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'Intruder Alert! Intruder Alert!' Video Games *in* Space

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Abstract
Running through the maze of video game history, this article considers the relationship between geographies of game play, routine images of game play in popular culture, and the frequently obscured diversity of video game culture. Geographies of game play foreground the materiality of video games – that is, as an object in specific historical locations that have changed over time. This includes the often overlooked and transitory spaces occupied by threshold games. Displacing the centrality of arcades, the home, and the content of video games, enables a corrective scrutiny of the ephemera of video game culture and its potential to expand the cultural memory of minoritarian subjectivity's relation to digital media; it accounts for who played, and how playing in different spaces bears on an understanding of games' place in televisual space.

Keywords
arcades • digital media • ephemera • materiality • minoritarian subjectivity • quotidian space • threshold • video game culture

> Maybe the liquor store was the poor kids' NES.
> (Kim Haden, 'Pigtails and PowerPills')

Three Memories

California. Redondo Pier, 8 January 2004: 'Drop another coin in slot and I will tell more' – Estrella. The arcade at the Redondo Pier is littered with severely aged coin-operated games ranging from fairground automata fortune-tellers like 'Estrella' (whose paint-chipped face struggles to bat an

exhausted mechanical eye as her cardboard prediction is dealt) to flashing-light love testers, from the boardwalk favorite skee ball to various pin-ball machines and a 'golden age' assortment of video game cabinets like *Pong* (1972), *Asteroids* (1979), *Pac Man* and *Defender* (both 1980). My poor game performance at the Pier resulted in a few tickets that I could redeem for a prize. I was given a choice between two pencils or one AA-size battery. Like cabinet and cocktail games, a battery that is not lithium-ion rechargeable has little value in the competing digital media of today's console, mobile, hand-held, computer, or online games. I opted for the graphite and wood.

Those pencils would have come in handy when I was asked to vote on my favorite designed object at the Design Museum in London in 2003. The two major contenders were various products from Apple (G4 PowerBooks and the iPod) and the well-designed world of Rockstar Game's *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*. This was not the first time that the 'black box' shared space in the 'white cube'. In 1989 the American Museum of the Moving Image held an exhibition entitled: *Hot Circuits: A Video Arcade*. Proposed by founding director Rochelle Slovin (2001), *Hot Circuits* attempted to make 'links between old and new media – between television and film, and the video-computer mix that dominates current "new media"' (p. 138). While the screen space of video game cabinets proved vital for investigating inter-activity and histories of digital media, the curators also exhibited each cabinet as a designed object rather than a transparent container, or inconse-quential box to support a screen and mount a control panel. Slovin explains the importance of this curatorial decision:

> Finding quality cabinets was further complicated by the fact that arcade owners would regularly put the chip for a new game into an old cabinet whose decals had been removed or painted over. This modular treatment of the chips is interesting. It mirrors the unfortunate 'content focus' of most video game criticism, which too often concerns itself solely with what is happening on the screen. Just as jaded arcade owners would often regard the game cabinet as irrelevant (and the game program itself of prime importance), too many academics and psychologists had hitherto ignored the rich cultural value of the games' context – cabinets, arcades, and the like. (p. 143)

In its endeavor to regain the cultural value of its exhibited artifacts, *Hot Circuits* transformed the *display* screen of video games into a *displayed* screen: an object lesson in visual and material culture that taught its players, viewers, those hanging on and around the cabinet, to see a game *in* the space of the museum, then to carry this new knowledge beyond its walls and beyond the walling effect of the screen that Slovin dubs 'unfortunate content focus'.

A final memory, one that inspires my contribution to this themed issue, is based on one of my favorite video games: *Berzerk* (1980). Situated at the threshold of Time Out, a mall arcade I frequented as a kid, *Berzerk*'s voice-synthesizer would insult you whether or not you actually played. 'Chicken! Fight like a robot!' was an unforgettable command that both resonated in

arcades and lured strolling shoppers into complicity with its robotic interpel-
lation. The game's strident warning, 'Intruder Alert! Intruder Alert!',
returned at the *California Extreme-Classic Arcade Games Show* in San Jose
(26–7 July 2003), see Figure 1. This time it resounded in a multipurpose
convention center. Hearing *Berzerk* in a space where the circumstances of
video game preservation require a hardware store of game schematics,
rebuild kits, motherboards, and zip-lock bags of salvaged plastic buttons
demonstrates other systems of knowledge, relationships, histories, and

Figure 1 *Berzerk* Cabinet at California Extreme. Photo: Raiford Guins, 2003.

experiences often rendered invisible when the player–screen interface commands a central position in the history of video and computer games. Just as the anachronistic space of game play that Estrella's cryptic fortune heralds and the museum space that fossilizes gaming, seeing the assorted parts and pieces necessary for playing video games at *California Extreme* has encouraged me to look and think around game play, to refrain from only looking at the screen and pre-empt the strain that results when one looks too hard and for too long at one thing.

