

Theology, Politics and Emergent Interactive Narrative

Two Weeks in the World of 'Twitch Plays Pokémon'

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Abstract

The phenomenon Twitch Plays Pokémon attracted a great deal of attention due to its outlandish concept and the novelty of the idea. From its humble beginnings as a 'social experiment' it attracted millions of views in days and spawned an elaborate community of people whose imagination it captured and whose imagination propagated a narrative more reminiscent of an epic poem than a *Gameboy* game. Along the way the community created and then forced upon itself deep political divides matched only in their ferocity by the level of worship afforded the deities within the complex religious system it spawned.

While the rest of the world shook their heads and rightfully went back to more sensible things to spend their time on, I threw myself head first in this world in order to find out what it might teach us about how this sort of narrative is created and what it might mean not only for the medium of video games, but of new media forms that are emerging or may be on their way in the near future. I discovered that *Twitch Plays Pokémon* struck upon a couple of key elements that allow for or encourage coherent emergent narratives to form, while also enabling players in this new genre to self-regulate mechanics of the game in innovative ways.