for an external observer, if an adventure videogame session can be similar to a set of narrative sequences, then playing and watching a game are completely different. He acknowledges that some types of *ludus*, especially adventure games, may produce narrative sequences. However, it would not be correct to state that videogames are adventure narratives because the *ludus* consists of a set of possibilities, whereas the narratives is a set of linked actions.

According to Nielsen *et al.* (2008), the cultural reference in which the player is inserted provides the interpretive principles that guide and give sense to his experience in the game, which consists of the integration of different levels, such as narrative and playability. A complex and dynamic combination of narrative involvement and problem-solving allows the player to fill in the eventual gaps intentionally or purposely present in the game. Adherence to a certain interpretive guideline allows the player to enjoy the extent of the ludic experience, as it was initially conceived by the game developers. The relationship between narration and engagement is also highlighted by Massarolo (2008), according to whom it is the diegesis that provides meaning to the fictional-interactive universe of the game. According to the author, the narrative architecture is central for associating the navigation experience in interactive spaces with the possibilities of dramatic immersion. The importance of this fact has been progressively recognized by the game design field, which has invested in both the construction of plots structured in the form of traditional narratives and the elaboration of complex interactive experiences.

> "For an interaction with fictional universes that create parallel realities, fictional realities, to exist, the gameplay elements must have a narrative meaning and be coherent with the reality represented by the screen (...) it is the events, characters and facts that shape the reality of this story, but differently from a movie, in a videogame the player has the freedom to modify the elements." (Massarolo, 2008: 346)

However, according to Cassar (2013), "freedom" can only be articulated when referring to the interaction with digital simulation because game developers typically shield the plot from the participation of players, who typically watch the narrative in the form of cutscenes and only interact with the simulation[1]. Except for moments consisting of fights

---

[1] Juul (2001: 1) states that, although the narratives are fundamental to human thought, not everything should be described in narrative terms. Despite the fact that many computer games contain narrative elements and video games and narratives share some structural features, narration and interactivity can not occur at the same time, nor is there a completely interactive story.

against the game bosses, the actions performed by the players do not have any structural impact on the narrative. Hence, boss fights represent the moments of fusion between the narrative and the ludic levels.

The narratological perspective also offers the possibility of considering the aesthetic relationships between electronic games and cinematic narratives. Gomes (2009) explores the interpenetration of cinema and videogames, especially at the moment when the games acquire a more complex narrative configuration. The adoption of the avatar "body" and the incorporation of the subjective camera in game design in the mid-1990s allows the cinema spectator to experience what it is to "go inside the movie", i.e., to participate in a visual narrative. However, the author also identifies an impasse that she calls the "narrative dilema"[2] of videogames, which is the opposition between the defectiveness inherent to the plot and the need to offer freedom of choice that motivates the player interaction.

> "The rise of digital systems with graphical interaction, namely through virtual reality (VR) technologies, led to the creation of so-called virtual environments. These environments allow the development of new representation levels that are able to allow the creation of new video game models (...). The differences that separate a narrative object mediated by traditional media, such as cinema, and an object supported by interactive media, such as a videogame, are evident (...). Thus, a virtual environment may be of a narrative order, but it will always be an interactive environment by nature (...). However, although narrative and interactive, the virtual environment is not only responsible for an innovation but is also responsible for the so-called 'narrative paradox', i.e., the less control the author has over the narrative, the less it seems interesting to the receptor. In turn, maintaining control by the author limits the supposed freedom that a virtual world is supposed to offer." (Zagalo, 2009: 17)

Calleja (2013) understands that to address the problem of narrativity in electronic games, it is necessary to relinquish classical notions of narrative and elaborate a reconceptualization based on the cybernetic properties of electronic games and human experience. A comprehension model of the narrative experience based on six dimensions of player engagement — kinesthetic, spatial, shared, affective, and ludic involvement and narrative participation — is proposed.

Next, we discuss how, in the field of historiography, the reflection on narrative previously discussed from an aesthetic perspective transforms into an epistemological inquiry.

