

GAMES AS CULTURE

DIGITASLBI

25TH NOVEMBER, 2014

PROF. RICHARD A. BARTLE

UNIVERSITY OF **ESSEX**

INTRODUCTION

- SO, I HAVE SOMETHING LIKE **20 MINUTES** TO TELL YOU **WHO** I AM AND WHAT I **THINK** ABOUT **GAMES AS CULTURE**
 - THIS IS **LUCKY** FOR YOU, AS LEFT UNCHECKED I COULD TALK ABOUT IT FOR 20 **HOURS...**
- AS IT **HAPPENS**, WHO I AM **EXPLAINS** WHAT I THINK ABOUT GAMES AS CULTURE
 - AND **WHY** I THINK IT
- GAMES ARE AN **ART** FORM
- GAME DESIGNERS **ARTICULATE** THEMSELVES THROUGH THEIR GAME **DESIGNS**

WORLD OF WARCRAFT

- WORLD OF WARCRAFT, BLIZZARD, 2004:



EVERQUEST

- EVERQUEST, SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT, 1999



- DIKUMUD, COPENHAGEN UNIVERSITY, 1990

```
[x2] A barrel has been left here.  
An angry-looking statue of Hoturi is standing here.  
An angry-looking statue of Priapus is standing here.  
A statue of Odin is standing behind the altar.  
A Sign for Newbies is here.  
You are a guest here until you save yourself.
```

```
If you need  
to get to your guild, use the guild medallion in your inventory. If you lose  
it, pray to the statue of Odin for another.
```

```
105m/202e/38hlook
```

```
Temple of Udgaard
```

```
You are inside the small and humble village temple in Udgaard. A simple  
stone altar, with strange stone carvings, is placed against the north wall. A  
small humble donation room is to the east. The temple exit is south to the  
Village Square.
```

```
[x2] A barrel has been left here.  
An angry-looking statue of Hoturi is standing here.  
An angry-looking statue of Priapus is standing here.  
A statue of Odin is standing behind the altar.  
A Sign for Newbies is here.
```

```
105m/202e/38h_
```

ABERMUD

- *ABERMUD, ALAN COX, 1987*

Your wimpy value is set to 15. See 'help change' to see what that means.

The Temple Of Paradise

You stand in the Temple of Paradise, a huge sandstone structure whose walls are decorated with ancient carvings and runes, some so old that even the priests no longer know their meanings.

A single set of steps lead south, descending the huge mound upon which the temple is built and ending in the forests below.

A roaring fire burns here. Its flames make the temple sparkle and glitter.

At your feet a huge sacrificial pit allows you to give valuables to the gods in the hope of being rewarded.

A furlled umbrella lies here.

Obvious exits are:

North : Welcome Center

South : Forest Track

Down : Forest Track

Last login: Wed Sep 7 17:43:26 2005

>

MUD

- MUD, ROY TRUBSHAW & RICHARD BARTLE, 1978

Narrow road between lands.

You are stood on a narrow road between The Land and whence you came. To the north and south are the small foothills of a pair of majestic mountains, with a large wall running round. To the west the road continues, where in the distance you can see a thatched cottage opposite an ancient cemetery. The way out is to the east, where a shroud of mist covers the secret pass by which you entered The Land. It is raining.

*w

Narrow road.

You are on a narrow east-west road with a forest to the north and Gorse scrub to the south. It is raining. A splendid necklace lies on the ground.

*

- MUD DIDN'T COME FROM **ANYTHING**
- THIS IS WHY **I** GET TO GIVE THIS TALK AND YOU **DON'T**

SO WHAT?

- THAT MAY EXPLAIN WHY **I** GET TO GIVE THIS TALK, BUT IT **DOESN'T** EXPLAIN WHY I CHOSE TO **MENTION** IT
 - APART FROM SELF-AGGRANDIZEMENT, OBVIOUSLY
- SO, LET'S CAST OURSELVES **BACK IN TIME** TO THE MAKING OF MUD...
- THERE WERE **TWO** OF US WORKING ON IT:
 - **ROY TRUBSHAW** DID MOST OF THE **PHYSICS** AND SOME OF THE CONTENT
 - **I** DID MOST OF THE **CONTENT** AND SOME OF THE PHYSICS

EARLY DAYS

- A STUDENT ONCE ASKED ME WHY WE WROTE MUD USING **TEXT** RATHER THAN **GRAPHICS**
- **THIS** IS WHY:



- THOSE MACHINES BEHIND ROY ARE **TELETYPES**

SETTING

- I HAD TO DECIDE WHAT **SETTING** TO GIVE THE WORLD (THAT IS, ITS **FICTION**)
 - WITH NO **PRECEDENT** NOR **PARADIGM**, I COULD HAVE GONE FOR **ANYTHING**
- I WANTED A PLACE THAT WAS **OF** EARTH, BUT THAT WAS **NOT** EARTH
- SOMETHING THAT WAS **FAMILIAR**, BUT **UNFAMILIAR** IN ITS **FAMILIARITY**
- I THEREFORE ROOTED THE GAME IN *English Folklore* – WHAT **TODAY** WE CALL **Fantasy**
 - I'D EXPERIMENTED WITH IT IN A BOARD GAME ONCE

