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Illusory Agency in *Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines*

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Abstract

The understanding of agency within digital games is a concept that we believe requires reinvestigation. The development of more complex gaming experiences means that the relative ability that a player has to shape their own experiences within it has become more complex. This paper looks towards the growth of a new taxonomy of agency by investigating one aspect; that of illusory choices in role playing games. Through a case study of Activision's Vampire the Masquearde: Bloodlines, we aim to begin a new series of debates surrounding this issue.

1. Introduction

The development of worlds within games, and the freedom of the player to act independently within these games, is a subject which has had erratic attention devoted to it by Games Studies, despite the growing potential of games to provide their players with much broader worldscapes. At present, no game can ever grant full agency – the ability of a player to move as they will and make totally free behavioural choices. As a result, Games Studies has drifted away from the subject, or addresses it in rather nebulous terms, and whilst authors such as Michael Mateas have developed theoretical readings of agency (2004), the concept itself has had little scrutiny and tends to be taken for granted. This paper argues that there are different types of agency available to a player, and that this contributes to their gameplay experience. Specifically, we shall examine a type of agency that we have defined "Illusory Agency".

Our choice of *Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines* (*VtMB*) (2004) as a case study for these questions coincides with a body of previous work done on the *Vampire: The Masquerade* series (*VtM*) (1991 – present). This includes work on both the computer games and the tabletop incarnations (Tosca 2001, Hindmarch 2007). From this point of view, it is therefore a series with a strong history of critical

attention, and one which forms an established body of work. As the complexity of games has developed, so too have the worlds within them. This is reflected in the continuing popularity of the series, and through Troika, the design studio responsible for the digital version of the games, *VtM* endeavours to remain abreast of game development. Our emphasis on the ways that the game aesthetic helps encourage Illusory Agency therefore becomes an increasing issue in games studies, as worlds expand and the types of freedom available to a player within a game world grow more potent.

There are two (non-exclusive) ways that a designer can seek to address agency. They can seek to grant as much freedom as they can or they can seek to disguise the fact that possible actions are limited. Instead of focusing its efforts on granting agency, *Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines* disguises the absence of such. This process of 'tricking' a reader into believing they have greater impact on and import within the game we have termed 'Illusory Agency'. This is a facet of the game design which appears to allow the player free reign and personal choice, but in fact guides them along rigid lines through a relatively linear narrative. This paper investigates how this type of agency can aid and abet game design, and how it can contribute in a positive manner to a game aesthetic.

In many respects, this paper is also an answer to Susana Tosca and Lisbeth Klastrup's earlier work in this field. Both collectively and apart, they have investigated the transmedial potential of worlds, and the ways in which some games encourage the player to utilise an intertextual approach (Klastrup 2003, Klastrup and Tosca 2005, Tosca 2001). Through a series of cross-media texts, the world of the game is supported through exterior sources that add an understanding of the internal narrative. This paper expands on these ideas, drawing on the ways in which the game aesthetic uses its transmedialism to provide the player with a world view within the game, but also uses this transmedialism to enforce the gameplay motifs encouraged by Illusory Agency.

2. *Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines*: Transmedial Vision

> The stories told in this game are set in the World of Darkness. It's a place very much like our world, sharing the same history, culture and geography. Super-ficially, most people in this fictional world live the same lives we do [...] yet, in the World of Darkness, shadows are deeper, nights are darker, fog is thicker. If, in our world, a neighbourhood has a rundown house that gives people the creeps, in the World of Darkness, that house emits strange sighs on certain

nights of the year, and seems to have a human face when seen from the corner of one's eye. Or so some neighbors say. (*World of Darkness* 2006: n.p.)

Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines was developed by Troika and released by Activision in 2004. It uses the *Half Life* source engine, combining elements of both a computer role-playing game (character choice, advancement and a quest format) and a first person shooter (first person views, plenty of guns, strafing). The game is a digital interpretation of the pen and paper "tabletop" roleplaying game *Vampire: The Masquerade* (*VtM*), first published in 1991. The *VtM* game world is rich in detail, has a well developed game system and a wealth of voracious and dedicated players. Numerous supplements, fan fiction and adventures extend an already detailed world; from supplements describing the politics of each city, to long histories stretching well beyond the timelines of the games themselves. Examples of this include *Vampire: The Requiem*, the tabletop successor to the first edition of *VtM* (Achilli et al. 2004), books detailing the backgrounds for each clan (for example Soulban 2001, Campbell 2000 Oliver 2000), the officially sanctioned roleplaying forum 'Danse Macabre' (2003-present), and fanfiction from published novels (Dolium 1998) to the numerous short stories listed, but by no means exclusive to, the 'Vampire RPG' website (http://vampirerpg.free.fr/Fiction/: 2000-present. Accessed 13/08/07).

In some ways, this can cramp the creativity of a new developer, providing little room in the setting for invention, and demanding intricate continuity. In others, this wealth of background material gives designers a great deal to draw upon. For a digital game audience – who are not the original consumers of the series – this can present problems of its own. Previous players will be well acquainted with the background of *VtM* and may be frustrated by both visual realisations of their imaginative creations and aspects which they see as disharmonious, whilst others are approaching the game for the first time. This immediately means that the game world will be read in very different ways by different players. However, as Tanya Krzywinska argues, these approaches can be beneficial in their multiplicity:

> [T]he presence of multiple intertexts encourages a certain type of depth engagement with the game, as well as the experience of being in the game world, that goes beyond but also informs the types of tasks offered to players.
> (2006:384)

It seems that often, games developers hold the holy grail of roleplaying game design to be the creation of a huge world in which players can go anywhere and do anything, and the popularity of huge worlds such as those in Massively Multiplayer Online Games, or the way in which *VtM* itself has grown over time seems to support this. The freedom to explore and act has been a constant of roleplaying games, and many have addressed this with increasing vigour as their ability to depict such

worlds has increased. The design aim of large worlds is to engage the player by providing them with extensive freedom of action. Here, the term "game world" means not merely geography, but rather the whole of the text and its transmedial antecedents (see Matthew S. S. Johnson's paper in this issue). As we have seen, the *World of Darkness* has a very well developed canon, but this is almost secondary to the mass of cultural myths about vampirism itself. Even strangers to the *World of Darkness* setting will bring with them a body of knowledge that informs their opinions of vampires and which is liable to aid them in seeing the vampire both as villain and as flawed, tragic hero.[1]

> If the vampire is an Other, he or she was always a figure in whom one could find one's self [...] - the despicable as well as the defiant, the shameful as well as the unashamed, the loathing of oddness as well as pride in it. (Dyer in Williamson 2005:2)

Vampire mythology contributes strongly to the *mis-en-scene* of *VtMB* but the game world also evokes the nihilism of gothic-punk, blending it with our knowledge of the present day. These three aspects are combined or juxtaposed to create new cultural artefacts within *VtMB*, by using the mundane contents of our world in the usual ways (Fig. 1), by juxtaposing them to create the ambience of the *World of Darkness* or by inserting the fantastic into recognisable settings. In Figure 2, moral decay and the descent into sensuality are depicted by the inversion of church into nightclub. The light well in the centre of the image places the church's cross below the congregation rather than above, transforming a traditionally holy symbol into something that suggests deviance and perversion. Similarly, the myth that vampires cannot enter churches is debunked here.

Fig 1: Supermarket shelves in *VtMB*. (Activision 2004. Reproduced with permission)

Fig. 2: A church that has been converted into a nightclub. (Activision 2004. Reproduced with permission)

Thus we see elements of different media and mythology combining to form the heart of a transmedial world:

> Transmedial worlds are abstract content systems from which a repertoire of fictional stories and characters can be actualised or derived across a variety of media forms. What characterises a transmedial world is that audience and designers share a mental image of the 'worldness' (a number of distinguishing features of its universe). The idea of a specific world's worldness mostly originates from the first version of the world presented, but can be elaborated and changed over time. Quite often the world has a cult (fan) following across media as well. (Klastrup and Tosca 2005: n.p.)