History, historiography, and narrative

The history of the concept of history in the German intellectual tradition, according to Koselleck (2013), reveals that the constitution of the scientific field of historiography

---

[2] Ryan (2009: 45) refers to interactive paradox as the opposition between the desire for freedom on the part of the player, and the existing authorial control to the design level.

between the 18th and 19th centuries resulted in a radical repositioning of the place of narrative in relation to history. With modernity and the consolidation of the order of the bourgeoisie, the meanings of many political concepts were reassigned, including the concept of history itself. Whereas the concept was previously used in the plural (histories) or as the equivalent of a report, it then began to be used in an abstract and generalized manner that was able to encompass all possible histories. In the linguistic plane, the singular form *Geschichte* gave place to the plural form *die Geschichte(n)*.

However, an important transformation in semantics also occurred, as *Geschichte* incorporated the meaning of the Latin word *Historie*. Since the medieval period, *Historie* was used to refer to the narrative of events, not to the events themselves. In practical terms, *Geschichte* began to refer to history as a thing or reality, in addition to the knowledge of the past, i.e., what we call historiography.

Because history is the discourse of modernity (Vattimo, 2007), it is formed by a universal history based on the Enlightenment conception of progress and the assumption of the existence of a triumphant march inherent to Western civilization. Precisely because of this ideas, it is harshly criticized on account of its ethnocentrism that reduces the history of other societies to fragments of the past history of Europe (Gaboriau, 1963).

More recently, discussions on the role of narrative in historical reasoning have played a central role in the consideration of the epistemological status of historiography. The post-modern critique reveals the existence of aesthetic and rhetorical aspects inherent to the practice of the historian, leading to the deconstruction of a certain historiographical realism and the relativization of the discourse of the historian in regards to the place of truth about the past. In turn, a certain pessimism or unease, in the sense of doubt over the effective possibility of history to adhere to the past, has also been established, placing history in the same territory as literary fiction.

According to Chartier (2009), history and literature converge with regard to written production and the form of discourse. However, Chartier argues that historical discourse diverges from literary discourse because it is oriented toward the possession of verifiable knowledge. For this purpose, it uses rhetorical tools with the objective of legitimating its status as a science. One way to legitimate historical discourse is to resort to citation. Citation is used with the objective of offering credibility to the arguments outlined in historical discourse. Finally, as a social practice, history has the social function of transmitting moral values. In this "theater of erudition", historiographical discourse is established as writing about other texts with the purpose of presenting the past. However, the purpose does not end there: the discourse of the historian also seeks to display the qualifications of the researcher to demonstrate that he/she has expertise in the handling of sources. These rhetorical operations especially serve the purpose of convincing the reader.

Veyne (2008) defines history as a narrative of past events. The author does not cause the reader to relive them but only inscribes the narrative in a text. Without laws, it would be impossible to think of history as a science. Its approach is essentially partial and subjective[3], with an epistemological status similar to that of astrology.

3 See Vesentini (1990: 9): "With what criteria a historian speaks of the struggles and agents of an era that is not yours?".

According to White (2008), historical imagination is rooted in the four figures of speech in rhetoric and classical poetry: metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony. This foundation constitutes the meta-historical basis of history. According to the structuralist argument of White, the linguistic mode underlying speech determines the possibilities of thought. Two questions guide White's (1991) argument: What is historical discourse? What type of knowledge does it address? According to White, there is a metaphysical foundation in historical discourse, which is the assumption that the past exists and that it can be known. It is the attribution of the condition of the past to certain objects that makes it possible for them to be studied by history. Starting in the 1990s, with the increasing interest in historical narrative, the logic of White becomes a reference, influencing the construction of an epistemological critique of self-reflection in historiographical thought. This trend indicates that the intellectual trajectory that led to the construction of the scientific field of history had concealed a central question to history itself, the narrative problem (Hartog, 1998).

