

“Let's Pretend”

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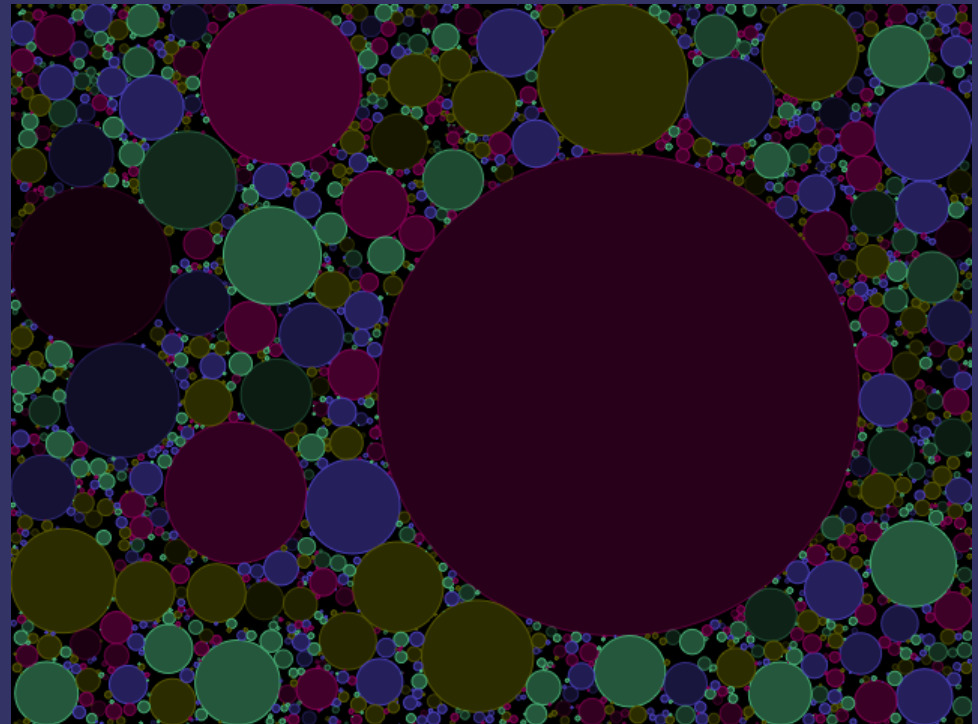
Limits and Approaches

This is an early report
on work in progress.

It is shameless auto-
ethnography

It draws on the hybrid
foam metaphor proposed
by Mirko Tobias Schäfer.

It aims to discover how
the sense of risk and
possibility of
transgression create a
ludic tone that attracts
participants.



Old BeOS screensaver for Mac

Social Software

Is it a social network,
a web interface, a game?

A metaphor of hybrid
foam helps describe the
characteristics I wish
to explore.

Seemingly enclosed
worlds, but touching,
intersecting, and
permeable membranes
belie the apparent
safety or closed nature.

The screenshot displays a game interface with a central 'VS' (Versus) button and an 'Attack!' button. On the left, a player profile for 'You' is shown, featuring a character icon and a table of fighting history. On the right, a list of opponents is displayed, each with a character icon and their respective stats.

You
- I musta-been-speeding Vampire
- army of 3 Vampires
- 290 Vampire points

Your Fighting History	
Total Wins:	37
Total Losses:	15
Total Vampire Fighting Points	80

VS

Attack!

R. R. Nori Malface
- Ice Vampire
- army of 12 Vampires
- 702 Vampire points

Monty Cantsin
- Hypnotic Vampire
- army of 3 Vampires
- 353 Vampire points

Giuseppe Getto
- Hypnotic Vampire
- army of 0 Vampires
- 317 Vampire points

Naomi Ridge
- I musta-been-speedin Vampire
- army of 2 Vampires
- 261 Vampire points

Matthew Moberly
- Vampire Warrior
- army of 0 Vampires
- 149 Vampire points

Wolfen Moondaugl
- Catholic SchoolVampi
- army of 0 Vampires
- 15 Vampire points

Christopher De Vri
- Rockstar Vampire
- army of 0 Vampires
- 6 Vampire points

Virtual/Actual/Real?