Troika have used the player's latent transmedial knowledge to good effect: well aware that they come to the text with many external references. Firstly, these preconceptions are sustained; the protagonist is a victim, made a vampire for unknown reasons (the vampire 'sire' having been abruptly slain). This immediately allows the player to empathise with their character; horrible things have happened to them, but it is not their fault. Secondly, the preconceived notion of vampires as mindless, bloodthirsty killers is subverted by their behaviour and racial traits. As Susana Tosca points out, for many this is one of the key attractions of the *VtM milieu*.

> The game offered players the opportunity to play vampires, who for the first time in role-playing games were not stupid zombi-like villains, but tortured souls struggling not to lose their humanity. (Tosca 2001: n.p.)

One of the most obvious examples of this playful subversion of transmedial belief is the Nosferatu race. A vampire clan based on the film of the same name,[2] these ugly, malformed sewer-dwelling vampires are almost exclusively helpful and positive within the game, contradicting the preconceived impression that they must be "bad" because they are ugly and secretive. When the Nosferatu turn out to be helpful allies, the text is perceived in new ways, and this process of having to think about the setting encourages engagement with it. Though these sort of simple narrative tricks could be used in any setting, the richness of the text emphasises them and they become all the more potent for it.

> The point is that by encountering one of the world's actualisations [...] the imaginary construct is evoked in the participant's imagination, and each simple act gains much wider meaning. (Klastrup and Tosca 2005: n.p.)

Finally, Troika use the game world to good effect throughout the game, building on what the player knows – either through the game itself or from external sources – in order to create a rich and vibrant imaginary construct. The majority of this construct does not exist in the game; it is merely implied. Therefore the spaces that the text leaves are filled by the player's imagination; the designers have faith that their reader's ability to do so is sufficient, and that their background knowledge will support this vision.

This technique bears strong resemblance to historicist arguments that a text should be consolidated, subverted and ultimately contained within its own discourses (Dollimore and Sinfield: 1985). To transpose the player's response to the game in terms of these actions is fruitful, since all imply in a more literal sense an active moment within the game (consolidating, subverting, containing) that is ultimately driven entirely by the game dynamic itself and not the player. Thus, to summarise, a player approaching the text does so with a series of preconceptions, even if they have not played the game before. They have created a narrative of their own before the game commences. Their agency here consists of their own belief that certain actions, events or situations might arise. However, once the game begins, the designers have worked to subvert these ideas. People and places are not as they seem – even the player might not be the person they thought they were. However, through this they gain a sense of freedom – of agency. The world therefore appears to be a new one with limitless possibilities. Finally, however, their perceptions rest on what Marie-Laure Ryan calls 'recentering' (Ryan 2001:103-5); an act of repositioning in a new world that the reader must undergo. Thus, ultimately, they are given a full new framework in which to exist. The world is an estranged one, combining familiar elements of the real world, the mythology of the vampire and the

worldness of *VtM* in unusual ways. The player is contained – they lose the belief that anything might be possible but gain a familiarity with the rich intertext that has been created.

The depth and detail of the text and its related intertexts engages the reader, making them feel part of something greater. By being part of that imaginary construct, they are encouraged to believe that their actions are individual and independent. However, in reality they are held within a frame of meaning that is entirely created by the game world. Whilst they might believe they are free to imagine its contents, with the plethora of intertextual references within the world helping them with this illusory belief, in fact they are governed by tight structures. This is the essence of Illusory Agency. The next section of this paper will discuss how Illusory Agency can be embodied within various activities in the game.

3. Roleplaying versus Agency

In a recent critique of roleplaying games Joris Dormans (2007) acknowledges that the term "roleplaying game" has become so broad that it is necessary to determine types within this field. The *Vampire: The Masquerade* series falls under his third category, 'computer roleplaying games':

> In computer roleplaying games a single player controls a single character or an entire party in an electronically simulated environment. These days the term roleplaying is used as shorthand for a typical type of gameplay of computer games: a type of gameplay where the player has to develop her character or party, with such development reflected by various statistics, typically strength, dexterity, charisma and so forth. A first person shooter that offers the player some choice for development is said to have some roleplaying elements. (Dormans 2007: n.p.)