Because past events can be studied by many disciplines, it is not possible to argue that they are exclusive to history even though their historicity resides in their condition of linkage to the past. Thus, White (1991) considers that past events belong to the archival type of knowledge. Their historicity derives from the manner in which they are represented by history, i.e., the form of written narrative.

Because the possession of information about the past is the elementary condition for the production of a discourse about the past, the historical discourse does not produce new information about it. It only produces interpretations of the available information, interpretations that can take many forms, ranging from simple chronicles to complex philosophies of history. The common point of all these forms is their narrative representation. This argument, to use White's terms, opposes narrative and theory, placing the first at the center of discussions about the epistemology of history and diluting the boundaries between historical and literary texts, between reality and fiction[4].

The effect of this argument on the field of historiography was to assign to literary theory the role of an important epistemological tool for the historian because it makes it possible to analyze the role of figurative elements in historical discourse, helping to separate form and content within it and deconstructing the idea that the logic of this discourse is guided only by facts. Hence, history began to be regarded as and argued based on an essential element, namely, language.

> "Literary discourse can differ from historical discourse because of their basic referents, conceived more as imaginary than as real events, but both types of discourse are more similar than different, as both of them operate language in a way that any clear distinction between its discursive form and its interpretational content remains impossible (...). In summary, historical discourse should not be primarily considered a special case of the works

---

[4] In response to these provocations, Rüsen (2001: 83) assert that, if history makes use of rhetoric, it must also seek traces in the past. The narrative is important because it is through the construction of historical consciousness the formation of identities and orientation for action (Herbert, 2007: 36).

of our minds in their efforts to know or describe reality but rather as an essential type of language use that, like metaphorical speech, symbolic language, and allegorical representation, always means more than what is literally said, says something different from what it seems to mean, and only reveals some parts of the world and hides many others." (White, 1991: 6)

According to Vattimo (2007), little is left for history in post-modernity. In truth, the possible meaning of the discourse of post-modernity when denying modernity is precisely to overcome the discourse of modernity itself, not by proposing another historical age but instead by affirming the end of history itself. This end arises as the result of the perception of the contradiction inherent to history itself, i.e., the perception of rhetorical mechanisms, the ideological bias inherent to universal history that resulted in the impossibility of supporting the argument of a totalizing narrative. Simultaneously, the notion of the end of history is an epistemological critique that notes the loss of consistency and historiographical unity, but it also corresponds to the realization that the advance and expansion of media crush the centers of historical production:

"What, by contrast, characterizes the end of history in the post-modern experience is that, while in theory the notion of historicity becomes increasingly problematic, in historiographical practice and its methodological self-conciousness, the idea of history as a unifying process is dissolved, establishing effective conditions in concrete existence (not only the threat of atomic catastrophe but also and especially the technique and the information system) that provide it some type of immobility that in reality is non-historical (...). Contemporary history, from this point of view, not only concerns the years chronologically closer to us; it is, in more rigorous terms, the history of the age when everything, through the use of new means of communication, especially television, tends to level itself in the plane of contemporaneity and simultaneity, thus also producing a de-historicization of experience." (Vattimo, 2007: 16)

Historiography and boundary works

The impact of the post-modern critique resulted in a new repositioning of history in relation to poetics. Beyond the problematization of narrative aspects, historians became interested in the possibility of using narrative models derived from literature and other narrative forms about the past, such as the memoir. Silva (2007) argues that, different from literature, historical knowledge is bound to the "compulsion of reality". However, it is not sustainable to dissociate the fictional from the real:

"... historical writing has performative aspects, whereas fiction has a certain documental character. To say that history respects the truth by simply recording facts in documents is just as absurd as believing in the idea that

fiction is not a record. We know that the cognitive value of narratives lies in offering a unifying connection of worlds that would be inaccessible without them." (Silva, 2007: 83)

The propositions of Hayden White, in delineating a structural similarity between historical and fictional narratives, repositioned historiography, moving it from the scientific plane to the literary scene. In turn, bringing history and fiction together resulted in an epistemological appreciation of literature and art in the face of history.