Where is the line
between “real”
life and pretend?

Does the tension
between what's
real and what's
not encourage a
spirit of play?



Models of Online Community

- Fan
- Fetish
- FLOSS
- Hacker
- Artistic

The communities I will discuss may be usefully viewed as fan communities (Jenkins, Foster, De Vries), and as fetish communities (Hill)



Transgressive games

Because it isn't quite “real” transgressive behavior is more common, but is also encouraged by the games structure. Players are encouraged to attack, trick, challenge and taunt other players, all of who are friends or perhaps “friends.”



Who did I just add?

“Yes, the picture. I guess I just violated facebook etiquette--it is not me (maybe it is the inner me). It is, of course, 1950s hearthrob Troy Donahue! I will have to work on that.”

Eventually I discovered that he was the husband of a friend...



What is Real?

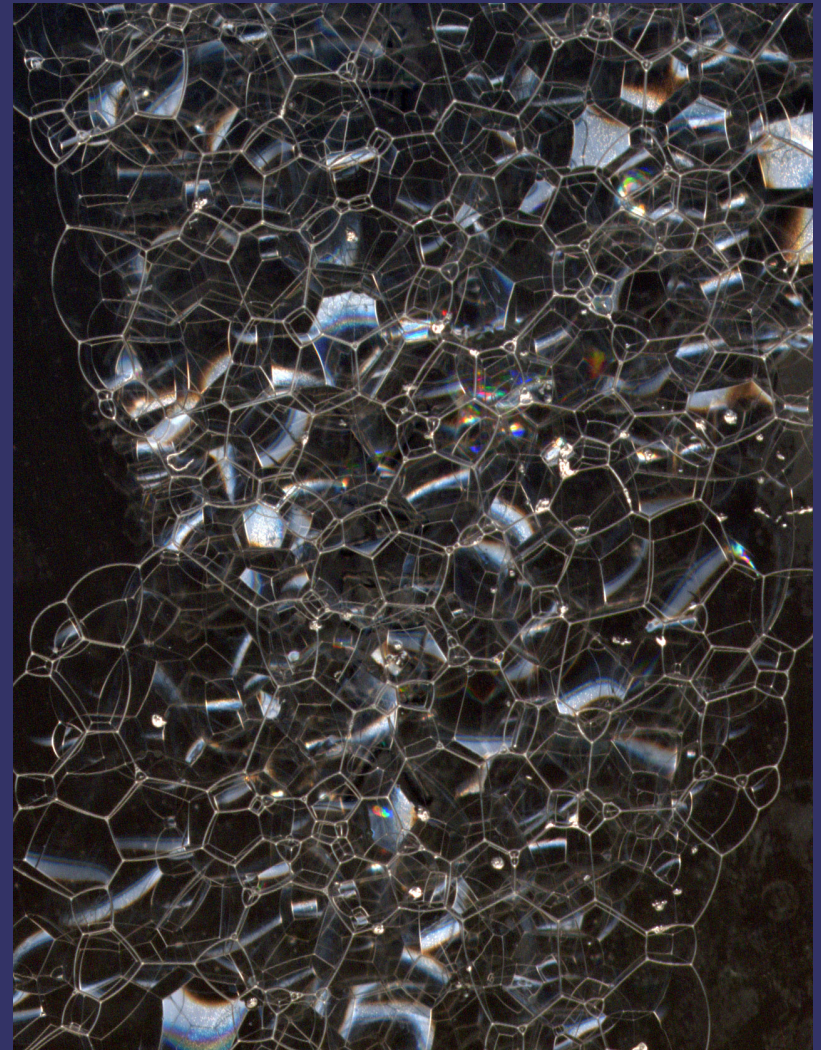
What is shared between genre fiction, games, and social networking sites?

- * Tension between the real and unreal world
- * Tension between the real and fictional world
- * Tension between the real and game world



In-conclusion

We like to create worlds, but rather than the completely enclosed safety of fiction or game, maybe the most fun is to be had in spheres bound by permeable membranes, always offering the possibility of intersection, transference, and secret identities revealed.



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