Introduction

When Faust Entered the Holodeck…

Felix Schniz and Leonardo Marcato

Narrative frameworks have served humankind across the globe and throughout all ages to express, share, and engage their spirituality. The epos of *Gilgameš*, perchance one of the earliest surviving narrative texts, already weaved central religious elements of Mesopotamic belief into a cardinal example of the hero's journey. It is the root of countless tales of Gods and spirits, parables of belief, or personal expressions of the joys and woes concerning the assumed existence of powers beyond human perception. A narrative framework is more than the recount of an actual or fictitious happening, however. It sets the pillars within which spirituality can also be enacted. Religions, as scholar of the field Stephen Prothero argues, are **story systems** (2020: 36). Through their tales, interwoven and building upon one another, believers express their experiences in faith and how they share and spread their understanding of believe. From such a perspective, writing fiction – producing a story to be experienced – can be seen as a moment where a spiritual point of view is presented to a community at large and helps to build that place and time of **sacred** that is fundamental for a spiritual experience.

What about contemporary narrative artefacts and the ways through which fiction is experienced in our day and age? One could say that the importance of sanctuary, fictional worlds has been a central revelation of this pandemic age post-2020. In times of social distancing and lives under lockdown, alternative realities became re-appreciated elemental tools of spirituality (in the sense of meditative exercises, cf. Jarrett 1947), and salvation for the reality-restricted human being. The individual sought peace, tranquillity, and meditation in media such as *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* (Nintendo EPD 2020), a serene zen game of housekeeping and self-caring that became one of the 2020s most successful videogames (see, for instance, Yee and Sng 2022). Playful contemporary cultural productions in narration, entertainment, infotainment, and participative art can provide **wreaders** (the active reading protagonists of interactive fiction; cf. Mukherjee 2015) with the opportunity to experience spirituality in ever-changing ways. Whatever one may call the ulterior theme of this trend: it gives reason for a novel evaluation of spiritual modes and expressions that find a virtual space to unfold in fictional worlds.

Moreover, narrative media may encourage their audiences to think about their personal understanding of beliefs, spirituality, religion, or morals via explicitly made-up beliefs. These fictional spaces, of which popular culture is ripe, may encourage us to critically reflect on "what religion is and what 'holiness' and 'religiosity' look like" (Cusack/Kosnáč 2017: 3). This can happen within or even beyond a formal religious structure and create unexpected interplays between popular and sacral culture. George Lucas' *Star Wars* universe, for example, gave birth to Jediism. Based on the example of Luke Skywalker and other characters of the franchise, the organisation upholds the tenets of focus, knowledge, and wisdom (Temple of The Jedi Order 2007: n.p.), a life philosophy intended to nourish personal growth and spiritual seeking:

> Real Jedi do not worship George Lucas or Star Wars or anything of the sort. Jediism is not based in fiction, but we accept myth as a sometimes more practical means of conveying philosophies applicable to real life. (ibid.)

While Jediism understands itself as a spiritual and philosophical movement rather than an institutional religion, its members are serious in their practices and creeds, having structured their system around a fictional yet endearingly passionate world born from popular culture and the story it tells. In the constant quest to understand religion and spirituality, scholars have considered the element of narration in its aspect of mythology, meaning the study of which system of stories and narration builds the myth of a society, its foundation.

Fictional worlds provide us with relatable, alternative contexts in which all matters of humanity may be rethought – and thus, also may encourage us to rethink questions of transcendence, of one's own personal understanding of belonging and meaning in existence (Wendel 2007: 225). Goethe's *Faust* (1808)[1] is reputed to be one of the grand introductions to the negotiation of morale, wisdom, and believe. In Germany, its country of origin, *Faust* is a core literature for senior-year high school students, pedagogically applied as a gateway to these grand issues of humankind. The play of the ageing alchemist who turns away from all his worldly attempts to achieve wisdom strikes a deal with Mephistopheles, the devil, and – in a trope well-turned into a cliché by now – loses it all for putting his trust in dark powers. One of the key scenes of the play, which is typically discussed in classrooms, plays out as follows: Gretchen, the youthful daughter of a pious household, is courted by Faust, the old, crestfallen academic who sought out the devil to seal a pact, offering his soul in the afterlife for one moment of absolute satisfaction. Their encounters are presented as a tender tipping scale, a constant balancing act between the good of love and the blasphemy that originally allowed this meeting to take place – the cohesive: Gretchen's naivety. This is the so-called *Gretchenfrage*: a humble question which nevertheless brings up a precarious topic, which the one being asked wants to avoid or regards as uncomfortable. It intends to elicit a clear statement on one's moral ground or point of few that is bound to not appease everybody. In Faust, the often-recited *Gretchenfrage* is the following:

1 This introduction relies on the English translation by Martin Greenberg (copyright 1992, published with an introduction by W. Daniel Wilson in 2014).