The "boundary works" concept or works of "quasi-history" was proposed by Glezer & Albieri (2009) with the purpose of reflecting on the importance of non-historiographic representations for the dissemination of knowledge about the past. According to the authors, the main characteristic of fiction is that it is the result of a creative process that takes the activity of the imagination as the reference, meaning that the world produced belongs to the fantasy plane. Thus, fictional characters, as products of the imagination, are opposed to historical characters because these latter characters actually existed.

However, upon further examination, in novels, it is possible to find historical situations and scenarios that are based on notable historical accuracy, even when they are surrounded by fictional characters; by contrast, it is also possible to see historical characters and contexts portrayed in fictional settings. These two configurations are found in boundary works. They differ from the context of pure fiction insofar as their constitution (characters, scenarios, narratives, etc.) includes the "discursive conventions of history".

The concept of works that border history concerns the many types of works and narratives that escape the rules of the canons of historiographical academic production but that use the past as a reference. The historical novel is a typical example, but the concept also includes oral reports, memoirs, biographies and autobiographies, journalistic texts, and audiovisual products, such as movies, comics and, according to Glezer & Albieri (2009), electronic and digital games.

History, digital games, and historical conscience

If digital games can be seen as quasi-history works, then what relationship do they have with knowledge about the past? What can be learned about history from the interaction with digital games, and how? To answer these questions, electronic games based or centered on the presentation of narratives or simulations of "historical events" are considered the object of this discussion (Neves, 2010).

According to Kusiak (2002), the digital games market produces a simplified version of the past with the purpose of entertaining the player. As an industrial product, digital games are guided by the logic of entertainment. In the dynamics between authenticity and playability and between realism and fun, playability and fun tend to prevail over that which is considered to be "historically correct" or historically accurate and that which adheres to historical theory or objectivity.

It is therefore a matter of considering the decisive importance of the interaction between designer and player in the analysis of the possibilities of simulating the past

in electronic games. Analogous to a historian writing a book, the designer directs the game's production to a certain audience. In this field of production, the designer is the one who builds the historical message and even assigns it a new meaning, the meaning of the history concept. This approach is interesting for understanding the boundaries between history and fiction in digital games.

> "Any historical value found in a computer game is the direct result of the interaction between the game designer and the player. History here is a variable whose value is defined by the requirements of these authors in the exchange ruled by the objective of distributing and receiving entertainment." (Kusiak, 2002)

Similar to Kussiak, Arruda (2009) states that the game, different from a novel or movie, does not have the purpose of telling a story to the player; instead, it requires the player to participate in a set of actions. It is the preponderance of playability that results in the elaboration, by the designer, of structures that allow the player to perform actions with as much freedom as possible within the rules programmed in the game: "What matters to the player is not the veracity of the game but whether there is coherence in the game plot, i.e., if the characters, costumes, geographical spaces, and technical and technological characteristics of the groups are coherent with the objectives of the game" (Arruda, 2009: 168).

In an analysis of the game *Age of Empires III*, Arruda (2009, 2011) claims that, if it is possible to find historical concepts in electronic games, then they are not subject to proper historical analysis. However, it is understood that the use of analogy by the games is a positive point for learning historical reasoning and ideas. Although in an electronic game it may not be possible to find history as a discourse or narrative, the past becomes the present through the use of elements such as the digital construction of scenarios, landscapes, and characters. This is an important dimension because the virtuality of the electronic game offers good parameters for the understanding of historical phenomena. The game can be more convincing than the historical objectivity present in the means transmitted by traditional historiography (textual) because, by stimulating the exercise of imagination (albeit anachronically), it disseminates knowledge about the past, stimulates decision-making, allows the understanding of time as transformation, and favors the comprehension of history as a construct.

