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The International Edition and National Exoticism

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### Abstract

This paper analyzes the current group of locally released and consumed Japanese “International Edition” video games. It considers the meaning of internationalism, nationalism, language and translation/localization within the context of these late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century video game special editions. By linking the International Edition to trends of self-exoticism and self-orientalism within Japanese history the paper seeks to understand how language and translation bring about alternate meanings to video games that cause them to be more than simple commercial products. Ultimately, the paper encourages the study of games to push beyond story, graphics and gameplay to include currently overlooked aspects of the medium including language and localization.

## Introduction

*Final Fantasy XII International Zodiac Job System* was released in 2007 for the Playstation 2 game system. It was released solely in Japan on a Region 2 encoded disk. While it is possible that the game will be released in the not too distant future within the United States, a prospect that would satisfy the horde of loyal, English speaking fans within the United States, such a release is highly unlikely. *FF12* is one of half a dozen games to be subsequently released by game company Square-Enix (Square merged with Enix in April, 2002) as an International Edition, and none of these International Editions has ever been exported outside of Japan. Unlike International Editions such as *Chaos Legion* and *Perfect World*, which were translated into multiple languages and exported outside of their country of origin for greater dissemination, the Square-Enix International Editions (as well others such as *Gundam Musou International*, *Yuu-gi-oh Dual Monsters International 2* and others from different companies) function both physically and theoretically within a domestic plane.

The International Edition is an interesting object of study as it reveals certain aspects of language in new media. Specifically, by revealing the lack of critical attention given to language in gaming the International Edition highlights language's importance. Typically, the three aspects given the most attention in gaming studies are story/narrative, gameplay and graphics (Galloway, 2006; Wardrip-Fruin and Harrigan, 2004). Language is a layer within gaming that generally goes hidden beneath the layers of graphics and sound, and unless we are talking about *Mavis Beacon* or *Typing of the Dead* language has little to do with game play. Finally, while language is linked to the narrative, it generally goes unseen to the gamer except in moments when typos and poor translations rupture the proverbial fourth wall and bring the writer/translator into focus. However, ruptures are an exception and both the culture and

nationality of a game often exist quite invisibly within the narrative in games that travel between countries and cultures through global trade. What does it mean when the International Edition, a product whose name signals this global/international trade, does not travel? The International Edition is an important cultural text for understanding the particulars of language in media texts in Japan, but also for understanding the possibilities of the global movement of these same cultural texts.

In this paper I will explore the essential aspects that exist within all of the International Editions. Through doing so I hope to produce a definition of what is “international” in the International Edition. I will argue that the same interaction between Japan and foreign bodies that can be seen throughout Japan’s cultural history is being reproduced in current video games. Specifically, the International Edition is a domestic product that works to produce ideas of internationalism and globalization based on intermediate language politics between self-orientalized and self-exoticized trends that have dominated Japanese cultural history since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Finally, I hope to encourage a more active view of language and translation within gaming, a responsibility equal to the current highlighting of graphics, gameplay and story.

### **Square-Enix and the International Edition**

Possibly the first International Edition video game was Square’s *Final Fantasy VII*, a Sony Playstation game that has sold millions of copies in Japan, the United States and throughout both Europe and Asia. In response to its popularity *FFVII* was released in the PS Greatest Hits collection within the United States, in the Platinum collection in Europe, and in the The Best collection in Japan. Qualification for Greatest Hits was through selling between 150,000 and 400,000 in the United States depending on the gaming system; Platinum Edition

required 600,000 in the PAL region; The Best, also called PSOne Books, was the Japanese equivalent and requires a similar level of popularity. Nine months after the original game's release Square created another version called *Final Fantasy VII International Edition*.

The US *FFVII* Greatest Hits edition differed from the original release only in the stripe on the left of the cover art that denoted its induction into the Greatest Hits collection. A similar, cosmetic difference existed between the The Best edition and original in Japan: the game was cheaper and was in a skinny case. However, the *FFVII International Edition* differed from the original Japanese edition because it included a second disk containing an encyclopedia of elements from the game: it was a special edition with extras, but little else. The game itself was not changed, and the extras were never released outside of Japan. It is unsure whether the International Edition was originally planned as a worldwide, internationally released special edition, but as it was released domestically and was followed by other domestic International Editions, of which none have been released outside of Japan, we must conclude its purpose exists solely in the domestic arena. It is difficult to understand what exactly was “international” about the release, and as neither *Final Fantasy VIII* nor *Final Fantasy IX* were turned into International Editions one might guess it was an unsuccessful venture. This might be true, except for the fact that International Editions were reinitiated with the move from Playstation to Playstation 2 around 2001. The easiest way to grasp the concept of “international” within the International Edition is by looking at what is similar between International Editions, what the Playstation 2 enabled that the earlier game system did not, and how these elements signal the “international” within Japan, a national entity.

