Terra Nova Decolonial Fantasy

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Abstract—**Terra Nova (New Earth) is a setting of Decolonial Fantasy where the oppressive colonizer lost and the oppressed and enslaved colonized won. This setting is a part of the set of analog and digital games that make up the Incorporeal Platform of Ludonarratives.**

Keywords—ludonarrative, decoloniality, role-playing game, minecraft

I. High Concept

Terra Nova (New Earth) is a setting of Decolonial Fantasy where the oppressive colonizer lost and the oppressed and enslaved colonized won. This setting is a part of the set of analog and digital games that make up the Incorporeal Platform of Ludonarratives (http://historias.interativas.nom.br/incorporaisrpg/).

The starting point was: what if in Brazil the quilombos had been victorious to the point that they were able to expel the colonizers and nowadays the quilombola culture was dominant? [1]

According to Anibal Quijano (apud Candau& Oliveira),[2] the colonizer destroys the others' imaginary, while reaffirming its own. This process turns the others into colonized, making them believe that their own culture and identity is inferior and wrong.

Catherine Walsh (apud Candau& Oliveira) [3] states that to decolonize means a strategy beyond political freedom from colonization. It aims at a total rescue and/or reconstruction of the once destroyed culture and identity. But now we have a problem: our entire research and knowledge repertoire was built upon the colonizer ́s foundations. In the field of Decolonial Pedagogy, Luis Fernandes de Oliveira [4] asks how is it possible to apply a method with a theoretical and epistemological non-Eurocentric basis in a reality where most teachers have a practice based on theories and epistemologies that are fundamentally Eurocentric.

When referring to Decolonial Pedagogy, Candau & Oliveira [5] state that colonialism created a kind of epistemic fetishism, meaning that the colonizer's ideas, behaviors and knowledge are presented in a seductive and very easy way to imitate. Referencing back to the discomfort that the black author and our students feel within the gaming industry and community, we aim to identify some of these Eurocentric foundations in game design in order to look for alternatives that improve diversity and, if possible, make these alternatives also seductive.

In this setting we offer a symbolic parallel between Europe and traditional medieval fantasy with elves, dwarves as the colonizers who brought dark skinned humans as slaves to explore and settle at the new "discovered" continent. When they arrived, they realized they had not discovered anything because the continent was already populated by powerful Native peoples. In a series of catastrophic wars the colonizers managed to destroy the great Native civilizations and started the process of cultural and identity annulment. However, the dark skinned humans allied with the natives and they began to fight back to rebuild their identities and culture. Assembled together in huge quilombos, they finally defeated the colonizers who were forced to retreat to a relatively small kingdom isolated in a cold region in the north.

As the game begins there is no apparent great conquest to achieve or great evil to defeat. What is there to do? What is the fun? What is the challenge? What are the mechanics after all?

The challenge is the reconstruction of identities lost and the mechanics has to reflect this in terms of ludonarrative cohesion and resonance (or consonance).[6] Instead of picking a ready-to-play template to conquer distant lands or defeat the great evil, the player first has to create a character based on loose professional concepts with no ethnic limitations or "racial" advantages. [7] Players must remember that the society of Terra Nova was not built upon rigid social classes or casts but upon reinterpretations of long lost ancestries, plus the need to survive a common enemy that wanted to enslave their ancestors.

II. Game Description

A. Target Audience

People from 14 years of age that are interested in games with social and decolonial issues.

B. Gameplay and Mechanics

The game begins with the gamebook at the setting website[http://historias.interativas.nom.br/terranovagame/] to create characters by the rules of the Incorporeal System of Ludonarratives.

These gamebooks have the objective of presenting the setting and the rules. They are based on a Google form with quantitative and qualitative parameters that can be manually transferred to a card, currently in the PNG format, for printing. Our goal is to create a digital version with a programming that imports the data from the Google form and configures said data in CSS and Javascript, generating a digital card with the character´s parameters and that allows image upload. This card will then be imported by the card game program using these parameters to calculate the results and confer experience points to develop the character. So far we have been designing the card drawers with RPG Maker VX [http://www.historias.interativas.nom.br/incorporais/sorteadores/numerais]

We are currently developing a gamebook to create characters from the Zula Nation [http://historias.interativas.nom.br/terranovagame/zula/] and, from that, develop at least one gamebook for character creation for each realm and/or culture of the continent of Terra Nova [http://historias.interativas.nom.br/terranovagame/mundo/].

From the already existing material our goals are:

- create a digital version of the character card using a program that imports the data from the Google form and allows the user to transfer and configure this data into CSS and Javascript, with the possibility of image sending.
- create a skin generator with a database of ethnicities and clothing that creates an image that can be sent to the digital card.

This card will be importable

- by the future program of the Incorporeal card game using its parameters to calculate the results of actions and confer experience points do develop the character;
- by the future program of the point & click ready to play adventure or gamebook;
- by the future program of the strategic board game "Caxangá"

The character will also be developed using the following resources:

- ready to play tabletop RPG adventures available online [http://historias.interativas.nom.br/terranovagame/rpg/].
- Minecraft Project [8] and or MashUp packages containing worlds, textures and skins.