Avoiding Eye Strain

The screen space of game play is only one space within which video games intrude. Expanding the permeable boundaries according to which televisual space can be delimited exchanges the screen space of video games (game design, games as spatial art, screenic immersive worlds, game play, the graphical user interface) for the materiality of the video game, relations to the screen in space, and the ephemerality of spaces within which video game play presided/s. It casts an eye towards the ephemera of video game culture. Why? Since the *Pong* prototype debuted in Andy Capp's tavern in 1972 and *Space Invaders* overtook Tokyo pachinko parlors in 1978, video games have intruded upon the thresholds of quotidian public places like launderettes, grocery and liquor stores, on television screens in the home, on cinema screens in the form of gaming themed films, films that look like games, as well as video games in the lobby, on computer monitors in the workplace and in the home, on the internet, on one's wrist, in one's palm, on one's phone, in the air and on the road. To get further mileage out of my 'intruder' metaphor, Wolf and Perron (2003) suggest that 'as the field of video game studies grows, it may well find its way to the center of media studies' (p. 20). This intrusion has neither been limited to site-specific locations where video games physically inhabit a place nor is it guilty of simply hijacking television and computer screens. It pervades popular culture and everyday life through its sounds (common samples in hip hop, funk, electro pop, and techno and as sound samples for MAME), narratives, avatars (be they a big square as in *Adventure* (1978) or more like Zidane from *Final Fantasy IX*), stars (Lara Croft, Mario, Sonic, Ms/Pac Man, Parappa), modes of play, rule systems, game design, spatial structures, cabinet art and marquee typography (returned as graffiti, stencil art, and album/CD graphic design), web pages and alternative archives (www.atarimuseum.com, www.videotopia.com, www.intellivisionlives.com), and through the recognition of consoles as designed objects, video game graphics as fashion as well as vernacular ('Wakawakawakawakawaka' – *Pac Man*, 'BYYEWWWW' – *Frogger*; see Weiss, 2003).

Looking around the screen leads to a startling convergence: the geography of game play is inextricably linked to the complex though frequently elided multiplicity of identity formations that constitute video game culture. That my three memories conjure the materiality of games is not important in and of itself. They make the games into objects in space. Their meaning relies on

the locations that they occupy. Looking at the video game in its variable spaces while taking its trivial, forgotten and overlooked historical paper trail seriously may provide insights into the cultural politics of video game culture; a culture grounded in social relations to technology and media. These politics are played out on the basis of who plays and where as well as what is on and around the screen. The relationship between geography and identity acts as the condition of intelligibility for the 'poor kid's NES'.

According to Wolf (2001), *Berzerk*'s spatial structure consists of 'adjacent spaces displayed one at a time' (p. 59). Unlike mapped space that provides players with an overview of the terrain or full 3D spaces or even one contained screen, the non-overlapping screens (electrified mazes filled with murderous robots and the indestructible 'Evil Otto') wield constant surprises as the player flees from one maze to the next. No security. No victory. Not an end in sight, but always more mazes, more challenges. The adjacent spaces of this essay are episodic screenshots designed to glimpse the maze of video game history while fleeing into spaces not thoroughly mapped. The ephemera of video game culture and the ephemerality of video games in space may be just what we need to get '1-up'.

No Cash Value[1]

What was the arcade? I teach a course called 'Sites for Sight: Space and Visual Culture'. The course studies 19th- and early 20th-century technologies of exhibition. After one class dedicated to a PowerPoint presentation on arcades, one student who looked frustrated during the entire session wanted to discuss the lecture with me in private. He said: 'Now I'm totally confused ... I thought we were going to learn about video games, not a history of old buildings.' Rather than remind the student how important course readings are, I took my student's disappointment as an opportunity to think through the spatial–visual–material complexities that such confusion raises, especially when the increasing vagrancy of video and computer games makes the diverse spaces that surround the screen of play difficult to see. 'Arcade' was first an architectural term. The *OED* indicates that from the 17th to the 19th century the word designated the structure of an 'arch', a 'vaulted place, open at one or both sides', 'a passage arch', or 'a series of arches on the same plane'. Benjamin's 'The Interior, The Trace' from the recently translated *The Arcades Project* (1999) catalogs mechanical devices – 'the hen that lays the golden praline-eggs, the machine that stamps our names on nameplates, slot machines, fortune-telling devices, and above all weighing devices' (p. 214) – that greeted visitors at the threshold of 19th-century sites of excursion. Although Benjamin first locates such devices outside of cities, they eventually took an analogous place at the threshold of urban 'center[s] of commerce in luxury items' (p. 3). Perhaps on account of their historical location within the entrances to arcades as well as in parlors and saloons, large cases of wood and glass containing mechanical automata like Estrella gave way to 'arcade games' – computers in wooden cabinets with their own fitted CRT screens and speakers. In the 1970s and 1980s, the term 'arcade game' became

synonymous with 'video game'. 'Games in this category', as Salen and Zimmerman (2004) clarify, 'are digital games played on dedicated machines that only play a single game' (p. 621). The 'arcade', as a site for games, became a destination rather than a passage. Movement 'through' became movement through a CRT screen into varied digital game spaces. Given this brief overview, it then seems fitting that the museum with its technologies of display would place the various platforms back under transparent cases.