*FFVII* in the US and in Japan were in different languages. The original Japanese edition had Japanese written dialogue, game menus and signs within the game world itself. One such

Japanese sign was the evil corporation Shinra's logo that consisted of the kanji *shin* and *ra*, a second was the ninja clan of Wutai (a mixture of Chinese and Japanese architecture and culture) that was in a state of war with Shinra and the pseudo-modern city Midgar. The US English version had translated dialogue and menu system, but many of the graphically and culturally Japanese elements (such as the Shinra logo and ninja clan with its pagoda architecture) remained. Cross-cultural (international) elements such as the opposition of the West and Japan, modernity and tradition, and technology and culture, which exist within *FFVII* and other Japanese gaming texts, are a major topic in Japanese cultural theory relating to nationalism and internationalism. However, such elements are within both *FFVII* and its International Edition version, not to mention most of the games released in Japan between the mid-1980s to late 1990s. The games themselves are highly cross-cultural, or "international," but in a way unrelated to the International Edition. There is something beyond these cross-cultural/international elements within the texts that relates most closely to the international of the International Edition, and this element is most successful, prominent and reproducible in the Playstation 2 games. This means that there was something in the Playstation 2 releases that went beyond the Playstation games' cultural oppositions in signaling both nationality and internationality. The differences between the Playstation and Playstation 2 systems were increased disk/data capacity and better graphics, and while the graphics were greatly improved between consoles it was the disk capacity used for the inclusion of voice that is the most striking difference between systems.

Since Square's move to releasing games for the Playstation 2 system in 2001 there has been a slew of International Editions. Included in this list are *Final Fantasy X: International*, *Kingdom Hearts: Final Mix*, *Final Fantasy X-2: International + Last Mission*, *Kingdom Hearts 2: Final Mix+*, and *Final Fantasy XII: International Zodiac Job System*. As the contents of each

of these International Edition games can be broken down to similar elements I will not waste time analyzing all of them. Instead, I will use *Kingdom Hearts* as the representative example. I should add that there is another reason to focus on *Kingdom Hearts* over *Final Fantasy*.

*Kingdom Hearts* is a product of the combined effort of both Square and Disney: one Japanese company and one American company, but both very much international. This aspect of the game/series helps elaborate the concept of “international” slightly better than the *Final Fantasy* series, because it is a product of both Japanese and American cultural and corporate production.

Square and Disney released *Kingdom Hearts* in 2002. The game, as well as its sequels on various gaming platforms, was about a young boy named Sora (the player) who sought to save the Magical Kingdom (Mickey Mouse’s Disney Kingdom) from evil Shadows with his trusty keyblade (sword). Sora was aided by numerous figures from past *Final Fantasy* games (mostly the more popular main characters from VII, VIII and X such as Cloud, Aeris, Squall and Auron) and Disney films (such as Mickey, Donald and Goofy, as well as newer ones such as Peter Pan, Hercules and Tarzan). He also fought enemies such as Captain Hook and Hades from the Disney films, but enemies from the *Final Fantasy* series were almost entirely missing (the only one within the game was a semi-cameo battle with Sephiroth that did not effect the course of the game). The game was a montage of two franchises, and was popular enough in both the US and Japan to spawn five sequels (three of them currently in production) and two International Editions so far.

The Japanese version of *Kingdom Hearts* was released in March of 2002 and was mostly voiced by the same Japanese voice actors who dubbed the Disney films and original Square-Enix games. Similarly, the English voice actors of the US games, movie and cartoons voiced the US version released in September 2002. In Japan, the character Auron was voiced by Hideo

Ishikawa, the same voice actor from *FFX*; in the US, Matt McKenzie reprised the role between *FFX* and *Kingdom Hearts*. The English localization translated the menu system and dialogue from Japanese to English, and changed the voice actors to match the English films and previous games, but the game itself was not changed. This difference of voices and languages between the two countries maintained a synchronicity with what the players would have heard in their experience with either Final Fantasy games and/or Disney movies.

In November of 2002 *Kingdom Hearts: Final Mix* was released in Japan with no corresponding release in the US. While the menus and written content within the game remained the same as the original Japanese release from 2001, all of the voices were switched to those used in the US release of the game. What was previously a synchronicity of film and game was split within the International Edition when Japanese gamers were made to listen to foreign, English voices. For example, while the US player was used to Wayne Allwine voicing Mickey Mouse in the English cartoons and the US *Kingdom Hearts* release, the Japanese player listened to Takashi Aoyagi's voice in the original release, but was confronted with Allwine's voice in the International Edition. As Mickey Mouse was originally voiced by Wayne Allwine this change might be argued to hold a sense of authenticity: the Japanese players were suddenly confronted with the original Disney voices. However, the consideration of Square characters such as Auron is the exact opposite. While the conception of authenticity is shaky even in the case of "American" Disney characters (Brannen, 1992), any possible authenticity gained on the Disney side denies the Final Fantasy side's corresponding authenticity as the Japanese voiceover by Ishikawa was "first." Instead, one must look at the alteration in terms of translation, domestication, the national and the international. The alteration of voices from familiar to

unfamiliar and other is a foreignizing element at the same time that it might be called a step toward international (English).