The impact of electronic games on historical conscience still must be understood. To this end, we examine how certain historians have discussed the relationship between history and electronic games. Responding to this question, Fogu (2009) states that videogames promote a paradigmatic change in historical semantics that leads to a break with modernist assumptions that have structured historiography since the 18th century, namely, the association of history with the past and the linear and progressive view of historical time. This break occurs as witnessing is replaced by simulation and virtuality: through the interactivity of videogames, historical time is spatialized. Kansteiner (2007) shares Fogu's (ibid) optimism in relation to videogames. He claims that the virtual

worlds and fictional elements of videogames offer notable opportunities for the exercise of counterfactual historical exploration.

Narrative and the communication of historical knowledge through electronic games

As discussed above, for historians, the discussion on narrative, history, and electronic games involves asking what historical conception is present in a certain game or how a set of events can be narrated or represented. According to Kee (2011), these questions are important for transforming electronic games into an effective means of communicating historical knowledge, in the sense of building into the universe of digital games the necessary conventions so that they, as media, are able to express scientific knowledge. According to the author, this process is a slow but achievable process, and the history of printed communication reveals that books themselves took a long time to establish the proper conventions for the expression of scientific knowledge. Kee (ibid) claims that the analysis of the inherent structure and the capabilities of the game must consider its genre, narrative, and mechanics. Kee analyzes what he considers to be the main game genres, namely action, simulation, and adventure games, using the narratological typology proposed by Todorov (2004) and certain ludological principles.

According to Kee (2011), action games have a narrative structure marked by a definite end. Todorov named histories that move from a negative state to a positive state "mythological narratives". The aim of this type of narrative is the change of a term to its opposite or negation. The game offers well-defined objectives to players, and a *ludus*-based simulational mechanics is predominant (Caillois, 1990). Simulation games correspond to the narratives that Todorov (1971) named ideological, in the sense of having an abstract idea or rule that generates different adventures. They use variations of a specific situation or parallel applications of the same rule. They do not contain pre-established objectives, having a mixture of *ludus* and *paideia*. Adventure games avoid the single narrative structure and variation of the same theme. They correspond to the narrative that Todorov named "gnosiological" because they involve the transition from ignorance to knowledge through the exploration of the game world.

Next, Kee (2011) establishes a relationship between the game types in the debate on epistemology and the teaching of history in Canada, using the typology proposed by Seixas (2000): the best possible history; the disciplinary history; the post-modern history.

The best possible history model involves a single narrative of an evolution with the objective of providing the young with a shared entertainment about historical facts and a coherent purpose. This model is criticized for suppressing the knowledge that there is no consensus about the past. Disciplinary history believes that it is necessary to provide students the opportunity to evaluate recurrent interpretations about the past because doing so may bring them closer to the reality of the practice of historians. This perspective is criticized by post-modern historians who interrogate the possibility that historians disinterestedly construct interpretations of past and the possibility that students access them

objectively. The post-modern current believes that students should go beyond evaluating the merits of historical arguments to consider the criteria that underlie the historical construction of the arguments. The problem with our distance from the pass and the difficulty of creating an accurate picture of what happened are highlighted. This current defends the need to lead students to the practice of historical research.

The epistemology of the "best possible history" can be properly expressed using a mythological narrative, which is present in action games and set in a gameplay based on *ludus*. A historical conception in terms of disciplinary history is aligned with a simulation game oriented by an ideological narrative. A post-modern conception of history would be conveniently expressed by an adventure game oriented by a gnosiological narrative.

Final considerations

A videogame, as an electronic game, is precisely that: software, a digital simulation produced for entertainment purposes. A history game can be defined as an interactive fictional world set in representations or in an imaginary historical, produced with the resource of digital simulation. Its virtuality consists precisely of its complex mimetic nature, which, in the educational process, contributes to understanding and discussing the past.

The most recent developments in historiographical theory repositioned fiction in the representations and practices of historians, creating space for views and experiences about the past that are constructed in various fictional worlds, such as literature, memory, cinema, and digital games.