MAME Jumping out of Cabinet Land

Where is the arcade? Television screens and skateboarding have something in common. They share a politics of geographical and social scale that Smith (1992) describes as the 'contest to establish boundaries between different places, locations and sites of experience' (p. 64). As McCarthy's (2001) work on site-specific and transient television establishes,

> scale is central to the study of television because it generates much of the complexity of the medium itself, a complexity signaled in the tensions between the placeless generality of the image and the specificity of its terminal forms as they appear on screens of all sizes and in all sorts of spaces. (p. 11)

In Willard's (1998) work, skateboarders experience scale as limitation and restriction, as a series of architectural boundaries. Through tricks – tricking off objects in the built environment like handrails and benches – the scale that demarcates place is 'jumped'. Considerations of scale are also apparent today, when the arcade welcomes its players through *windows* instead of doors.

The flash animation of Grand Master Peter's 'flovies' (see www.powerstrike.net) jumps a different scale: one that intrudes into/across screens and relocates the site-specificity of the arcade from a fixed geographical place to cyberspace. Combining pop music soundtracks, an eye for music video aesthetics, and Flash software, VJ Grand Master Peter 'samples' the history of video games in MAME (Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator). MAME is an archivist internet project dedicated to the documentation of the hard and software of video games. In Grand Master Peter's *MAME Jump* Donkey Kong performs a pixilated lip-synch to the words of Van Halen's 1984 hit 'Jump'. *MAME Jump* synchronizes the song's lyrics, shifts in melody and tempo with onscreen actions performed by avatars across video game screens. Donkey Kong appears in various onscreen spaces of different video games. He pops up on the bottom of *Pac-Man* and *Q*bert* (1982) while also floating around the edges (half onscreen, half offscreen) of the visible screen space of *Bump 'n' Jump* (1982), *Kangaroo* (1982), and *Circus* (1977). The guitar solo of 'Jump' is significant for what I am calling MAME Jumping. Eddie Van Halen's solo is visualized through the game *Track and Field* (1983). As the solo begins, *MAME Jump* 'cuts' to *Track and Field*'s long jump event while the long jumper begins his sprint. The athlete jumps as the melody shifts. Rather than

land within the screen of *Track and Field*, he flies across a cascade of video game screens to ultimately alight in the space of *Track and Field*. The jumper jumps across the different places of dedicated games, across the scale of video game screens never amassed in such a manner (presented as a strip of screens), jumps across the history of video games, jumps across a LCD computer screen. The televisual boundaries between 'arcade game' and 'computer game' are contested; the spatial boundaries of game play are elided. MAME suggests that historical distinctions between the spatial, visual, and material differences between games may be increasingly difficult to discern with any confidence.

This jump also exceeds the geography of the arcade. The preservation of computer code in the form of MAME and other emulators points to the arcade's new permanent residence: the internet. Facing the screen, the user–player–collector–builder can download ROMs of arcade as well as console video games to then play on the screen of their computer. This relocation is significant in that it differentiates medium-specificity of game attributes. It concurrently remediates the televisual as computer-graphic. In this sense, the 'video game' dependent upon a cathode-ray tube (the one-time core of television, older computer monitors, dedicated screens for cabinet and cocktail arcade games) exists in name alone once the 'arcade experience' is displayed on the TFT (Thin-Film Transistor, also known as Active Matrix)-LCD screen of a computer.

Nevertheless, the numerous websites devoted to archiving the arcade stress the importance of arcade sound samples, screenshots, game flyers, title screenshots, cabinet marquees and artwork for reliving/remediating the arcade experience on a flat screen. CinemArcade.com makes the case that the emulation of games is only part of experiencing them. In order to 'travel back' to the arcade and because 'the PCs monitor is a poor substitute for the classic arcade experience', the site offers the MPEG *Arcade '84* as a 3D computer graphic tour of the arcade experience. Complete with sound samples, screenshots, cabinet art and rock soundtrack, the Quicktime window functions as a portal to an imagined past. The audio–visual journey continues. Vgmuseum.com and arcadeflyers.com both provide their visitors with JPEGs of cabinet and console ads that originally appeared in comic books, trade magazines, video game periodicals, and cover art from cartridges and different platforms. The 'Arcade Ambiance Project' provides visitors with MP3s of arcade sounds catalogued according to years (1981, 1983, 1985). According to Andy Hofle, the site's author,

> My main motivation for this project was to create some ambience in my basement arcade, having fairly authentic arcade noise in the background while I or my guests are playing on my MAME cabinet. I thought that maybe others who have cabinets (or just miss real arcades) could also benefit from my work.

