gamevironments

global network player authority PewDiePie guild god Let's Play angel undead wtf authentic mediatization Skill PVP contest
game rule system gameplay avatar WoW blessing noob kills demon race body fight ingame PS4 discussion digital
religion gamer analysis representation healing lore religio-scape Soul diablo class tradition experience twitch rebirth genesis clan wedding gamer
simulation lol ludology The Last of Us death resurrection funeral rules ritual virtual identity buff priest immersion community symbols salvation mage XBox 360PVE
narrative

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New Earth. Fantasy Pantheon Inspired by Afro-Brazilian Religion

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Abstract

In this research report I describe how I used a decolonial framework to design a pantheon, the faith system and temples based on Afro-Brazilian religions known as Candomblé and Umbanda for a fantasy setting of the role-playing game *New Earth* (2013), in which the oppressed defeat the colonizers and establish a culture based on their mixed ancestries.

This is a current project in which we adapt Afro-Brazilian religion to a decolonial role-playing game (RPG) fantasy setting for the *Incorporeal Ludonarratives Platform*, created in 2013 by Eliane Bettocchi and Carlos Klimick, a role-playing game system that combines *TIN* (Techniques for Interactive Narratives) and LudoPoetic Design techniques for educational purposes (for more information cf. Bettocchi, Klimick, and Perani 2020 and Bettocchi, Klimick, and Perani 2019). In order to materialize our ideas, we opted for *Minecraft* (2009-2021) Windows 10 version, which is a relatively cheap game, very easy to play and works on most computers. We chose this version of the game because it was the easiest to build and apply resource packs compared to Java and Education versions.[i]

In a previous paper (Bettocchi, Klimick and Perani 2020) we described the ludopetics and ludonarrative didactic for teaching and creating decolonial games framework we created to understand the communication process in gaming experiences and that we have used to elaborate an educational process for future game designers or teachers. This educational process uses ludonarratives as an object of both game research and production. Considering that contemporary Cultural Studies admits the possibility of a Decolonial Pedagogy, we entertained the possibility of building a Decolonial Ludology through ludonarratives. We identified some of the Eurocentric foundations in game design in order to look for decolonial alternatives that improve diversity and, if possible, also make these alternatives attractive.

With that in mind, we have been using our threefold principle of *understanding*, *applying*, and *disseminating* to design an educational method to train future game designers or teachers. This research is still in its first exploratory stage and we present here our first investigations through projects done with game design students to find alternatives to Eurocentric standards implicit in current design frameworks. In this paper we continue our investigation by describing the actions in our exploratory research within the process of designing a game, applying it to students and gathering the results. The three phases of this method unfolds in cycles, repeating itself as long as needed:

- *Understanding*, as we must apprehend rules, gameplay, and contexts of play;
- *Applying*, as we must use this newfound knowledge to act upon the ludic activity;
- *Disseminating*, as we must communicate our findings, learning, skills, and experiences within the game to other players, e.g. generating a metagame.

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Bell Hooks (2013) compares the educator with the healer in a process of rescuing the traditional knowledge of the original peoples, making teaching sacred so that the teaching-learning process is no longer limited to the transmission of knowledge, becoming a means to contribute to the continuity of society, transgressing and then improving it. Ahmadou Hampaté Bâ (2010, 169) states that the African oral tradition

> "is, at the same time, religion, knowledge, natural science, initiation into art, history, fun and recreation, since every detail always allows us to go back to Unity primordial."

We believe this cyclic and healing nature reinforces our commitment to defy colonialism not only in the themes we choose, but also in the ways we choose to design and teach, bringing into the academy speeches and thoughts so far invalidated. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind these defining pillars: "[...] Design is, therefore, essentially specular in nature, both as an advertisement and as a denouncement" (Bomfim 1999, 150-151). The LudoPoetics is a method of design to persuade (advertise) to question, resignify and refigure (denounce).