This identification of the roleplaying game in the terms described above is necessary as it presupposes that the player will be adopting some sort of role or character, and that this character will undergo development. It is interesting, however, that Dormans's description acknowledges that this development is largely statistical, and that some games, despite often having the moniker "roleplaying game", may only offer "some" roleplaying potential. Thus, any agency that the player possesses is not going to be personal or interactive, but rather dictated through such terms as statistics or directed movement.

Elsewhere, we have defined a player's intent through the term "roleplaying":

> A player who is consciously role-playing [...] is seeking to 'create' a character that transcends the mechanic of the game and takes on a plausible, defined reality of its own. (MacCallum-Stewart and Parsler 2008:443)

Thus our first assertion when trying to determine the relative agency of a player within a game is that it is misleading to assume a "roleplaying game" allows a player to "roleplay". Furthermore, independent realisation of a character can often be extremely difficult to perform. Certainly, the claim that a game is a "roleplaying game" does not automatically engender free agency within it. Thus agency – the ability to move at will in a game, is not the same as roleplaying – realising a role within it. This distinction is one of the key stumbling blocks in understanding agency, and therefore separating the two is important, as the example below shows.

The mechanic of *VtMB* defines how the player-character will perform in the game environment. For example, a Brujah is a violent rebel, quick to anger, and the game reflects this by making them more liable to lose control of themselves and by giving them powers that make them strong and fast. Additionally, different computer controlled will react to them in different ways – the status conscious, controlling, Ventrue will tend to look down on them, or worry about how they might behave. All this is part of the game mechanic. However, to truly bring the Brujah "alive" the player must decide how they will react to a whole variety of situations, and for this they must step outside of the mechanic and think of their game avatar as a "person", a character in a film or book. If they decide their Brujah is smart then, even if spending their hard earned advancement points on intelligence might not make them more potent within the game mechanic, they will still do it, because they have transcended the game mechanic and are no longer merely looking at the interaction of the numbers within the game.

4. Avatar

Agency first appears to manifest in the creation of an avatar, or character. Character creation is the very first stage of *VtMB*. Two options are offered. The player can answer questions and have a clan recommended, or they can choose to jump directly to the character sheet and make the choices for themselves. The process of manual character creation can be daunting, since there are a wide number of skills to spend points on (Fig. 3), so the 'multiple choice' method of character creation enables easy entry to the game by those unfamiliar with the rules. In the *Vampire* setting, there are also numerous types of vampires, who live collectively in a clan. The clans also have racial attributes in the game that grant various abilities or strengths in some skills. In a transmedial sense, these clans are clearly sourced from the many vampires of fiction, film and mythology, including for example, the

Toreador, who are clearly derived from the sexy, velvet clad inhabitants of Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* (Rice 1976-2003).
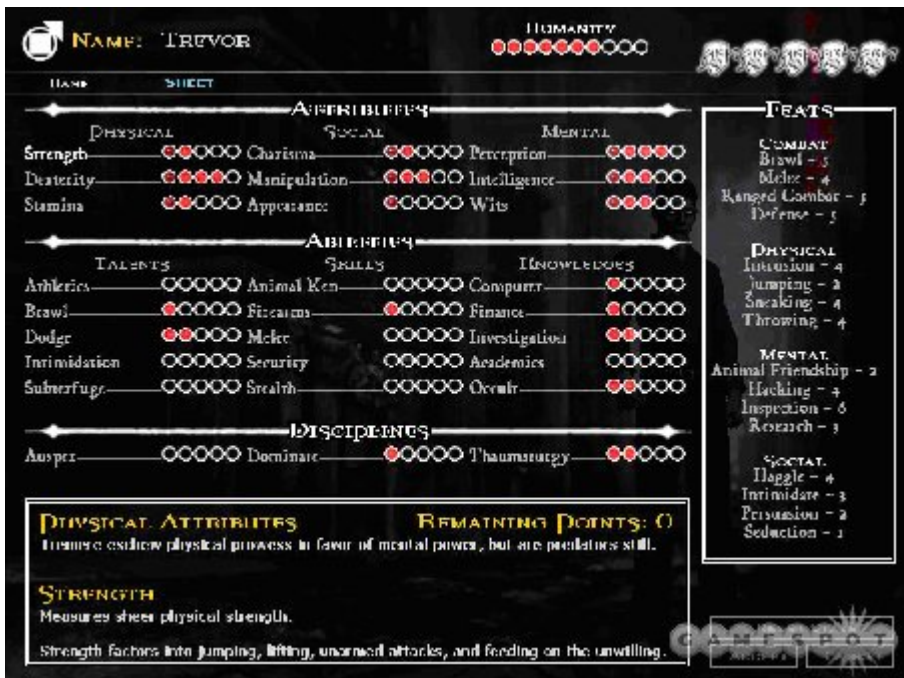