The construction of ambient noise is not limited to reconstruction. Coinopvideogames.com provides its visitors with actual sounds collected

with a Sony stereo Walkman recorder while the site's author visited arcades as a kid. Efforts like these attempt to preserve the ephemeral experiences of the arcade as well as document the material history of video games. In this relocation, what might we ask is not represented? What is left behind? Who re-presents history and whose history gets represented?

Outside the Arcade and on the Periphery of the Screen

Who was in the arcade? Cunningham's 'Mortal Kombat and Computer Games Girls' (2000) begins with an excellent proposition: rather than remain absorbed with '*what* children are watching on television', research ought to concentrate on 'what they are *doing* with the television set' (p. 213). Such research is invested in broadening how game play can be understood with respect to gender and speaks to changes in the games industry.[2] An important transformation that influences both is 'the second wave of game-playing' (p. 213). The second wave, according to Cunningham, occurred in the early 1990s when dedicated game consoles (Sega and Nintendo) relocated game play from public spaces like arcades to the home: 'the move of computer games from "street culture" in the arcades to "bedroom culture" in the home ... has transformed the experience of games-playing for young girls' (p. 217). This transformation rests on snapshots of evidence predicated upon selective memory, an imago, reinforced by popular representation. I call this imago: 'Visible Evidence of Who Plays' (the shorthand is VEWP). VEWP works like this:

> In the crowds around game machines, boys far outnumber girls. (Greenfield, 1984: 98)

> Go into your local arcade, preferably one that is in a venue with a mix of entertainment such as an amusement park, pier, or entertainment mall. If you look closely, you may notice that there are actually girls and young women in the arcade. Now look again and see how many of them are playing games. Chances are that hardly any of them are feeding quarters into those beautiful profit centers. (Pearce, 1997: 205)

> The 1980s video arcade was one of the few truly diverse hangouts in teendom. It catered equally to preppies and high school dropouts, geeks and jocks, Chicano kids and rednecks-in-training. (Herz, 1997: 47)

> Hundreds of times I had stepped into the palpable darkness that stretched Peacock's three rooms to the limits of possibility, stumbling through football players and freaks and blacks and gearheads and dropouts and nobody specials and Mexicans and no-good trust-fund rebels, half of them higher than hell judging from my future experience ... (Weiss, 2003: 13)

The last two accounts present their VEWP from the perspective of a first-

person-shooter moving in the rear-view mirror space of 'teendom' nostalgia. Their theatre of memory is perversely idyllic; its onscreen background characters ('freaks and blacks and gearheads') are low-resolution 2D objects in their imagined community of 'remember when'. The first two quotes demand that we inspect the space carefully to see that girls are not playing. This assumes that girls did play where boys play, and that game play itself can be easily located. Neither assumption is conducive to seeing girls. Yet our line of sight ought not rush to that second wave of which Cunningham speaks. Perhaps those non-machine feeding girls were gaming in school cafeterias with handheld games by Coleco, Radio Shack, Mattel Electronics, Tomy or maybe even on the way to school, at after-school hang outs, or

THE ULTIMATE GAMER

Don't mess with a girl wielding Windex and quarters. She means business.
Illustration by Martin Cendreda, text by Raina. Inspired by Craig Kubey's The Winners Book of Video Games, 1983.

Shades
A la Corey Hart,
worn to protect eyes
which are sensitive
to light from staying
in darkened rooms

Highly Developed Forearm
From working out on complex
button combos and controllers

Glass Cleaner
To remove
fingerprints,
sweat (other
people's) and
smudges from
screen

Power Gloves
Padded and coated
to prevent blisters,
aches, and the dreaded
"Joystick Hand"