Poiesis as Criticism and Resignifying

We understand the denouncement ability as close to what is meant by the so-called *poetics*. Currently, poiesis is not just a *doing*; rather, it is an *intention*, hence its use for contemporary artistic forms of expression: the intention to offer new possibilities for the construction of meanings by the enjoying subjects, leading to a refiguration of these subjects and their contexts. Marco Silva (2002, 10) treats the punk slogan *do it yourself* as

> "[...] an orientation to free meaning, when predetermined meanings are in ruins, [...] a line of thought that questions the classic notions of truth, reason, identity

and objectivity, the idea of universal progress or emancipation, the unique systems, the great narratives or the definitive foundations of explanation."

Education as Development of Autonomy and Critical Sense

We understand learning as the active role of building one's own meanings in a holistic, integrated and potentially poetic way. In this way, we take the act of designing or *projecting* as a learning process that implies an a) multidisciplinary aspect, referring to the multiplicity of disciplines with their content, knowledge and skills and b) an interdisciplinary aspect, referring to the use of methods from different disciplines for the mobilization of skills. *Project* is used in the same sense that architects, designers and artists understand the

> "work procedure that concerns the process of shaping an idea that is on the horizon, but that admits modifications, is in permanent dialogue with the context, with the circumstances and with the individuals who, in one way or another, will contribute to this process." (Hernández 1998, 22)

The multi- and interdisciplinary demand for productions *from the* content requires more user effort, promoting transdisciplinarity, which happens when disciplines seek what is outside of them via action (non-disciplinary – or interdisciplinary methods) and affection (context, circumstance).

Gaming as a Means of Communication

As McLuhan (2003, 275) stressed, "(...) games are extensions, not of our private but of our social selves, and that they are media of communication, should now be plain." Also, Franz Mäyrä (2008, 14) points to the importance of elements of culture in play: "A concept of games culture can help to bring into light the mostly unspoken backdrop against which games make sense for their players." Therefore, playing

supposes communication and interpretation (Brougère 1998, 191), and these communication processes in gaming may be used for transmitting messages for several purposes, as in education. Thus, we feel confident to state that a gaming experience is defined not only by the relationship between players and the game itself, but is also a ludic activity dependent on the communication process between players and the elements of a game. This communication process involves the immersion achieved through players' contact with gameplay, as well as the production of meaning that happens during/from this activity.

Franz Mäyrä (2008, 16-19) proposes the concept of dynamics as "forces or movements that characterize a system," to address what defines a game, mechanics (gameplay), which we call *dynamis* that remains the same even when the surface is modified, a minimum set of rules that the player must know before starting to play. In simpler words, it is what the player does, regardless of interface, graphics or history.

Narrative as a Means of Understanding the World

According to Janet Murray (2000), narrative is one of our primary cognitive mechanisms for understanding the world. Muniz Sodré (1988, 75) defines narrative as a

> "discourse capable of evoking, through the temporal and chained succession of facts, a world given as real or imaginary, situated in a determined time and space. [...] Like an image, the narrative puts before our eyes, presents us, a world."

These *powers of narrative* are presented by Barthes (1977) in the form of *mathesis* (many types of knowledge that intertwine) and *mimesis* (representation of reality). These powers allow the narrative to act as the playful encounter of diverse knowledge as this playful one refers to the *make-believe* game, triggering pre-existing fantasies

that generate interest, identification and affection (in the general sense of emotional response, not necessarily pleasurable), and transforming those fantasies into *Fantasia*. *Fantasia* is according to J. R. R. Tolkien (1966), the human activity of representing, through art, that which does not exist in the *primary world*, everyday, creating *secondary worlds* so narratively consistent that they become credible.

Decoloniality as a Means of Empowerment

Phillip Penix-Tadsen (2019, 3) mentions the encounter between a researcher and a Palestinian teenager girl where this girl shares with the researcher what she describes as "'the best game ever.'" The girl is talking about the first-person shooter *Special Force* (2003), a pro-Arab video game, in which she does not have to shoot at her own people. This example illustrates the discomfort that I, as a black author, and my non-white students feel within the gaming industry and community. Gayatri Spivak (2010) asks if the once colonized can speak for him/herself using the very tools of the colonizer? As Franz Fanon (1967, 17-18) has stressed:

> "To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but above all it means taking on a culture, supporting the weight of a civilization."