For the dissemination of historical knowledge, this perspective represents the juxtaposition of fictional worlds that begin to be seen as important elements in the process of the expression and appropriation of historical phenomena. The fictitious begins to be understood not as false but instead as something that is rooted in the real and orbits the sphere of the likely. Thus, for historians, the resource of fictional digital world creation may represent an effective form of expressing knowledge and representing history that offers a positive response to the challenges posed by the post-modern critique of historiography. Because history references both events and reports of events, it is possible to interact with the past even when in a certain game it may not be present as narrative.

In turn, notions such as "historical conscience" and "boundary works" confer a positive status to digital games in fields such as pedagogy and historical conscience. Finally, it is important to ask what conception of history is present in a given game and to reflect on the relationship between narrative structures, the representation of the past, and the conception of history in a given videogame.

References

Aristóteles. (2005) *Arte poética*, São Paulo: Martin Claire.

Arruda, E.P. (2009) *O jogo Age of Empires III desenvolve ideias e raciocínios históricos de jovens jogadores?* Tese (Doutorado em Educação), Belo Horizonte: UFMG.

Arruda, E.P. (2011) "O papel dos videogames na aprendizagem de conceitos e analogias históricas pelos jovens", *Ensino Em Re-Vista*,.2 :287-297.

Berbert, C. (2007) "A História e as aporias da narratividade: um estudo sobre Jörn Rüsen, Paul Ricoeur e Carlo Ginzburg" in Serpa, Elio Cantalicio & Menezes, Marco Antônio (eds.) (2007) *Escritas da História: narrativa, arte e nação* Uberlândia: Edfu, pp.33-49.

Caillois, R. (1990) *Os jogos e os homens: a máscara e a vertigem*, Edições Cotovia: Lisboa.

Cassar, R. (2013) "God of War: A Narrative Analysis". *Eludamos. Journal for Computer Game Culture*. 7 (1): 81-99. disponível em http://www.eludamos.org/index.php/eludamos/article/view/vol7no1-5, consultado em 10/ 02/ 2014.

Chartier, R. (2009) *A história ou a leitura do tempo*. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica.

Dovey, J. & Kennedy, H.W. (2006) *Games Cultures: Computer Games as New Media.* Open University Press.

Frasca, G. (1999) *Ludology meets narratology: similitude and differences between (video)games and narrative*, disponível em http://www.ludology.org/articles/ludology.htm. consultado em 02/06/ 2013.

Fogu, C. (2009) "Digitalizing historical consciousness", *History and Theory*, Wesleyan University, (47): 103-121, disponível em http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/ docs/icb.topic645924.files/Fogu-HT-0509%20-%20 Digitalizing%20Historical%20 Consciousness.pdf, consultado em 20/09/2013.

Genette, G. (1995) *Discurso da narrativa*, Ed. Lisboa: Vega.

Gaboriau, M. (1963) "Antropologia estrutural e História" in Lima, Luiz da Costa (ed.) (1963) *O estruturalismo de Lévi-Strauss*, Petrópolis: Vozes, pp.140-56.

Gomes, R. (2009) *A poética dos tempos mortos: diálogos entre o cinema e o videogame*, disponível em http:// desdobramentos.files.wordpress.com/2009/01/ gamesar_renatagomes_final.pdf, consultado em 4/06/2013.

Juul, J. (2001) "Games Telling stories?" *Game Studies The International Journal of Computer Game Research*. 1, (1).

Kee, K. (2011) "Computerized History Games: Narrative Options", *Simulation & Gaming*, 42 (4): 423-440.

Koselleck, R. (2013) *O Conceito de História*, São Paulo: Autêntica.

Kusiak, J. (2002) *Virtual Historiography: How History is Presented in Entertainment. Based Computer Games*. Truman State University.

Laurel, B. (1993) *Computers as Theatre*, New York: Addison-Wesley.

Mallon, B. & Webb, B. (2005) "Stand Up and Take Your Place: Identifying Narrative Elements in Narrative Adventure and Role-Play Games", *ACM Computers in Entertainment*.