Sneakers
Worn a little
roomy to avoid
numbness from
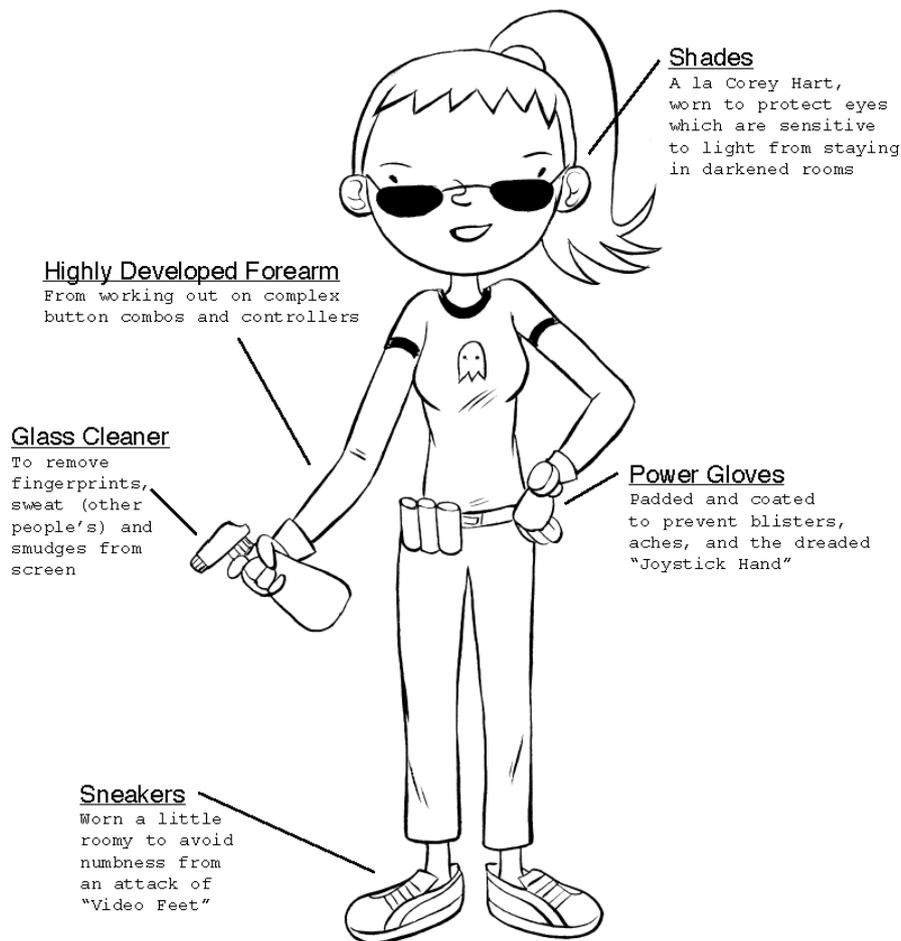an attack of
"Video Feet"

Figure 2 *1-Up* variation of the normative gamer.

during school with the vast assortment of video game watches on the market in the early 1980s such as Nintendo's *Game & Watch* series. Girls will remain invisible in the place of video games if play is limited to a 'first-wave' vs 'second-wave' model: the arcade as a boy-zone and the bedroom as a girl-zone (see Figure 2). The VEWP that accounts for the absence of girls actually playing in arcades ought to look outside of that space. After all, games in space are not unlike Barthes' (1979) Eiffel Tower: 'an object when we look at it, it becomes a lookout in its turn when we visit it' (p. 4). These mini-Eiffel towers simultaneously allow us to see in their space – to interact in their world – while we look at/see through their screen; in return the video game becomes a destination unto itself, an object-site that transforms as it reveals the routine spaces of everyday life.

'Threshold Magic'

Video games in space? 'This domestication of computer games has fed into girls' existing "bedroom culture", and now both boys and girls spend hours in their bedrooms playing computer games with friends' (Cunningham, 2000: 217). Girls may be in danger of even losing *this* game space based on recent US television commercials for Xbox, Sony Playstation 2, Hip Hop music videos where game play is shown, and even McDonald's ads. The domestic sphere is re-presented as a homosocial space dedicated to 'the guys'. In this scenario the 'guys' own the media room; they drink Coke or Pepsi, eat McDonald's burgers, and spread out across the now standard overstuffed black leather couch and accompanying armchair. Girls signal interference to the social space of game play. They threaten to end it through marriage, parenthood, or going out on a date. Not to worry though. Xbox's on-line capabilities will keep that butt print in the sofa even if it's remote.

There is as yet a play space untouched by such rigidity. This space counters the documentation that is taken for granted by VEWP. It is the transitory, nondescript, and virtually invisible space of the threshold game. Threshold games are random: in bars/pubs, in restaurants as cabinet and cocktails games, garages and launderettes, airports, bowling alleys, cinemas, and in liquor stores (see Figure 3) as my opening quote indicates. *Space Invaders* was not simply an endless wave assaulting the earth; it was 'the first game to appear outside of arcades and bars and reach a mainstream audience in places like restaurants and ice-cream parlors' (www.videotopia.com). Hidden in banality – in the void between the exit and checkout registers in grocery and convenient stores – the physical presence of arcade games configures social space into a televisual place. In the home, the 'doing to the television' is actually an undoing. Its screen space is re-configured as game space; the console in the home rearranges older 'furniture'. Following games in space, 'looking' out from their screens, who do we see playing? What other histories reside here?