Catherine Walsh (2005) 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, Candau and Oliveira (2010) 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.

Currently, both the process and the imaginary employed in the creation and enjoyment of games start from a Eurocentric perspective, particularly with regard to games in Fantasy or Science Fiction scenarios. The tropes and clichés of Anglo-American (also of Eurocentric origins) productions have become so dominant that they are only perceived in their most caricatured versions.

The issue also involves the problem of supporting diversity and lack of representativeness that has been debated both in game environments and in other narrative productions. For example, when I showed *Assassin's Creed Origins* (2017) to my black students, where the protagonist is a black man, they all manifested a real satisfaction of being represented.

One could be curious whether the question is really "can the subaltern play?" (Spivak 2010) and not *can the subaltern design?* So far we observed in our classes, among our minority students, that lack of representation lames the very desire to play. However, in order to design, one needs to play first. Therefore, we have to discuss how playing decolonial games might, through representation, empower students to become game designers.

The African-Brazilian Religions as Identity

> "Rabia Gregory, in 'Cyborg Chimeras and Organic Meatbags: Gender, Religion, and the History of Video Games,' argues that digital games offer powerful alternatives to the normative understanding of the relationship between body, gender, and identity." (Campbell et al. 2015, 3)

Although previous studies of religion in other media have provided good references to religion in games, Campbell et al. claim that

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> "[u]nfortunately, the study of religion and video games still only borrows quietly from queer and feminist theorists. Scholars of religion and gaming, like many game designers, have presumed the heterosexual male gaze of the gamer." (Campbell et al. 2015, 12)

It is easy to recognize this gaze in the same colonialist gaze: an European white man, cisgender, heterosexual and mainly Christian. It is also easy to identify in games mostly elements of Christian religions. That leaves non-Christian black women at the bottom of the social pyramid, if at any place at all. Now, being a non-Christian black woman, the author understands this study as a challenge to the *status quo*, thus as means of empowerment through identification for black students as future game designers.

According to Vagner Gonçalves da Silva (2002, 85, translated by the author), in Brazil, black people have been so far represented as "an *external* element to nationality and later as the main obstacle to the country's social development," deprived from the right of self-representation, self-narrative and self-study. Besides, whenever represented, black people were portrayed as indolent, aggressive, immoral, promiscuous as well as exotic and primitive. Here I would like to remind the matter of invalidation of knowledges categorized by the academy as *primitive*.

> "Trapped by their condition of social invisibility, black people presented themselves to intellectual elites as the *necessary evil* for the country's economic formation, that is, an *anti-hero* of Brazilianness." (Silva 2002, 85, translated by the author)

In Brazil, the African-Brazilian religions, such as Candomblé, Umbanda, and Tambor de Mina, have been associated with resistance since the beginning of colonization,

when the first Bantos[ii] arrived bringing their Nkisi[iii] and disguising them as Catholic saints. The African beliefs were criminalized in Brazil up to the 1930s, first punished as witchcraft, then as vagrancy, charlatanism and/or fraud.

Well, the law changed but not so the ideas about African beliefs. Luis Fernandes de Oliveira (1997) describes the apparently paradoxical relation between belonging to the Labor Party (PT, *Partido dos Trabalhadores*) and some African-Brazilian faith. Since the Labor Party is funded on Marxism, it follows the idea that religion and magic practices tend to alienate people. However, if we consider the particular situation of African-Brazilian religions as a cultural manifestation that survives oppression and gives back black people an important part of their identity, one can begin to understand how it is possible to be a Labor Party activist and at the same time a devotee of Ogun, Yemoja, Oshala, Shango and so forth (Oliveira 1997, 2). Oliveira then weaves comparisons between being an African-Brazilian devotee and being a socialist activist bringing to mind a possible analogy or elective affinities (Löwy 1988, 1991). He comes to the conclusion that these analogies – faith and utopia (as conscience), tradition and future (as a goal) and Ashe (magic power) and militant ethics (as a practice) – can help us understand that some elements of religion can contribute to a process of fighting the oppressions of this world and encouraging a militant practice ethically perfect (Oliveira 1997, 7). That is the spark that ignites the high concept of the game *New Earth* (2013), fueled by the process of identification with the settings' Orisha inspired pantheon.

