Reasons to Rethink the Generic Classification of Video Games. Towards a Pragmatic Vision, the Case of Survival Horror

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Three major theories to discuss

- Formalist and historic theories

- Emotional theories

- Semio-pragmatic theory

What is the survival horror ?

- A thematic component (the horror)
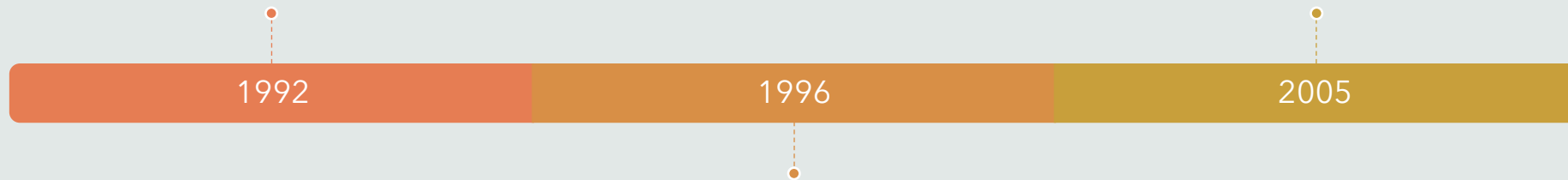- A mechanical component (the survival)
- ➔ Is it that simple ?

Formalist and historic theories (Perron, 2018)

- Classifications based on the characteristics of games
- Consider the evolution of the genre

History of survival horror
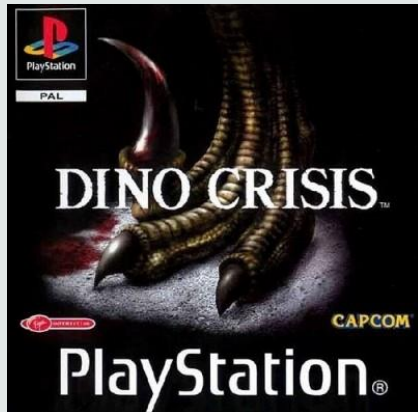
Alone in the Dark (innovative work)
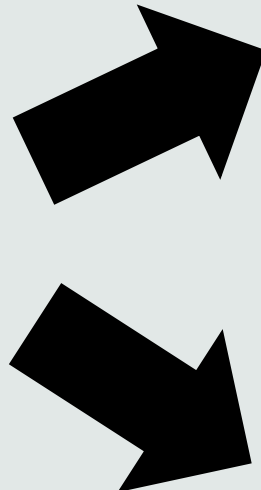
Resident Evil 4 (ultimate work)

| 1992 | 1996 | 2005 |

Resident Evil (paradigmatic work)

According to the Alastair Fowler's theory (1982)

Dichotomy post-Resident Evil 4

Survival horror
Resident Evil 1, 2, 3
Silent Hill series
Alone in the Dark
Dino Crisis

Action horror
Resident Evil 4, 5, 6
Dead Space series
The Evil Within
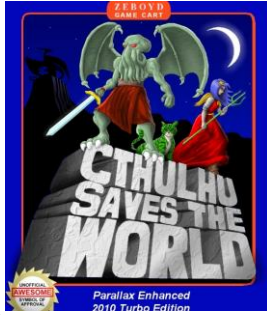*Condemned : Criminal Origins*

Terror games
Amnesia series
Penumbra series
Outlast series
Layers of Fear 2

Principal issues of formal theories

- It remains unclassifiable cases.
- Difficulties to consider original cases.
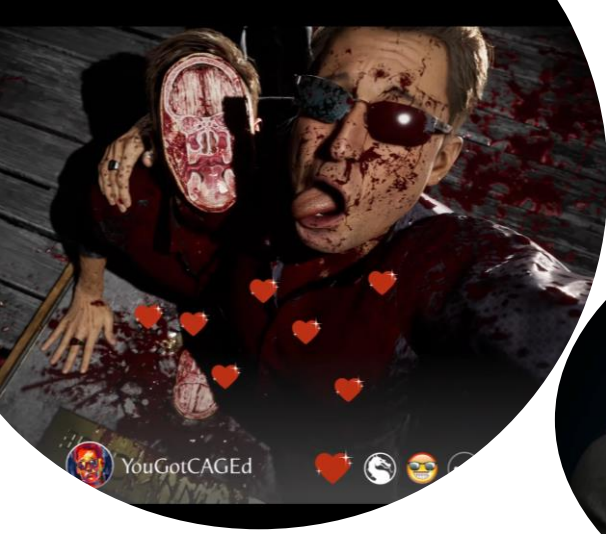- **Tends to create unused labels.**

Emotional theories

- Can we define survival horror as « games that generate fear »?

- Is a survival horror a game that involves horror thematics? (Krzywinska, 2009)

The issue of perception and individuality (Clémot, 2014)

Is it possible to standardise the gaming capital (Consalvo, 2007) or the emotions produced by a game?

A semio-pragmatic theory (Arsenault, 2011)

- A game possesses a model player (based on Eco's model reader ; Eco, 1985) who uses the affordances offered by developers.
- A genre is determined by the kind of experience that these affordances offer to the player.

Can a studio still legitimately determine the genre of a game?

- Games are produced by colossal industries.
- Employees labor is invisible.
- The goal of communication is marketing.

➔ Communities of gamers have gained the power to establish classifications by themselves.
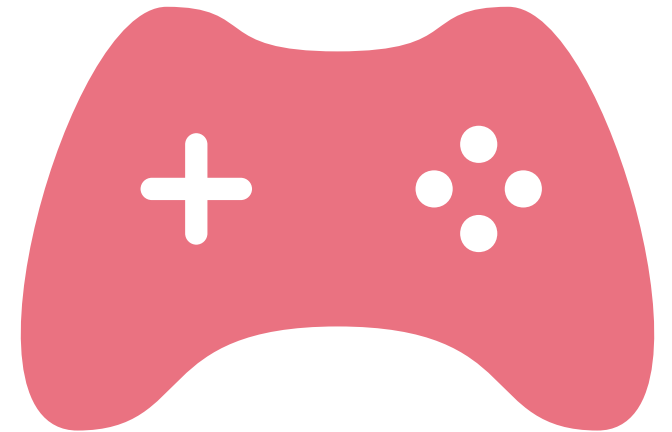
A switch in our vision of genres

- A pragmatic vision rooted in the discourse of the reception
- A study of the used labels

- Consideration of genres instability
- Consideration of the hybridity of several works

➔ Showing the richness of video games by interpreting them in many ways
➔ Legitimising the discourse of the players

Thank you for your attention !

To continue the discussion :
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