In preparation for my contribution to the themed issue I interviewed Raina Lee, editor of the video game culture fanzine *1-Up*. '1-Up' refers to the extra

Figure 3 'The First Time I Played Asteroids' by Martin Cendreda, *1-Up,* 3.

avatar ('extra life') earned by a certain score during the course of a game. Lee's reflection on her own history of game play forces us to examine this threshold carefully. It is necessary to quote Lee at length:

> When I was a young kid (around 7) my parents owned a *Numero Uno*, a pizza restaurant franchise. Like most Asian immigrant's parents my parents, who were first generation immigrants from Taiwan, ran their restaurant mom and pop style, meaning they were at the restaurant from open to close – they didn't really trust anyone with management, and working themselves was a way to save money. So this is really common I notice with Asians, like I have a friend Kim Haden whose parents owned a liquor store and did the same thing – they worked all the time and kept their kids at the store with them. Hence, because I usually didn't have a babysitter or relatives to watch over me, my parents kept me at the store with them. I would have nothing to do except spend time at the arcade games in the hostess station. Usually we'd have two machines there; from *Ms. Pac Man*, to *Galaga*, *Sky Shark*, the various incarnations of *Arkanoid*, to the totally addicting *Tetris*. To keep me out of their hair my dad gave me quarters to pump into the machines ... They didn't really let me go alone to arcades, because they were seen as bad places with bad teenage boys, but they sometimes took me to an arcade on the Redondo Beach Pier called 'Fun Factory'. Anyway, I spent many hours playing, and still deeply associate the start up music of *Pac Man* with my childhood and many hours at my parents' restaurant. Sometimes my dad would play *Tetris* against me – for a girl, it was quite unusual I think that my parents let me or encouraged me to play with video games and hi-tech type toys that were

usually part of 'boy play'. Since I spent so much time at the arcade games, they bought me an Atari home computer (2600) as well, with *Pac Man*, *Combat*, and *Pitfall*. They let me have various other video game consoles as I grew older – Nintendo, Genesis, SNES. They didn't really see anything wrong with video games, like so many parents these days do, but they worked a lot and didn't really have enough time to police their child. After my parents stopped putting arcade games in their store, I still continued playing games, albeit on the home consoles. But I definitely first got my taste for video games from the time spent at *Numero Uno*.

Lee's account of her gaming experiences in quotidian spaces like her parents' restaurant, as well as the experiences of her friend Kim, attest to the need to add referents to the VEWP that currently circulates and demarcates the social history of video games: how and where it gets cited/sighted. Equally, Lee's gaming history *centralizes* questions of race, immigration, ethnicity, and class within the study of video game culture. This placement mustn't be cast in the convenient category of nostalgia, but rather, ought to contest and severely pressure the primacy and privileging of those spaces and screens often looked into for the purposes of documentation and research. While the study of gender has entered into existing debates on the social construction of play and game design, a sure bet would be that 'girl' (even when spelled grrrl) still, by and large, implies the study of a white subject. If video games are fast being located at the 'center of media studies', I wonder what this center will consist of? Will the study of video games have to wait as long as film studies for its own Third Cinema or Postcolonial moment before these questions are raised within its 'gendered play spaces'?

Facing the Game

John Sellers' *Arcade Fever: The Fan's Guide to the Golden Age of Video Games* (2001) provides readers with a glossary of terms associated with the arcade experience. Referred to as the 'arcade lexicon', the vocabulary words of 'guy' and 'man' are listed as interchangeable terms for the 'icon you control onscreen' (p. 152). Non-iconic figures like a vector graphic triangle firing at asteroids, an 'x' or 'o' from *Atari Football* (1978), spaceships, laser bases, racing cars, the humanoid from *Berzerk*, and even a 'square dot' like in the Atari 2600 game *Adventure* are credited as male in articulations of game play. This observation is not posited as an explanation of how gender operates in games, but rather how games are gendered in a larger culture of play. In brief, questions of representation did not emerge when Ms. Pac Man was given a bow. It is far too easy to begin a discussion of gender in video games with a statement like '*Ms. Pac Man* is arguably the first game avatar gendered female' (Salen and Zimmerman, 2004: 526), just as it is far too convenient to limit the same discussion of representation to photo-realistic avatars and stereotypes (e.g. Lara Croft, *BMX XXX*, and *Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball*). This criticism also ought to be extended to the

racialization of avatars. As Lipsitz (1998) has asserted: 'Whiteness is every-where in US culture but very hard to see' (p. 1). 'Everywhere' includes the detritus of video game culture: the packaging of console cartridges for the home. Late 1970s and early 1980s packaging graphics only displayed black figures as basketball players (Atari 2600's *Double Dunk*, Intellivision's *Basketball* and *NBA Basketball*, Atari 7800's *One-on-One Basketball*) or boxers (Intellivision's *Boxing*, Activision's *Boxing* for the Atari 2600). Black and Latino figures shared space on soccer games (Atari 2600's *Championship Soccer*, *Pelé's Soccer*). Other sports games like football, baseball, squash, bowling, skiing, volleyball, shooting, wrestling and racing, as well as games with science fiction, combat, fantasy, jungle adventure, fighting, educational, board-based, casino, film tie-in themes (with the exception of Activision's *Ghostbusters II* that featured a photograph of the 'fourth ghostbuster', 'Winston Zeddemore' played by Ernie Hudson) all present whiteness as a naturalized identity for game play.