Mayra, F. (2009) "Getting into the Game: Doing Multidisciplinary Game Studies" in Perron, B. & Wolf, M.J.P. (eds.) *The Videogame Theory Reader 2*, New York: Routledge, pp.313-330.

Nielsen, S.E. (2008) *Understanding Videogames: The essential Introduction*, New York: Routledge.

Propp, V. (2010) *Morfologia do conto maravilhoso*. 2ª. ed., Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária.

Ryan, M. L. (2001) *Narrative as virtual reality: immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media*, Baltimore; Londres: Johns Hopkins.

Ryan, M. L. (2009) "From narrative games to playable stories", *StoryWorlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies*, Nebraska, 1: 43-59.

Rüsen, J. (2001) *Razão histórica: teoria da história; os fundamentos da ciência histórica*, Brasília: UnB.

Silva, L. (2007) "Narratividade e filosofia da história: o debate pós-moderno II" in Serpa, Elio Cantalicio & Menezes, Marco Antônio (eds**.).** *Escritas da História: narrativa, arte e nação*, Uberlândia: EDFU, pp.81-93.

Seixas, P. (2000) "Schweigen! die kinder! Or, does postmodern history have a place in the schools?" in P. Stearns, P. Seixas, & S. Wineburg (eds.), *Knowing, teaching and learning history: National and international perspectives*), New York: New York University Press, pp. 20-39.

Stobbart, D. (2013) "Playing with Fiction: Ludology and the Evolution of Narrative in Videogames", *5th Global Conference Videogame Cultures & the Future Of Interative Entertainment*, Oxford.

Todorov, T. (1971) "The 2 principles of narrative", *Diacritics*, 1(1), pp.37-44.

Todorov, T. (2004) *As estruturas Narrativas*, São Paulo**:** Perspectiva.

Vattimo, G. (2007) *O fim da modernidade: niilismo e hermenêutica na cultura pós-moderna*.2ªed, São Paulo: Martins Fontes.

Vesentini, C. (1997) *A teia do Fato*, São Paulo, HUCITEC: USP.

Veyne, P. (2008) *Como se escreve a história; Foucault revoluciona a história*.Brasília: Editora UNB.

Vogler, C. (2007) *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure For Writers*. Michael Wiese Productions.

White, H. (1991) "Teoria literária e a escrita da história" in *Estudos Históricos,* 7 (13): 21-48.

White, H. (2008) *Meta-história: a imaginação poética do século XIX*, São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo.

Zagalo, N. (2009) *Emoções Interactivas, do Cinema para os Videojogos*, Coimbra: CECS/UM, Gracio Editor.

Ludography

Comunidades Virtuais – UNEB (2010), *Búzios*.

Comunidades Virtuais – UNEB (2008), Tríade: Liberdade, Igualdade e Fraternidade.

Sony Computer Entertainment (2005), *God of War*.

Ubisoft Montreal (2009), *Assassin's Creed* II.

Sponsors

Bio notes

Helyom Viana Telles, PhD in Social Sciences by the Federal University of Bahia, Researcher of Virtual Communities Research Group; Post-Doctorate in Education by the University of State of Bahia (UNEB).

E-mail: helyom@gmail.com

University of State of Bahia (UNEB),R. Silveira Martins, n° 2555, CEP 41.150-000, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil

Lynn Alves, Postdoctoral Fellow in Digital Games and Learning by University of Turim; Professor of University of the State of Bahia (UNEB) and Senai-Cimatec Faculty of Technology; Coordinator of the Virtual Communities Research Group.

E-mail: lynnalves@gmail.com

University of the State of Bahia Bahia (UNEB), R. Silveira Martins, n° 2555, CEP 41.150-000, Salvador, Bahia, Brasil; Senai-Cimatec Faculty of Technology, Av. Orlando Gomes, 1845, CEP 41650-010, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.