III. GAME ART

In 1929, Oswald de Andrade wrote the Anthropophagic Manifest in which he reworks the eurocentric and negative concept of anthropophagy as a metaphor for a critical process of the formation of Brazilian culture. "[...] As anthropophage we are capable of digesting the imported forms to produce something truly Brazillian without falling in the old model/copy relation that has dominated part of the colonial period art and of the academic art of Brazil from the 19th to the 20th century." [9]

So we arrive at this concept of Fantasy that proposes a challenge: the contamination of the colonizer by the colonized, the attempt of really experiencing cultural anthropophagy, a movement touched by tropicalism, but not entirely incorporated to the Brazilian poetic thought - although it is very present in other sectors of culture, mainly in music and street art [10] - that manifests itself in a fantasy originally european that was digested and recreated by our "Brazillianess".

The first proposal is to use New Art, or Art Nouveau as, for example, Alphonse Mucha [11], as a compositional basis over which we will aggregate other styles such as armorial and cordel, manga, art naïf, native Brazillian, African, and as many others as desired by the gamers as, for example, the Afro-Brazilian painter Abdias Nascimento [12].The Art Nouveau style was chosen because it visually evokes the concept of fantasy from JRR Tolkien since Terra Nova can be considered a setting traditionally defined as "medieval fantasy". First, due to the thematic approximation that does not link directly to a mythology, but rather to a certain idea of mythology, the "poetic and mythic fragments of lost languages" that dance in the imaginary a fairytale dance. Secondly, because historically the style is connected to fantastica art which is the origin both of RPG and its visual identity: from the apparently innocent lines of Art Nouveau emerge publicity, comic books, outdoors, and, in a not so distant future, games. And these lines carry with them, to our contemporary mass productions, their "fantastic fragments".

Refer to the paper http://analoggamestudies.org/2016/11/the-incorporeal-project-teaching-through-tabletop-rpgs-in-brazil/ for details on the art creation process with undergraduation students.

A. The Terra Nova Minecraft Project

Is currently under development for Windows 10 version, but it will soon be also programmed for Java Edition.

For screenshots and links refer to http://historias.interativas.nom.br/terranova/terra-nova-minecraft-project/.

REFERENCES

[1] A quilombo (Portuguese pronunciation: [ki‖lõbu]; from the Kimbundu word kilombo, "war camp") is a Brazilian hinterland settlement founded by people of African origin including the quilombolas, or maroons and others sometimes called Carabali. Most of the inhabitants of quilombos (called quilombolas) were escaped slaves. A similar settlement exists in the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America, and is called a palenque. Its inhabitants are palenqueros who speak various Spanish-African-based creole languages. Quilombos are identified as one of three basic forms of active resistance by slaves. The other two are attempts to seize power and armed insurrections for amelioration. Typically, quilombos are a "pre-19th century phenomenon". The prevalence of the last two increased in the first half of 19th-century Brazil, which was

undergoing both political transition and increased slave trade at the time [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quilombo].

[2] Candau, Vera Maria Ferrão & Oliveira, Luiz Fernandes de. Pedagogia decolonial e educação antirracista e intercultural no Brasil. **Educação em Revista**. Belo Horizonte, v.26, n.01, p.15-40, abr. 2010, p.19.

[3] *Idem*, p.33.

[4] *Idem*.

[5] *Idem*.

[6] For the common use of the terms, see https://www.lasertimepodcast.com/2014/11/23/3-ways-ludonarrative-consonance-makes-better-games-and-players/, http://www.mattiebrice.com/ludonarrative-resonance/ and http://www.realityrefracted.com/2013/03/ludonarrative-why-it-matters.html.

[7] In the 17th and 18th centuries, the main argument for the legitimacy of slavery of the African peoples was the religious motive. This religious argument stated that the dark skinned peoples of Africa, the so called "black race" were "cursed and without soul". This was based on an element of Judeo-Christian mythology, "the Curse of Caim and his descendants". This was the justification for the submission of these peoples turning them into objects and tools of work, depriving them of any subjectivity and from the right to their own bodies. In the middle of the 19th century the religious-mythological argument lost its strength and the legitimacy of slavery became based on pseudo-scientific arguments. Alongside Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution and the positivism philosophy of Imperialist Europe, came the concepts Race and Eugenics. Without knowledge of the genetic code (DNA was only discovered in 1954), scientists devoted to positivism created theories, based on a distortion of Darwin's theory, proposed that humanity evolved from more primitive beings to lesser primitive ones reaching an evolutionary apex in the white Christian European peoples (even religions were classified this way: the more animistic, the more primitive it was. The most evolved religions were the monotheistic ones). This way these theories provided a perfect legitimization for the submission of non-white peoples by the white peoples, with the black being at the base of the evolutionary pyramid. Therefore, cultural assimilation and the erasure of subjectivity were viewed as a kind of "charity", a "duty" that the evolved white had to fulfill for the benefit of their poor and inferior servants. Eugenic appears, a concept of "improving the races" based on selective breeding (rape) between white males and their non-white female slaves. This led to the emergence of a desperate need from non-white to "breed" with light-skinned people to whiten their children, for this way they would have more chances of reaching better living conditions and of "evolving". This despair reinforced the erasure of subjectivity. Even though they had dark skin, these people tried to behave and dress as though they were white people, submitting their bodies and minds to all kinds of aesthetic and discursive violence, in search of acceptance. This concept of a symbolic "race" that comes from an imperialist pseudoscience under the service of a mechanism of oppression is what feeds Racism.

[8] As in https://ardacraft.me/

[9] https://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/termo339/manifesto-antropofago

[10] http://177.71.252.105/materiacontinuum/fevereiro-2012-saga-modernista-completa-90-anos/ em 07/02/2013

[11] http://www.muchafoundation.org/home

[12] http://www.abdias.com.br/obra_artistica/obra_artistica.htm