Surely Shirl's (Leigh Taylor-Young) hands were the first in a Hollywood film to play a cabinet game. Better known as 'furniture' in Richard Fleischer's *Soylent Green* (1973), Shirl plays *Computer Space* (1971) in her modernist abode. Taylor-Young's hands and her place in front of the game screen were quickly replaced in films that depicted game play like: *Tron* (Steven Lisberger, 1982), *Joysticks* (Greydon Clark, 1983), *Nightmares* (Joseph Sargent, 1983), *Wargames* (John Badham, 1983), *The Last Starfighter* (Nick Castle, 1984), and *D.A.R.Y.L.* (Simon Wincer, 1985). Audiences could clearly see whose hands were on the games (interfacing with computers); and at some point in the film the face of the white guy playing would fill the cinema screen as it simultaneously reflected in the game screen.[3] Girls did, however, appear in *Joysticks*, where they played 'strip video'. Their presence transforms the arcade into 'a red-tinted bordello, with naked mud-wrestling, boys being whipped, and girls actively humping the arcade cabinets' (Lee, *1-Up,* 1: 45). *Nightmares* consists of three separate *Tales-from-the-Crypt*-style narratives. In 'The Bishop of Battle', Emilio Estevez plays a video game-obsessed teen who attempts to hustle one of 'the nobody specials and Mexicans' at a Hollywood arcade. After being found out, he and his friend barely escape from the gang of *esses* before heading back to the safety and security of the mall arcade in the valley. As my onslaught of anecdotes has underscored, when one looks around the screen one encounters ephemera that illustrate a 30-year history of representing both race and gender: white guys on screen, white figures dominating software packaging, and ads for consoles that depict a 'model' family spending quality time around the screen.

Yet as I hope has become evident, alternatives do exist depending on where one looks. Returning to *1-Up* for a moment (see Figure 4), even the publica-tion's title signals a direct intervention into the lexicon of game play, the determining factors of VEWP, game space, and the need to consider ephemera constitutive of a larger video game culture. The editorial of issue one addresses the question of who documents the history of video games:

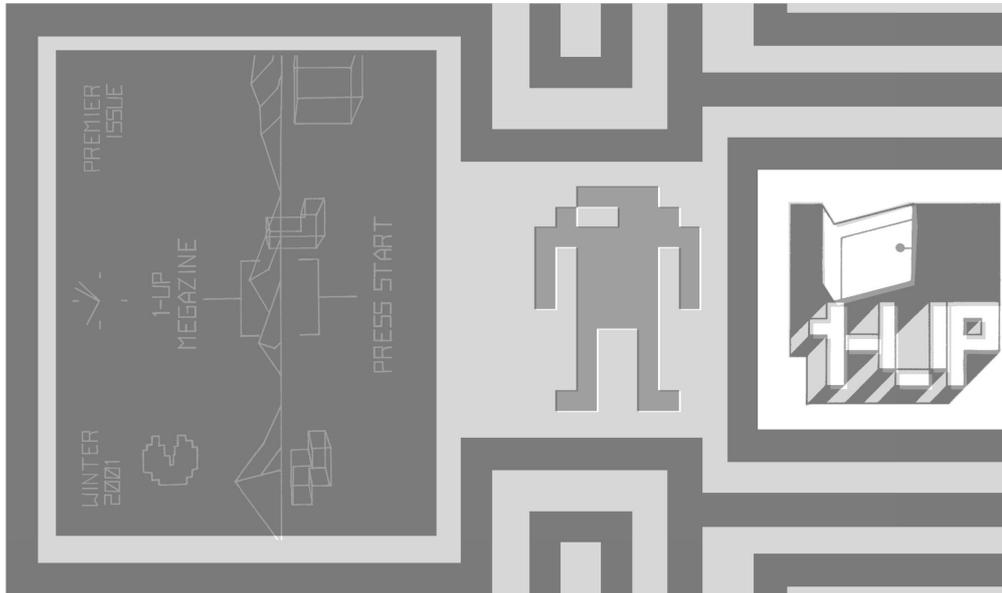While some brush off video games as mindless entertainment, there is

Figure 4 Cover image of *1-Up,* 1.

> little written about them as a cultural experience. Most of the material
> comes from game publications that are written in the voice of a 14-year-
> old boy, which is ok if you are a 14-year-old boy. Many of us are not, and
> have never been. Which is why we have this publication. (p. i)

The use of 'many' instead of 'some' speaks to the invisible history that the
pages of *1-Up* make visible through the active expression of voices dedicated
to telling their own stories in their own ways.