New Earth – Setting Decolonial High Concept

New Earth is a fantasy setting for the *Incorporeal Ludonarratives Platform* that uses digital gamebook, tabletop role-playing game, card game and board game rule

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systems (for a more detailed game design document, cf. Bettocchi et. al. n.d., for early applications of the method with undergraduate students, cf. Bettocchi, Klimick and Rezende 2019). The starting point for the high concept was the question 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?[iv]

In this setting, we offer a symbolic parallel between Europe and traditional medieval fantasy with elves and 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 powerful native peoples already populated the continent. 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 remaining 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 have to reflect this in terms of ludonarrative cohesion and resonance (or consonance). 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.[v] Players must remember that the society of *New Earth* was not built upon rigid social classes or casts but upon reinterpretations

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of long lost ancestries, plus the need to survive a common enemy that wanted to enslave their ancestors. One of the main elements of identification are the deities.

Magic in the Incorporeal System and the *New Earth* Setting

Incorporeals, according to Emile Brehier (1907), are all the conceptual conditions that change us at the relational level without changing us physically. Incorporeal relationships are reflected in the social types represented by individuals, who change their relationships with the world without changing their physical bodies. These (incorporational) relationships constitute a network that is continually changing and being changed by individuals (bodies), and from this cyclical action concept arise at all times, which ignore hierarchies and calcifications. Changing these incorporational relations in an unusual way causes impact and strangeness, generating a rupture with the principle of identity.

The platform currently has five different settings:

1. *Arcadia*, using characters from Greco-Roman mythology;
2. *Brasil Barroco*, exploring Brazil´s colonial past;
3. *Era da Escolha/Age of Choice*, designed to provoke changes of thought related to sustainability (e.g., ecology, economy, genre, and race);
4. *Terra Nova/New Earth*, a setting that started as a Tolkien-inspired *anthropophagic fantasy* combining high fantasy themes with the culture and mythologies of indigenous peoples of the Americas, as a metaphor for (de)colonization; and
5. *Witchcraft Tales*, a setting (in English) based on 19th century Brazil, inspired by the fictional characters of Brazilian writers such as Machado de Assis (African-Brazilian), and European writers like Bram Stoker.

Collective participation in the project implies co-authorship both in the construction of the stories and in the construction of the supports for these stories, which are experienced in the form of several ludonarratives. We expanded a concept of ludonarrative dissonance, as suggested by Clint Hocking (2007) and resonance, as suggested by Mattie Brice (2011) or consonance, as suggested by Ryan J. Hodge (2014), to define what we understand by games in which the goals are to tell or build a story. Thus, in a ludonarrative, mechanics and rules must resonate with the narrative; otherwise, the game simply does not happen.[vi]

As examples of ludonarratives, we can think of RPG games (both table and live), alternative reality games, game books, some video games and others. In fact, any game that aims to tell and/or create a story can be ludonarrative. It does not matter if the game is digital or analog, competitive or cooperative, or even if it was not necessarily a narrative game originally, as in most card and board games. You can do a board game narrative if the goal of the game becomes to create a story. If you make chess rules that build a story in the process, then you have narrative chess.

The setting in the *Incorporeal Ludonarratives* is much more a focus on a world than a world itself, an approach that intends to offer precisely the possibility of openness, a multiple space where one can discuss meaningful relationships. Thus, one can simply apply new approaches to existing worlds or develop new complete scenarios. All the settings of Incorporeal are designed based on the concept of fantasy proposed by J. R. R. Tolkien (1966), in which an imaginary world is built with the consistency of reality.