Fig. 3: Avatar Statistics (Activision 2004. Reproduced with permission)

The impression given by the choice of clan is that it will profoundly affect game play, and superficially, this is true. The various mixes of powers (called 'disciplines') vary greatly from clan to clan, but in fact, very few clan choices profoundly affect play. The aforementioned ugliness of the Nosferatu means that normal people will call the police if they see them. Other clan choices grant non-combat options; Ventrue may use their 'domination' abilities to shortcut some dialogue; likewise, Malkavians may do the same with their insanity creating abilities. At root however, almost all disciplines are orientated towards combat or avoiding it, simply providing different options when killing enemies. 'Obfuscate', for example, is a stealth power which allows one to sneak past enemies. Skills might use different animations to perform actions, giving the appearance of individuality, but at root they are still following the same pattern. Tosca remarks on this lack of individuality in an earlier game in the series, *Vampire: The Masquerade - Redemption* (Activision 2000):

> The singleplayer game is thus difficult to evaluate, since on one hand the graphics, 3D rendering and atmosphere are absolutely brilliant, but the story fails to immerse the player and the gameplay is extremely monotonous, not really bringing anything new to the action or roleplaying genres. (Tosca 2001: n.p.)

Player reading of clan choices will vary greatly. To those new to the setting, the choice of clan will be dictated by what is presented in the game itself, a short description of the clan and the associated avatar (Fig. 4). All the clan choices affect the dialogue options available when talking to characters in the game but, for the most part, these options make very little real difference to the game's outcome. Once again this is symptomatic of the illusion of agency the game creates.

Fig. 4: Character creation screen, *VtMB* (Activision 2004. Reproduced with Permission)[3]

Diane Carr provides an interesting parallel to restrictions in characterisation and action in her discussion of characters in *Baldur's Gate* (Carr 2006). She describes how her character 'Bad Joan', who she envisaged as a 'homicidal ingrate', was unable to truly carry out her evil nature. In particular, when she tried to kill her mentor, Gorion, he 'blew her up in self-defence' (51). The plot of *Baldur's Gate* requires that

Gorion is slain as part of the master-narrative. In this case, despite taking a proactive role in the narrative, a 'safety device' has been encoded into the game to prevent agency, and Carr ultimately concluded that the only way to successfully realise Bad Joan was through excusative and imaginative means which would have no outward show in the game itself:

> The only effective way to play Bad Joan as a real villain is to have her obey and conform when expedient – for her to manipulate others via an affectation of virtue. Obviously this would mean that she was nasty, but it would also mean that her dominant trait (evil) would reside solely in the perception of her user. (Carr 2006:51)