1-Up mirrors the actual diversity of video game culture. Articles from all three
issues range widely: accounts of gaming experiences, interviews with notable
video game celebs, such as Walter Day (founder of Twin Galaxies – the
Official Video Game and Pinball scoreboard) and Billy 'Perfect *Pac-Man*'
Mitchell (high score record holder of a number of arcade games), profiles of
existing arcades and accounts of various platforms, comics dedicated to
personal experiences with gaming, coverage of gaming expositions, graphics
and artwork illustrative of various periods of game design. *1-Up* provides a
forum within which the dichotomy between gendered game play is rigorously
contested. Kim Haden's article 'Pigtails and PowerPills' recounts playing
video games in her parents' liquor store in San Pedro, California:

> I think he [her brother] actually got a kick out of watching me totally
> destroy these boys who were twice my age. And I never said a word to
> any of them. I just stick my quarter up on the ledge and waited patiently
> for my turn to rock the house. (p. 7)

Raina Lee's voice is active in each issue. It informs articles such as 'Tales of a

Street Fighter 2 Girl Nerd', 'My Feminist Reading of Um Jammer Lammy', and 'Ethnic Cleansing is Not a Game'. In issue two she includes a note she wrote in 1984: 'I like to play Video Games because it's fun to play. The video games I like best are *Dig Dug*, *Donkey Kong*, *Octopus* and *Galaga*. I could beat the high score' (p. 48). This 'scrap' is offscreen, a memento that is well beyond the sight of VEWP. It may, however, be very much at the heart of an expanded video game culture.

Outta Time: An Epilogue

Late on the last day of *California Extreme* (Classic Arcade Games Show) the fluorescent lights came on. This violent burst of illumination ruptured the impermanent ambiance of the makeshift 'classic arcade experience'. The games appeared different in the contrasting luminosity: no longer lined up alongside one another they became distant specks that vanished into their owners' trucks, practically pushed out by custodians whose task was to sweep clean the detritus that evidenced a fleeting social space and historical experience with televisual media. Loaded up, this time the games departed. A few players lingered. The game's brief intrusion ended. 'Memories, you're talking about memories ...'

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. 'No Cash Value' is a common inscription on arcade tokens. Tokens were introduced to prevent theft – that is, people either breaking into machines or technicians pocketing profits while repairing them. My thanks to Pete Cooley for bringing this to my attention.
2. Cassell and Jenkins' (1998) edited collection on gender and video games successfully documents generational and political divides that distinguish the girls' games movement from game grrlz. An apparent tension is the disputed definitions and understandings of games designed for girls and the types of games girls are meant to enjoy playing according to girl game designers. The girls' game movement operates inside and outside a game industry that Pearce (1997) describes as 'like most of the entertainment industry at-large, a boy's club' (p. 204). In order to address gender difference in play (and most likely attempt to educate executive attitudes she often encounters: 'Girls? What do I care about girls? They're only five percent of the market' (p. 203)) Pearce constructs a chart with the headings 'Males like ...' and 'Females like ...' According to Pearce's observations males prefer games with science fictional themes whereas females prefer 'natural beauty'. 'Soft music', 'beauty, cuteness', 'person to person', 'safety', 'solving mysteries', 'story' are female gaming

attributes while the opposite are male: 'loud music', 'ugliness, grotesqueness', 'human-to-machine', 'danger', 'solving problems', 'game'. The challenge of dissonant feminisms resides less in the biological gender identity of a game designer than in heteronormative and conventional ideas about gender upon which play is modeled. I would argue that the game grrlz are right to voice their anger when gender is treated as a stable category within which 'male' and 'female' form oppositional categories. Lists like these assume that a category like 'cute' cannot also be 'violent' or 'aggressive'. The Suicide Girls models, drag kings, Yoshitomo Nara's paintings (e.g. 'The Girl with a Knife'), and the PowerPuff Girls (avid gamers in the television and comic book series), all prove otherwise.

3. Wolf and Perron (2003) provide a substantial survey of how video games have been studied over the past 30 years. This survey ranges from publications concerning the interests of hobbyists, collectors, designers, and strategy guides to early histories of video games, psychological, sociological, and cultural studies approaches to theorizing the multifaceted relationships to games and gaming. Although not mentioned in their brief survey, Hirschfeld's *How to Master the Video Games* (1981) and his companion text, *How to Master Home Video Games* (1982), as well as Bloom's *Video Invaders* (1982) adorn their covers with a 'game face' similar to those appearing in films of the period. For example, on the cover of *Video Invaders* we stare through a screenshot of a video game to see a smiling white teenager smiling back at us through the same screen. While out-of-print books aimed at young players of their era can easily be dismissed as insignificant in the history of video games and doomed to live out their remaining days on ignored city library shelves, their covers nonetheless illustrate a raced relation to who faces the game.

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