Well, tell me, you must
About your religion – how do you feel?
You're such a good man, kind and intelligent,
Yet I suspect you are indifferent.
(2014, 122)

With one single inquiry, Gretchen ensnares Faust in the role of a confessional. In the stage play's setup, Faust cannot avoid answering the question – for doing so would raise even more questions in Gretchen regarding his faith. She catches him in an exquisite personal, moral dilemma: neither can Faust wholeheartedly call himself a person of faith anymore, nor declare himself void of such thoughts. Both are a mere side battle to Faust's actual dilemma, namely that whatever he answers is going to reveal his reason (Liessmann 2007: 4). No matter how Faust reacts, his answer will speak about his creed, and one that, as is the thing with striking deals with the devil in 18th century Germany, is not as respected as going to church every Sunday. The play thereby mistakenly makes clear that faith is a sacred marker of identity to be displayed publicly and lived as an open moral display.

Faust's biggest confession here is that he draws an elementary distinction between faith, the communal practice, and spirituality, the personal notion of it. These broad terms hide questions and debates that have been part of the human discourse since the dawn of analytic thought in the Western cultural world, which is the main standpoint of the papers presented in this volume. To summarise the entry in the Stanford Encyclopedia (Bishop/McKaughan 2022: n.p.), a lighthouse in philosophical discourse, faith can be considered as knowledge acquired (be it by acquaintance or proposition) that is (1) immediately **evident** to a believer and (2) not necessarily inferable from other beliefs. In the personal life of a believer, it explicates itself into a worldview that inform personal, intrapersonal, and social practices and behaviour. In this sense, while it is mostly appliable to structured religions (generally of a theistic nature), it could be argued that it can extend to other frameworks through which humans relate and act in their environment. Spirituality tends to be considered as a *taxon* for more intimate practices driven by similarly held beliefs, but that not necessarily can become a structured practice. These concepts sit on the idea of belief, which is generally considered 'something that we held as true' without needing proper validation. They are also strictly tied to the idea of mysticism, which is the experience of said beliefs and has been widely debated and argued upon; however, even with these very quick and not at all exhaustive definitions in mind, Faust's dilemma may still remain one of sought avoidance but, at the same time, also receives a tint of insecurity.

It was Janet Murray's assessment of the Holodeck (cf. 1997) that first explored the idea of the intimate dialogue from a stage of audience to the floors of participation on a digital stage. By drawing connections to the technology of Star Trek – she envisions the drama as a virtual stage that invites us to join. The holodeck, an almighty engine of virtuality, can create any environment and fill it with *actores ex machina*, virtual actants created by the machine who one knows are not real. Nevertheless, they feel naturally real to us and grant us an interaction with human resemblances. Murray's vision of the virtual stage on which we mingle with computer-generated actants has long become an

accepted reality in video games. While the NPCs – the non-player characters of video games – are still decidedly non-human, their audio-visual *gestalt* becomes increasingly lifelike. What's more important, however, and bearing more relevance to the power of interactive media, is Murray's understanding of agency. The beings we meet in today's interactive media not only grant players experiences: their agency well surpasses our imagination of a mere intellectual feedback loop for the players to expect output from. Nowadays, NPCs possess the quality to say no to the player if they feel unwanted or deem the player unfitting to their taste, such as in *Dragon Age: Inquisition* (Bioware 2014). NPCs independently go on their quest and follow their destiny far-off player doings, as does Knight Solaire in *Dark Souls* (FromSoftware 2012). The role understanding may mingle in cases like Death Stranding (Kojima Productions 2019). While players never meet one another synchronously, the asynchronous presence of others, may it be through leftover items that can be retrieved, the existence of roads and ladders other players have left and that make one's journey easier, or motivational signs left on the side of a road are ever-present.