5. What's in a Name?

To continue the ideal of individualism, however, *VtMB* (and also *VtM*) carefully counterpoise the mundane and the extraordinary in the naming of these skills. Some, mainly the functional or career-orientated skills, have mundane names, including such things such as 'Lockpicking' and 'Computer Use'. Vampiric powers are made to appear extraordinary through linguistic change. The rather commonplace skill of added strength in a vampire is not the practical 'Vampiric Strength', but 'Potence'. These off-beat, evocative words are used throughout to give a more compelling atmosphere to the game. 'Stealth abilities' become 'Obfuscate', 'Shape Changing' is 'Protean' and 'Speed' becomes 'Celerity'. All of these terms form a collective ideal; normal people can use a computer, or pick a lock, but only a vampire can access these quasi-mystical abilities. The fact that lock picking or computer use are actually quite complex skills in themselves also means that emphasis is neatly placed on the extraordinary nature of the vampire in a few short words. This emphasis again helps to maintain illusion: if I am extraordinary, I must be significant and if I am significant, then my actions – specifically my actions within the game – must be significant also.

6. Humanity

A significant feature of the traditional *VtM* game that the designers have included in the digital version of the games is that of 'humanity'. This is a numerical expression of how 'humane' the character is; a high value indicates a character in touch with their human nature (as defined by a liberal ideology), a low value indicates closeness to the beast (typified by a lack of value for human life). Humanity can be gained by

certain actions (bringing medicine to a sick man) or lost by others (usually killing those the game defined as 'innocents').

In the ethos of the *Vampire* games, all vampires are damned and the beast lurks within them, a savage predator seeking to make its presence felt. Only through retaining one's human identity and by, for instance, not killing innocents or otherwise behaving in an inhuman way, can one stave off this beast and the dissolution it will bring. The game does not use this rule mechanic well. Only rarely is the player placed in a position where an action that would cause loss of humanity would be useful, and as such it is easily avoided. Though 'humanity' is lost for killing innocents, the game makes many areas combat zones where individuals who really should be classed as innocents (waiters, police, security guards) cause no humanity loss if killed. This means that despite initial appearances, there are few ambiguities and no real hard moral choices to be made. A few quests require one to choose between pragmatism and humanism, but these are rare and, overall, the humanity rules become a side issue. There is no real struggle to remain human and fight the beast within. Thus a core concept of the *Vampire* roleplaying games, one which does engender considerable agency since it hinges on decisions which then limit or encourage different styles of play, is lost. Additionally, because the character has been made into a vampire against their will and vampires are traditionally seen as "bad", this very fact can then be used to excuse their later behaviour. In *VtMB*, antisocial behaviour such as being rude to NPCs, or violent behaviour can be excused – the player can say "hey, I know I am being bad, but I never asked to be a vampire". In this way the player is able to empathise with their game avatar and in so doing feel they are "'part" of the world. However, at the same time they do not have to make, or can excuse themselves from choices which might call into question morality, or force them to act in different ways. This mid-point between player and character is one that has been discussed in depth by James Paul Gee, who gives this liminal position the name 'projective identity', and discusses the difficulties of separation between player as self, and player as characterised identity in-game (Gee 2003:54-66). In the context of the game however, the overall narrative that surrounds the character, and the differences inherent in "real" life, mean that the player is able to excuse their actions. Once again this creates the illusion of agency – a belief that the player has solidarity (in this case in choosing to behave against the norm of their "real" persona) when in fact it is relatively irrelevant in the grand scheme of the game.

7. Directed Narrative and Plot

The main narrative of *VtMB* uses a system common to many roleplaying games. A main quest dictates the overall flow of the action and there are a number of optional side quests. Whilst this manages to give a passable illusion of choice, the *actual* choices on offer are limited (Fig. 5). A player has the choice of undertaking a particular quest, or not. It is usually clear which dialogue options will lead to quests and which do not. Most players wish to maximise their game experience, and thus the choice between a quest and no quest is not a choice at all: they will choose the option which provides further game content. This is not to say that the choice does not matter, for such choices once again add to the *Illusory Agency* of the game.

In the image below (Fig. 5), it is clear that the answer 'Nope, just looking around. Later.' is relatively pointless. The other two questions appear on closer inspection to be different variations of the same thing. By asking either, the player will ultimately be led to the same answers, which means any agency granted here is ultimately illusory.