According to Richard Kieckchefer (1989), it can be suggested that magic usually manifests itself through different channels that depend on cultural insertion. In

general, Western common sense identifies three forms or channels of performing magic: witchcraft, faith and the paranormal. Witchcraft would be a series of knowledge learned and dependent on rituals and/or fetishes; faith would be an absolute belief in a deity capable of giving the believer the ability to perform miracles; and the paranormal would be one or more innate supernatural powers, difficult to control, independent of beliefs or rituals. Whatever the channel, the types of possible effects listed in the literature are quite similar with varying techniques and methods of realization. Apparently, witchcraft is more complicated and elaborate, requiring exotic materials and theoretical studies; however, unlike *innate* or *chosen* powers and miracles, it is accessible to anyone who believes and is dedicated to learning. These magical effects are the changes in reality that are considered, according to Kieckchefer (1989, 8-17), the hidden virtues of nature, which, to be exposed and used, depend either on material components (talismans, amulets, pawns, etc.) or on ritual components (prayers, sympathies, astral conjunctions, etc.) or on both. These components characterize the different spells, miracles, powers, etc.

Based on these definitions, in *Incorporeal Rules System*, magic is then understood as having its own rules based on the following parameters: having the Magic Ability at the relevant learning levels to be used in the three types of situations (Overcoming, Interaction and Introspection), the sum of which is equivalent to the points of Magic Power (energy, chi, prana, ashe, etc.) possessed by the character, which must be spent in order for the intended Magic Effect to happen; acquire Knowledge that here constitutes the Magic Effects. Faith consists of magical effects that are manifested through rituals performed by devotees who channel hidden virtues that emanate from the primordial energy of creation. In *New Earth*, this energy is presented in two ways: nature, currently worshiped by Elementalism and Shamanism, or the deities, currently worshiped by the clergy. In both cases the devotees must observe the

precepts and dogmas of the chosen religion, otherwise they can be penalized with the suspension of their hidden virtues. However, there are no impediments for the priest to also learn spells, as long as he/she uses them respecting his religious precepts.

The Deities

As previously stated, the *New Earth* is a metaphor for what we call a symbolic colonization. As an RPG setting, it is a new continent colonized by migrations from Tolkien's Middle Earth, the old continent, probably after the first Great War against Sauron (Tolkien 1954). This metaphor refers to the migration of the concept of fantasy developed by Tolkien, from Europe to the New World where this concept took the form of *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* (1977, Cook 1989). This way, Middle Earth represents the original concept of fantasy, which is a melting pot of Saxon, Celtic and Nordic myths and *New Earth* represents our South American contemporary concept of fantasy, adding our native myths, as well as Eastern and African myths to this melting pot.

The African-Brazilian myths are the main reference for the setting cosmogony and pantheon. According to Pierre Fatumbi Verger (1951, 1995), Carybé and Verger (1987) and Reginaldo Prandi (2001) one version of the Orishas says that they were once mortals who became divinities for their heroic deeds. That is why characters in *New Earth* may become deities themselves and either stay as immortals or go to other planes of reality. The iconography is a mix of clerical vests from Brazilian Candomblé rites, historical and ethnic weapons, armors and adornments and fantasy art dressing. Each Deity, as each Orisha, controls an aspect of nature and human life, but they all answer to the Trinity responsible for Creation:

1. the *Spirit*, inspired by Olorum;

2. the *Father*, male aspect, inspired by Oshala or Obatala;

3. and the *Mother*, female aspect, inspired by Odudwa as Nana-Buruku (in some versions of Yoruba myth Odudwa is Nana-Buruku, the grandmother, in some others, Yemoja, the mother of the sea).

Figure 1. The Trinity of *New Earth*: the spirit is represented by the bird and the creation is represented by the egg. Illustration by the author.

Thus, in *New Earth*, clerics are the priests and priestesses who worship the deities as representatives of aspects of creation, as they consider it too complex to be understood as a whole. They believe that the deities were once, just like the Orishas, ancestors who ascended and each assumed an aspect of creation, creating laws and commandments that must be followed to achieve total understanding. When a devotee dies, s/he goes to the paradise created by her/his divinity, being able to reincarnate later. Since all gods and goddesses were sentient beings who stood out,

evolved and attained divinity, becoming national heroes, this makes room for anyone to seek their own path to evolution and power, aiming to become gods and goddesses as well.