Back to Professor Faust, Gretchen, her innocently inquisitive question, and a thought experiment on the less fictitious, present-day power of play and the virtual. Equip your mixed-reality headset and boot up *Faust 2.0*. The walls are changing, starting to resemble the streets of 16th-century Germany. There is a holo-Gretchen in front of us, expecting an answer. We are now in the role of Faust. If we imagine embodying Faust as an avatar in a traditional role-playing game format, the *Gretchenfrage* may prompt us with a dialogue screen and the following options:

Say yes
Say no
Say nothing

Selecting **Yes, we are religious** equals a confession of morality or, rather, a commitment to an institutional moral framework. We as Faust would allocate us as belonging to the Christian system and the order it represents in this context. Answering **No, we are not religious** appears to be honest to our avatar Faust's character initially. Upon closer examination of Faust's pact with Mephistopheles and the consequential renunciation of Christianity, it is about embracing spirituality in its otherness to institutionalised religion. In the context of the fictitious *Faust 2.0* game, **saying nothing** has a distinct appeal. As actual agents of the story, we do bear powers that extend well beyond a binary yes or no – though what would we gain by withholding an answer other than more time to think about it, as it lingers in our heads. Even aiming to cheat for a **secret fourth answer** – as in some older role-playing games where one could walk away from an NPC in mid-dialogue, even as they were still talking to the player avatar – may bring us a moment of comedic relief, but will not do justice to the gravitas of asking how we feel about religion.

So why would we even be keen on playing Faust if the implied illusion of agency allows us to negotiate spirituality yet leaves us in an inner discord regardless of what we answer? Similar to the actual *Gretchenfrage*, the appeal of the scenario does not lie in the answer but in how the question is treated – or, as in the example of interactive fictional practices, how we are enabled to treat them. In Goethe's *Faust*, the scholar evades Gretchen's

question by asking a counter-question, inquiring about the need to stand up to one's belief (2014, 123). In an interactive adaptation of the moment, players would be enabled to follow his example or provide an answer and handle the consequences of doing so. However, one would decide to deal with this moment in *Faust* 2.0 would mean uncovering a bond between belief, spirituality, and the agency granted by interactive media that allows users, players, and seekers to explore the entanglement of these terms in their own, personally meaningful fashion. Playful meditation in a narrative system may inspire us to question our beliefs, strengthen them, or reflect upon our understanding of spirituality. It is a state of mind that emerges out of performance – and thus, it reveals that an understanding of spirituality and its contemporary meaning reveals itself to us through fictional practices of spirituality, of playful engagement between players with, and within, analogue and digital systems.

At the time of writing this introduction, the discussion over generative AI has ramped up with astonishing velocity. A research group from Stanford and Google has been able, using the algorithm of ChatGPT, to create a series of pre-programmed generative agents, instruct them with weighted prompts, and let them 'free' into a sandbox game-like world.[2] Their interaction throughout the study has been incredibly similar to a 'normal' interaction between real people, and even if everything was subject to the probability generative model of the algorithm, their working remains a **black box,** a system that even those who developed the algorithm still need to crack properly (Weber et al. 2000; Zhang et al. 2021). Understanding and approaching this point with a critical attitude might well be a breakthrough in game design and machine-human relationships – especially given that it is now advancing so heavily into the story-building dimension of human creativity. This is something that Italo Calvino foresaw half a century ago in his lectures on what he christened a 'literature machine.' In his 1967 lecture Cybernetic and Ghosts (Calvino 1996), referencing Raymond Lully's *ars combinatoria* and Chomsky's work, the Italian novelist posited that language is a machine that can be dismantled and reassembled, and the writer's work consists in finding the right words to combine. He said:

> I am not thinking of a machine capable merely of "assembly-line" literary production, which would already be mechanical in itself. I am thinking of a writing machine that would bring to the page all those things that we are accustomed to consider as the most jealously guarded attributes of our psychological life, of our daily experience, our unpredictable changes of mood and inner elations, despairs and moments of illumination. What are these if not so many linguistic "fields", for which we might well succeed in establishing the vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and properties of permutations? (Ibid: 16)