Fig. 5: The dialogue in this screenshot provides three choices, yet it is clear that one (choice 3) only leads to stasis and does not advance the plot. (Activision 2004).

7. The Cast

A strong cast of characters are presented in *VtMB*. At the very start of the game, a large group of NPCs are seen at a meeting, discussing whether or not the player (an illicitly sired new vampire), should be executed. This long opening cut scene serves to set the stage and introduces many of the plot elements that will later dominate the story (specifically, the rivalries between various clans). It allows for no player interaction at all, and this typifies much of the game. The designers have created a strong plot but in order for this narrative to be realised, the actions available to the player must be curtailed. This makes for a good story, but limits meaningful play.

In cases where the player talks to the major characters within the game, there is little they can say which will change anything more than their superficial reactions. Though the quality of the voice acting is good and the scripts well written, the player is a spectator rather than a participant. The slick gloss of the presentation, the conversational options on offer (even though they are generally meaningless), the lip syncing, the quality of the voice acting and the overall panache with which these conversations have been presented delude the player. These high presentation values encourage players not to notice the lack of choice but rather to *feel* that there is choice. Conversation with less significant characters can often be more satisfying, because these individuals are not "necessary" to the development of the main plot. The dialogue choices made by the player when dealing with such characters can have more obvious effects. One of these happens early on, where the player can convince a criminal to either sell her the explosives needed, or she can start a fight and steal them. These simple choices, with demonstrable effect on the immediate story, add to player agency. Being able to make profound choices in the little things means one is less concerned with being able to make choices in the big things: the choices give an illusion of agency, thus their relative significance in the overall plot becomes less important.

8. Conclusion: Negotiation and Subversion

VtMB relies on Illusory Agency, and thus gameplay would suffer immensely if a player started to challenge the game. As long as the player goes along with the game experience as presented and does not peer too closely at what they are doing, then a sense of agency is maintained. A subversive reading would destroy the engagement of the game experience. The designers have sought to avoid this in two main ways. Firstly, they have fully embraced the idea that reading of the text will be negotiated through transmedial ideas, but they make sure that any negotiation is on their terms. The player is allowed to make many choices which might seem to

be significant, but in fact they do not overly influence the game arc, and have little effect on the overall narrative. The player may feel that in making, for example, racial or statistical choices, that they are then free to play as a characterised, 'free' entity within the game, but this is also negated by the fact that however a character is played, it has little influence on the game.

Finally, *VtMB* avoids the player taking a counter-hegemonic stance by allowing them mild subversion within the game. The focus of the main story arc concerns the vampire prince, but the player is allowed to ally with his rebellious enemies. This alliance makes no difference until the very end of the game: the enemies tell the player to stick close to the prince and spy on him and, essentially, follow the same story arc as they would have anyway. These choices allow the player to *feel* subversive: an authority figure is set up and then the player is allowed to rebel against them. By offering this authority figure within the game it makes it less likely the player will challenge that ultimate authority figure: the game itself. Once again the illusion of free choice is produced to satisfy the player's need for a sense of empowerment within the game.

Ultimately, then, *VtMB* seeks to evoke and succeeds in creating an *illusion* of agency within a wide-ranging imaginary construct. It uses clever devices to encourage a player not to pierce that illusion and, instead, to become engaged with the text. This has some fairly profound implications for computer game design: does Illusory Agency produce better games than allowing free reign to agency itself?

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Notes

1. See the depiction of vampires in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Whedon 1997-2003), *Interview with the Vampire* (Rice 1976), *Blade* (Norrington 1998), and *Nightwatch* (Lukanenko 1998 and Bekmanbetov 2004).

2. *Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens*. (1922). [film]. Directed by F.W. Murnau.

3. Though the text here explains briefly what a 'Tremere' is, this is also a good example of transmedialism in the game, since a whole book has been written on this clan (Hening and Soesbee 2001). To a player of *VtM*, this device provides a synopsis of the Clan in question. To a new player, it is also a sufficient description as it centres mainly around the attributes a player may expect to use in the game.