SETTLED

- I FINALLY **CHOSE** ENGLISH FOLKLORE AS IT SHAPED A **CONTINUUM** INTO THE PAST
 - IT WASN'T SET IN A FIXED **PERIOD**
- THIS MEANT I COULD USE **TIME** AS METAPHOR FOR **DANGER**
 - THE OLDER IT IS, THE MORE **DANGEROUS** IT IS
- WE'D **HOPED** THAT MUD WOULD BE **RICH** ENOUGH TO ALLOW FOR **EMERGENT** FUN
- UNFORTUNATELY, THE COMPUTERS OF THE DAY WERE TOO **WEAK** AND **PUNY** FOR THAT
- I THEREFORE BUILT AN **ACHIEVEMENT** SYSTEM

POSSIBILITIES

- I **DELIBERATED** BETWEEN NUMEROUS **COMPETING** POSSIBILITIES:
 - EQUIPMENT
 - SKILLS
 - LEVELS (**WITH** EXPERIENCE POINTS)
 - EXPERIENCE POINTS (**WITHOUT** LEVELS)
 - LINKED QUESTS (CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE)
 - PLUS OTHER MORE **OFF-THE-WALL** ONES SUCH AS **DEMOCRACY**
- I **EVENTUALLY** CHOSE TO IMPLEMENT **LEVELS** WITH EXPERIENCE POINTS

WHY?

- **WHY** DID I DO THIS?
- WELL FROM A **GAMEPLAY** PERSPECTIVE, I KNEW IT **WORKED**
- I'D **SEEN** FROM *D&D* THAT LEVELS:
 - GIVE INTERMEDIATE **GOALS**
 - ARE EASY TO **UNDERSTAND**
 - ALLOW REWARDS FOR A **VARIETY** OF ACTIVITIES
 - GIVE PEOPLE AN **IMMEDIATE** SENSE OF THEIR PLACE IN THE **CURRENT** SOCIAL ORDER
- YET SURELY SOME OF THE **OTHER** APPROACHES COULD HAVE DONE ALL THESE **TOO?**

OH YES

- WELL YES, THEY COULD, EXCEPT THAT **LAST** ONE
 - GIVE PEOPLE AN IMMEDIATE SENSE OF THEIR PLACE IN THE **CURRENT** SOCIAL ORDER
- SO, HERE IT **COMES...**
- BACK IN THE **1970S**, PEOPLE LIKE ROY AND I WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO **GO** TO UNIVERSITY
 - **1 IN 7** OF THE POPULATION DID, ALMOST **ENTIRELY** MIDDLE AND UPPER CLASS
- ROY IS FROM WOLVERHAMPTON, HE SOUNDS LIKE A **FACTORY WORKER**
 - I'M FROM YORKSHIRE, I SOUND LIKE A **PEASANT**

A WINDOW

- HOWEVER, 1970S SOCIETY NEEDED **ENGINEERS**
 - IN PARTICULAR, **COMPUTER SCIENTISTS**
- MIDDLE CLASS PEOPLE DIDN'T **WANT** THEIR CHILDREN TO BE STUDYING SUCH TECHNICAL, **UNINTELLECTUAL** TOPICS
- SOME PROGRESSIVE UNIVERSITIES **DID** SEE IT AS A *SUBJECT OF THE FUTURE*, THOUGH
 - **ESSEX** WAS SUCH A UNIVERSITY
- VERY **CLEVER** WORKING CLASS PEOPLE WERE THEREFORE **ABLE** TO GET A **PLACE** ON A COMPUTER SCIENCE DEGREE

RAGE!

- ROY AND I **RAGED** AGAINST THIS!
- WE WERE **MARKED** BECAUSE OF OUR **BACKGROUND**, ACCENTS, PARENTS, POVERTY
– EVERYTHING **HELD US DOWN**
- MOST **OTHER** STUDENTS DISPARAGED US
– AND AS FOR MEETING **GIRLS** – HA!
- THE REAL WORLD **SUCKED**
- SO: WE WROTE A **BETTER** ONE
- ALL THAT STOPPED YOU **RIISING** LEVELS IN *MUD* WAS YOUR OWN **ABILITY** AND STRENGTH OF **CHARACTER** (OR LACK THEREOF)

POLITICAL

- MY CHOICE OF LEVELS OVER OTHER ACHIEVEMENT MECHANISMS WAS A **POLITICAL** STATEMENT
 - THAT MADE IT **ART**, NOT THAT I **CARED**
- THE PEOPLE WHO WROTE THE MMOS THAT CAME **AFTER MUD** DIDN'T **KNOW** THIS ABOUT LEVELS
- THEY **BLINDLY** EMPLOYED CONCEPTS THAT MADE SENSE IN **MUD'S** CONTEXT WITHOUT KNOWING **WHY** THEY WERE THERE
- THEY LIBERALLY ADDED **NEW** LEVELS, SO BREAKING THE **PERSONALITY** EACH LEVEL HAD
 - THEY COPIED THE **SCIENCE** BUT **LOST** THE **ART**

CONCLUSION

- MUD ENABLED US TO SAY **UNPALATABLE** THINGS ABOUT THE **REAL** WORLD THROUGH THE PROTECTED FRAME OF "IT'S JUST A **GAME**"
- WE WANTED TO MAKE A **VIRTUAL** WORLD BECAUSE WE DIDN'T **LIKE** THE **REAL** ONE
- **TODAY'S** DESIGNERS CAN DO THE **SAME THING!**
- YOU DON'T HAVE TO **THROW AWAY** A PARADIGM, JUST **UNDERSTAND** IT
 - **THEN** YOU CAN THROW IT AWAY...