Back in the day, Calvino thought that building such a machine would be so complicated that it would not be worth the trouble; but contemporary advancements in generative AI show that those developing them thought that the trouble was not only worth working for, but a crucial element in the advancement of technology and society. At the time

2 https://t.co/mdbGAJJABC. Accessed 27/08/2023.

of writing this introduction, both the academic and political worlds are looking into the ethical consequences and elements of generative AI. It is an interesting field, stimulating debate and theoretical production like few others in the contemporary world. For this book, however, the most interesting part is the 'inner elations' Calvino mentioned. If we accept that spirituality is part of our inner discourse, as humans, we also have to confront the fact that describing it can be difficult. Between human agents, these inner dimensions (named *qualia*, the qualitative states of the human mind) can be expressed and understood with both linguistic (words, music, art) and biological empathy (mirror neurons), but can the same be said about generative AI agents? We know how these 'black boxes' are programmed, what prompts we feed them with, and how we see the results. However, these final results are, again, linguistic and combinatory. As it has been argued (Asatiani et al. 2020), the inner workings of such algorithms are not completely clear to us, even if it is us humans who programmed them: we have a certain idea of how they work in a supervised environment, but when 'left alone' this suddenly changes. Unsupervised learning and generation are more leaning towards an output born from internal structures in the algorithm that are not evident from users or observers – even from programmers. Unfortunately, we humans tend to anthropomorphise any phenomenon we find: there is a serious risk, here, of giving human or superhuman intelligence and capabilities to simulated intelligences. It is a risk of misunderstanding the basic notion that, for all their awe-inspiring production, these algorithms are simply producing results according to what they have been trained to produce. They generate a combination of results that their calculation predicts to be the most appreciated, according to the prompts and training. As the episode where one of the most advanced Go intelligences first exacted a crushing victory against the world champion only to be then defeated by a novice player (Waters 2023: n.p.), shows how algorithms do not perceive reality like a human mind does. There is something that is missing here that could allow us to pierce this 'black box' of algorithmically simulated intelligence: we miss that kind of 'biological that can be enacted only between two living organisms. This is also a crucial topic that must be examined in future works, especially if and when generative agents start to show what might be misunderstood as 'spiritual' results.

For this reason, it is crucial to analyse spirituality in interactive narration. With this glance over how language works in role-playing games and digital games and how it is used to express spirituality, we can start to have the first tools to set up a *Gretchenfrage* to generative agents, should the need arise. And if this need will never come, we will still have furthered our knowledge on one crucial element of our life: telling a story together that can speak about belief and spirituality.

About this Book

Fictional Practices of Spirituality Vol. 1 explores the opportunities and meanings of spiritual expression in interactive fiction as it is present in our contemporary times in various fashions: playful or earnest, digital or analogue, but always personal and heartfelt by us humans. Fictional accounts of real-world religion have been subject to numerous analyses (cf. Johnston 2006; Lyden 2009), and the impact of new media on religious prac-

tice received much-deserved attention (Campbell 2013). Some even attempt to develop a structured systematic theology from videogames (Bosman 2019). However, the peculiar function and exercise of spirituality in interactive art practices and fiction has thus far rarely been in the spotlight. Notable exceptions (Campbell/Grieve 2014; Steffen 2017) provided insight by portraying a specific perspective on institutionalised clerical work with computers and consoles, which we intend to adapt through a transcultural, transreligious, and, most importantly, a transcendental lens.

The founding idea of this publication may be rooted in a philosophical pondering but is certainly not tied to philosophy exclusively: it provides angles from various research and working fields just as much as it unites contributions from scholars, designers, and practitioners of faith alike. Moreover, we have invited practitioners in game development or game-related fields to participate with texts about their experiences with implementing religion, belief, and spirituality in virtual worlds. This book is an example of how discussing forms of medial art, communication, learning, in which a freedom of act and navigation are defining factors, can show how human action is foregrounded and evaluated within an interactive narrative framework role-playing game or a computer-generated environment.