There are always two deities: one chooses the devotee and becomes the main or official and the second can be chosen by the devotee. That differs from Candomblé where all Orishas choose the devotee. We opted for the possibility of choice on the second deity to reinforce the process of identification.[vii]

Clerics manifest their deities to use their powers, staying in a trance. The clerical condition is a decision of its own and it only depends on the devotee to dedicate him/herself officially to the temple. Champions do not manifest their deities to use their powers. These are devotees chosen directly by the deities, that is, they do not decide their condition. However, they only develop if they attend the temples of the deities. Monks also do not manifest the deities to use their powers, and their monastic condition is also a personal decision, simply joining a monastery. They usually specialize in aspects of divinity, developing lines of specialized and exclusive powers. For not manifesting, champions work in the temples' routine and monks participate in the ceremonies helping the clergy when they are in a trance. They are the equivalent to the so called Ekedis and Ogans, priestesses and priests in Brazilian Candomblé who do not enter the trance state and take care of the others who enter the trance state during ceremonies, play the drums, dance with the manifested Orishas, among other important duties. To know more about the real African-Brazilian Candomblé beliefs please refer to our other game *Living Colors* (2019).

The Temples

The temples are inspired by Candomblé and umbanda *terreiros*, which resemble the African compounds. As Silva (2005, 64-65) notes, black people in Brazil reproduced the African compound system in the mythical level. Eshu, Orisha of Paths, guards the entrance; the other Orishas have their own rooms, representing families; and the main hall, where the feasts take place, is the compound common patio.
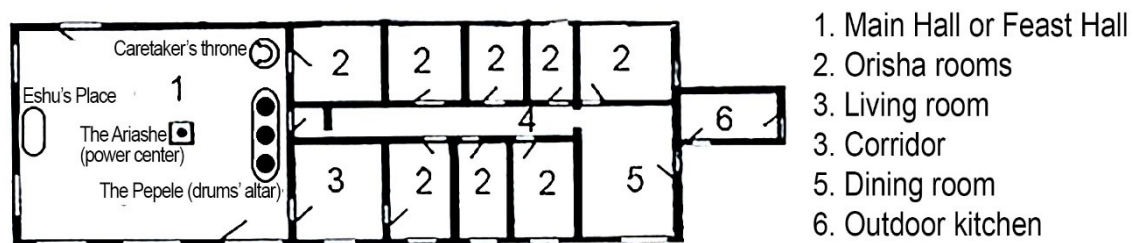
Figure 2. Blueprint of a Candomblé temple drawn from information provided by Vagner Gonçalves da Silva (2005, 64-65). Pictures comparing the architectural structure of an actual Candomble temple in Brazil and an example of temple in New Earth are available online (Histórias Interativas n.d.).

Temples in *New Earth* are dedicated to the deities of devotion of the Father or Mother (high priest or high priestess) that govern them. A typical temple consists of: a main hall, where the ceremonial musical instruments are, where the faithful gather and where all the deities manifest during the monthly ceremonies; a communal dormitory for Initiates (newly admitted priests), where candidates spend seven days and seven nights in meditation and recollection; a room for sacrifices; a communal dormitory for visitors, champions and Sons and Daughters (junior priests); a kitchen to prepare offerings and meals. Only initiates are obliged to reside in temples. Guarding these and the temple routine is done by Sons and Daughters and champions, who take turns in sacred and maintenance services. However, it is not uncommon for very large and wealthy temples to have more than one floor and house the homes of Father or Mother with their families and of more prominent Sons and Daughters with their families.

Conclusion

This report describes an ongoing research project in which we use a decolonial framework to design a pantheon, the faith system and temples based on Afro-Brazilian religions known as Candomblé and Umbanda for a fantasy setting of a role-playing game where the oppressed defeated the colonizers and established a culture based on their mixed ancestries. The setting belongs to the *Incorporeal Ludonarratives Platform* with Rules Systems for tabletop RPG, card game and board game and was designed and applied following the steps of the ludopoetics and ludonarrative didactic for teaching and creating decolonial games methodology. In the referred previous paper (Bettocchi, Klimick and Perani 2020), we also identify in games four consecrated Eurocentric standards considered through a colonialist perspective as universal and recurrent to all cultures. We believe this universal colonialist perspective may be responsible for a *creative myopia* that forces us, even if unconscious, to remain trapped in the labyrinth of the same structures, which limits creativity, interest and access for minorities to the gaming industry:

- *Minecraft* and the metaphor of colonization (Folding Ideas 2019): we believe we can address this colonialist standard of invasion, occupation and displacement of populations in a critical way by proposing a setting where the process of colonization reverts in favor of the oppressed peoples.
- The Hero's Journey, as originally proposed by Joseph Campbell (2014) based on the Eurocentric-archetypal point of view by Carl Jung (1969): we believe we address the standard as the main, and sometimes the only, reference for character concept and motivations by offering the identification through deities inspired by the African-Brazilian Orishas and their own myths and legends, from which characters can derive different sets of values.
- The Messianism and the dualism Judeo-Christian theological concepts as the eternal battle of Good versus Evil: we believe we address this standard as the

main, and sometimes the only, reference for contemporary games challenges and solutions when we offer polyteism and it is variety of behaviors and *modi operandi* as well as a point of view where good and evil are relative.

- The Fibonacci Number (Mitchell 2021), The Golden Ratio and the Vitruvian Man (Meisner 2014) – European references that are used as main references for visual representation: we believe we address this standard when we find beauty within various skin colors, hair textures and face and body shapes that differ from the white tall athletic straight haired thin nose and mouth person.

So far, I have being able to observe some results derived from my *Concept Art* and *Game Design* classes that satisfy the aforementioned definition pillars, meaning that treating the process of *design as denouncement*, we are able to create a narrative game *as means of communication and understanding the world* that can promote *criticism and resignifying* by *identification through African-Brazilian religions* from which students can *develop autonomy and critical sense* and perceive *decoloniality as a means of empowerment.* However, this is just the beginning of an artistic-research-spiritual journey.

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[i] We intend to broaden this experiment to a *New Earth* Minecraft Project (Histórias Interativas n.d.) following the examples of *ArdaCraft* (2014), *Fiocraft* (Fhrek1986, 2019) and the Modern Art Museum of São Paulo (MAM n.d.). So far we have been able to develop experimental texture packs (*Incorporeal Ludonarrative Platform* n.d.) and build the map of a city (*Incorporeal Ludonarrative Platform* n.d.a) using buildings from Juiz de Fora (the city where our university is located) as inspiration (*Incorporeal Ludonarrative Platform*, n.d.b).

[ii] *Bantos* or *bantu*, designates each of the members of the large ethnolinguistic family to which belonged, among others, the slaves in Brazil called Angolas, Congos, Cabindas, Benguelas, Mozambique etc. (Lopes 2011).

[iii] *Nkisi* or *Inquice* are each of the deities of the Bantu cults, corresponding to the Yoruban orishas. The term from the quicongo nkisi, means "supernatural force" and, by extension, the receptacle or object in which the energy of a spirit or a dead person is fixed (Lopes 2011).

[iv] A quilombo (Portuguese pronunciation: [kiˈlõbu]: village of escaped slaves. Originating in the quimbundo *kilombo*, "camp," "camp," "village," "village," "capital," "union," "army," founded by people of African origin including the quilombolas, or maroons and others sometimes called Carabali. Also the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America, where it is called a *palenque* (Lopes 2011).

[v] 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 Cain 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.

[vi] I am very aware of the discussion about the term, as featured, for example, by Ben Dunn (2020) and Patrick Healy (2018) and agree with the issues of using it to criticize a particular game. However, I am not using the term here to analyze or criticize someone else's game; instead I am using it as a tool to guide the design of my games. So if I claim to design a decolonial game, the mechanics have to resonate the narrative in order to reflect the high concept.

[vii] To see how this works in terms of the rules system please check the projects website http://www.historias.interativas.nom.br/incorporais/terranova/valordivindades.htm (Apoio, Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora e Centro Regional de Inovação e Transferencia de Tecnologia, n.d.). This cowrie drawer uses the same RPGMaker (n.d.) engine made for the game *Living Colors* (2019), which deals with the real Candomblé. The engine was built by the undergraduate student Geovanne Marchi in 2019 during our Game Design courses.