The book was written with a readership of established scholars and young academics who share an interest in the matters and meanings of belief and spirituality and often struggle to find expression in academic writing due to their personal fields. Beyond theology and healthcare services, spirituality is often ditched as a topic, not in synergy with 'proper' academic research (Shahjahan/Wagner/Wane 2009: 63). Hence, the book strives to open itself to a vast array of different approaches while maintaining academic integrity. The researcher fits in right next with the practitioner, the personal voice with the analytical one, and the volume structure wants to advance the idea that there are many ways to express spirituality and spiritual thinking while dealing with interactive fiction. In a sense, we can say that this volume is for and from pilgrims and wanderers, practitioners and researchers, all working together to find a way to express their own voice on the matter, from their own point of view and experience in their respective fields. It discusses the smallest acts and gestures that convey meaning and that can express one own look into the experience of spirituality. This book is organised in four parts, each of them focused on one central key concept of interactivity or interactive medium in the broadest sense, allowing its authors to question and go beyond the borders of said medium.

Part I of *Fictional Practices of Spirituality* looks at the intersection of analogue role-playing games and spirituality. The performative work of **Sarah Lynne Bowman** opens this book's main body by taking us along for "The Epiphany Experiment: Role-playing for Personal Transformation". Located at the crossroads of performance, play, and personal involvement, it offers a thorough overview of the opportunities of such cases but also of the necessary stipulations for its surroundings. After her, **Menachem Cohen** writes about "Chasing Dreams: the Design and Use of Roleplaying Games for Spiritual Direction". Both Rabbi and passionate tabletop role-playing gamer, Menachem Cohen has applied his gaming expertise to great success in the spiritual guidance of adolescence, showing the power of interactive narration into religious practice. Lastly, **Anna Milon's** contribution is titled "The Hunter Will Take You: Seeking Spiritual Experiences within Live Action Role Play" for this first part. By analysing LARP events, her field research presents with a

sociological take how players experience spirituality while collectively building the narration of the stories of their world, and what they bring with them after an event is over.

Part II gives a stage to the dedicated practitioners and is split into two subchapters. The first subchapter, which focuses on creating a game design framework for transformative play, opens with a contribution by **Doris C. Rusch** and **Andrew M. Phelps**: "Conjuring *The Witch's Way* – Game Design as Magic and Spiritual Practice." There, the authors present how designing a game about spirituality and magic meant, for them, to work on their own experience and spiritual drive to give and promote meaning even outside the boundaries of the game itself. The second paper, "Practicing Dying: How Role-playing Games Can Help Us Accept Death and Boost Our Quality of Life" sees **Kjell Hedgard Hugaas** take a personal and autobiographical approach to games as a mediation of one's own demise, presenting his own experience as both player and scholar for the attentive reader to take inspiration and reflect upon. The second subchapter details those practicing research and pushing the boundaries as to where we can encounter spiritual phenomena. **A. Rose Johnson** has taken the plunge into the wonderous realm of practiced spirituality among video game fan communities. In "Exploring Applications of Videogame Magic through Tumblr's Pop Culture Witchcraft", she looks into how Wiccan practitioners express their spirituality in the online field, and how the experience of playing *Undertale* (Toby Fox 2015) prompted some of them to implement new elements into their practices. In a similar but different fashion, in "Where the magic is: Ceremonial magic as a design perspective for Mixed Reality immersive experiences" **Maria Saridaki** and **Mariza Dima** present their research on how cardinal concepts used by practitioners of ceremonial traditions can help guiding the design of interactive mixed realities.

Part III solely focuses on videogames, one of the most common and experienced examples of interactive fiction. The concept of videogame experiences from a spiritual perspective is foregrounded in its first subchapter. **Felix Schniz** opens the chapter with a confession: "I Believe in Videogames: A Medium's Potential for Spiritual Experiences." His paper talks about identifying a spiritual experience, how it can happen in videogames and, most importantly, how researchers can approach these utmost intimate sentiments. **Frank Bosman**, meanwhile, turns the other cheek: "Fittingly Violent: Narrative Properties of Violence in Digital Games" explores one of the most visited topics about videogames (that of violence) with a keen analytical eye on morality and the inner turmoil of a player faced with violent choices, showing how the discussion can be productive if taken from a proper angle. The second subchapter sticks to videogames but shifts the level of attention from experience to player perspective. In "Spes Ultracombinatoria", **Leonardo Marcato** tries to build a spiritual approach to videogames that can take into consideration also the possibility of considering them a work of art, under the right circumstances and what this spiritual approach can say about the nature of humanity in a rapidly changing technological world. In "Sacred Places and Spatial Design in Fantasy-themed Isometric cRPGs", **Mateusz Felczak** guides our views towards the perception of architecture and geographical design of divine symbolism. Focusing on the sacred places of the world of isometric Role-Playing games, he analyses how the design of these holy sites conveys a different feeling and help express a different narrative, with the relevant appeals to the player's own knowledge. In the final part of this subchapter, **Lars de Wildt** is guiding our attention towards the critical intersection of religion and market

practices in the videogame industry. "Franchised Esotericism: *Assassin's Creed*'s Religious Perennialism as a Marketing Strategy" shows how, by appealing to real-life religions, myths, and legends, videogames can build a narrative strong enough to captivate the player's attention as part of the marketing efforts, without by this taking away value from the videogames themselves. The third subchapter of part III offers a deep dive into how Asian countries and cultures contribute to videogames from a spiritual point of view. A proper selection of case studies exemplifies in how far these games not only discuss Asian mythology but, thereby, also enable specific experiences as derived from Asian spiritual traditions. In "Ex Anankes: Cultural syncretism and the experience of necessitation in Saint Seiya: Hades's gameplay" **Graziana Ciola** and **Francesca Samà** share their play experience of *Saint Seiya: The Hades* (Dimps 2006) by showing the cultural interpretation of a proper Western myth system from a Japanese point of view. By doing both a strict philological examination of the original Greek mythos and a study of the game itself, this paper shows how the analysed title can be considered a proper example of intercultural media artefact. From a more general perspective, "At the Same Time… Both Truth and Fiction: Interrelation(s) of Psychology, Faith, and the Esotericism of the JRPG" allows **David Stevenson** to discuss how role-playing games from a Japanese perspective implement and enrich spiritual elements into their narratives to guide players in their experience further. Concluding this excursion into the Asian gaming experience, **Marco Seregni** and **Francesco Toniolo** explore a dystopian fantasy world in "Religion And Spirituality in *Nier: Automata*", and how the work of Yoko Taro heavily interwoven deep spiritual themes to build a game world for the players to experience and reflect.

No other Western video game has provided that much attention to scholars with regards to spirituality as the *Dragon Age* (Bioware since 2009) series, and for this reason the fourth and final part of the volume wants to look at this series as a case study on how spirituality can be present even in high-budget productions. **Sarah Faber** asks "Is there a God? Negotiating Spiritual Uncertainty through the Lens of Video Games" and analyses the religious and metaphysical world building of *Dragon Age* to present the reader a different approach to the age-old question on the divine. **Leonid Moyzhes** meanwhile wrote "Religion according to Bioware: religious dimensions of Chantry in *Dragon Age: Inquisition*". He analyses the interpolative structure of the central religious institution in the game, further proposing an intriguing interpretation of how a narrative can evoke different approaches to different players. Concluding the third part of the book, **Christine Tomlinson** gives a thorough and orderly perspective on the balance of believe systems in *Dragon Age*, providing a clear analysis of the spiritual worldbuilding done by Bioware in "Light, Blood, Stone, and Order: The Religious Beliefs and Systems of *Dragon Age*".

In a final lookout, **Michele Fanelli** and **Magdalena M. Strobl** summarise the essence provided by the authors we assembled and draw their conclusions on studying spirituality via interactive, digital media.

We want to conclude this introduction with a heartfelt thanks to everybody who has contributed to this anthology. To our authors as listed, to our student assistants, to our friends and families, to which all this book hopefully brings some joy and profound insight. And to our readers, we have one last question:

How do you feel about spirituality in interactive fiction, then?
Oh tell us, *play*!

References

"Doctrine of the Order." Accessed 4 May 2023, https://www.templeofthejediorder.org/doctrine-of-the-order.

Asatiani, Aleksandre; Malo, Pekka; Nagbøl, Per Rådberg; Penttinen, Esko; Rinta-Kahila, Tapani; Salovaara, Antti (2020): "Challenges of Explaining the Behavior of Black-Box AI Systems." In: *MIS Quarterly Executive* 19/4, pp. 259–78.

Bioware since 2009: *Dragon Age*, Redwood City Electronic Arts.

Bishop, John; McKaughan, Daniel J. (2022): "Faith." In: Edward N. Zalta; Uri Nodelman (eds.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2022 Edition). Accessed 27 August 2023, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/faith/.

Bosman, Frank (2019): *Gaming and the Divine: A New Systematic Theology of Video Games*, New York: Routledge.

Calvino, Italo (1997): *The Literature Machine*, London: Vintage Books.

Campbell, Heidi (2013): *Digital Religion. Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*, New York: Routledge.

Campbell, Heidi A./Grieve, Gregory P. (2016): *Playing with Religion in Digital Games*, New York: Routledge.

Cusack, Carole; Kosnáč, Pavol (2017): *Fiction, Invention and Hyper-reality From popular culture to religion*, New York: Routledge.

Dimps (2006): *Saint Seiya: The Hades*, Tokyo: Bandai Namco.

FromSoftware (2012): *Dark Souls*, Tokyo: Bandai Namco.

Jarrett, Bede (1947): "Meditation." In: *Life of the Spirit* 2/16, pp. 164–6.

Johnston, Robert (2006): *Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue*, Ada, MI: Baker Academic.

Kojima Productions (2019): *Death Stranding*, San Mateo: Sony Interactive Entertainment.

Lyden, John. (2009): *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Film*, New York: Routledge.

Mukherjee, Souvik (2015): *Video Games and Storytelling. Reading Games and Playing Books*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Murray, Janet H. (1997): *Hamlet on the Holodeck. The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace*, New York: The Free Press.

Nintendo EPD (2020): *Animal Crossing: New Horizons*, Kyoto: Nintendo.

Prothero, Stephen (2020): *Religion Matters: An Introduction the the World's Religions*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Shahjahan, Riyad Ahmed; Wagner, Anne; Wane, Njoki Nathani (2009): "Rekindling the Sacred: Toward a Decolonizing Pedagogy in Higher Education." In: *Journal of Thought* 44/1-2, pp. 59–75.

Spiders (2019): *Greedfall*, Paris: Focus Entertainment.

Steffen, Oliver (2017): *Level Up Religion: Einführung in die religionswissenschaftliche Digitalspielforschung*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

Swatos, William H. Jr./Giordan, Giuseppe (2011): "Introduction: The Spiritual 'Turn' in Religion as Process and Outcome." In: William H. Swatos Jr./Giuseppe Giordan (eds.), *Religion, Spirituality and Everyday Practice*, Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, pp. xi-xv.

Toby Fox (2015): *Undertale*, Manchester, NH: Toby Fox.

USC Innovation Lab (2017): *Walden, a game*, South Carolina: USC Games.

Vogler, Christopher (1998): *The Writer's Journey. Mythic Structure for Writers*, San Francisco: Michael Wiese Productions.

Von Goethe, Johann Wolfgang (2014 [1808]): "Faust." In: Martin Greenberg (transl.), *Faust. A Tragedy. Parts One and Two, Fully Revised*, New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 3–167.

Waters, Richard (2023): "Man beats machine at Go in human victory over AI." *Ars Technica*. Acessed 4 May 2023, https://arstechnica.com/information-technology/2023/02/man-beats-machine-at-go-in-human-victory-over-ai/.

Weber, Markus; Welling, Max; Perona, Pietro (2000): "Unsupervised Learning of Models for Recognition." In: David Vernon (ed.), *Computer Vision – ECCV 2000. 6th European Conference on Computer Vision. Dublin, Ireland, June/July 2000*. Proceedings, Part 1, Heidelberg: Springer.

Wendel, Saskia (2007): "The Emergence of Transcendence in Self-Consciousness: Towards a Rehabilitation of a Transcendental Position of Philosophy of Religion." In: Arne Grøn; Iben Damgaard; Søren Overgaard (eds.), *Subjectivity and Transcendence*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 225–39.

Yee, Andrew Z. H./Sng, Jeremy H.R. (2022): "Animal Crossing and COVID-19: A Qualitative Study Examining How Video Games Satisfy Basic Psychological Needs During the Pandemic." In: *Frontiers in Psychology* 13, pp. 1–13.

Zhang, Haojian; Zhang, Yabin; Jia, Kui; Zhang, Lei (2021): "Unsupervised Domain Adaptation of Black-Box Source Models," 28 Mar 2021.