Beyond the voices, several elements were tuned, altered or added in *Kingdom Hearts: Final Mix*. A few arena boss battles (including the one with Sephiroth) and different difficulty levels were added, some mini games (flying and alchemical creation) were tuned, and an alternate ending was created for when the player finished the game on the more difficult settings. This ending, “deep dive,” was referred to as the secret or final ending in online discourse. None of these three types of change are unique as all three have been a part of other video games at one point or another.

Additional content can be linked to repetition, and video games have from their beginning been repetitious texts. *Pong* was made to replicate tennis. *Pacman* was released illegally (and very successfully) as *Ms. Pacman* with the alteration of a few lines of code to add a bow and to change the outside box. Many games’ endings simply led you back to the beginning at a faster speed (*Star Wars Arcade*), and others didn’t even have ‘endings’ instead simply speeding up with the same board (*Tetris, Pacman*). Sequels and expansion packs were the same game with slightly altered or upgraded content, plots and graphics (*Mario, Castlevania, Megaman, Doom/Quake*), and remakes were the same game entirely (*New Super Mario Bros, Final Fantasy IV, Bionic Commando Rearmed*). Even non-series games very quickly fell into generic boundaries of side-scroller, adventure, 1<sup>st</sup> person shooter, god simulator and so on. With repetition being such a basic aspect of video games, modern special edition releases are far from strange. Special editions are released at the same time as the mainstream release with extra physical or in-game features (*World of Warcraft Collector’s Edition*), or they’re released well after the original has gone on to be a successful game (*Fable: The Lost Chapters*). In the later

event there has usually been some sort of inclusion of content or change in graphics depending on whether the special edition remains on the same console/system or moves to a new one. Fans buy the extra editions just as they might buy DVDs for bonus features: comfort and happiness in the familiar and the ability to own (Klinger, 2006). The added content within the International Edition is not unique: it is standard deluxe or special edition fare. However, that additional content is labeled international and released in a limited, domestic manner, opposing the internationally released, limited content version, is unique.

The inclusion of different endings is not unique to the International Edition as many games have multiple endings. Some games simply have one death no matter the cause or an ending (*Mario*, *Megaman*). Others have varied deaths but only one ending (*Zork*, *Space Quest*, *Dragon's Lair*). Others have different endings depending on character selection (*Final Fight*, *Street Fighter II*, *Baldur's Gate*). Some give you a different (better, longer) ending as the completion level of the game increases and/or time remains below a certain threshold (*Metroid*). And then there are those that give you a different ending depending on certain met requirements throughout the game (*Fallout*). The International Edition's included endings are a combination of the latter two types where you must do certain things including finishing 'more' of the game. If the player completes specific requirements within the game they are presented with a longer, more complete ending upon finishing the game. Obviously, the long list of ending types in other games indicates that the International Edition's ending is not unique of itself. However, including an additional, better ending in a special edition is rare, and having that special edition be a limited, domestic release is rarer still.

Finally, we come to the matter of English language. The inclusion of English as an international standard is not unknown within either business or entertainment. Various web

games release versions to the .com realm in English that require no national codes to log into as opposed to the .kr or .ch versions that require national identification numbers or similar identification methods. Similarly, International Editions are often released into Europe with English, Spanish, German and French as standard languages meant to cover all of the bases. However, these multilingual versions are not the same as the International Edition, which replaces the local dialogue with a foreign language, but maintains the menus and content in the native language.

As all of the changes in *Kingdom Hearts: Final Mix* are replicated in the other International Editions, I believe it is their combination that is the key to understanding these games. While the main difference between Playstation and Playstation 2 International Editions is the voices allowed by the increased disk capacity, it is the combination of switched voices and other aspects that makes the International Edition popular and therefore powerful. The International Edition would not sell if it solely changed the voices, but it would not be an “International” Edition without the change of voices; the two sides, added content and changed language, work together.

The International Edition is a domestically released special edition with extended/added content, new endings, and foreign English dialogue. Unlike other special editions it is not released internationally, instead it remains within Japan as a unique, exclusive text. It is the mix of local, exclusive content and foreign linguistic form.

### **National and International**

The standard explanations for the subtitle “International Edition” do not work as the product is neither sold nor played outside of Japan. The International Edition is only playable

within Japan due to the Region 2 encoding and Japanese menus. While it is possible to import a copy of the Japanese game and hack a Playstation 2 console to play Region 2 disks, such actions are uncommon and should be considered the exception. Rather, the normative, internationally played version is the original that was translated and exported. The International Edition must instead signal something “international” to its domestic audience. It must represent, or embody, the concept of international to its native, Japanese gamer audience. In order to further understand this claim we must now look at concepts within translation studies such as domestication and the relationships between Japan and the world, and between Japanese and English.

When the text of one language community moves to a different language community there is a simple necessity to translate. However, George Steiner argues, it is not just between language communities that translation occurs, but any form of interpretation, adaptation, transmutation, et cetera (Steiner, 1998). Therefore, despite the lack of movement into another language community, translation style is highly relevant in the case of the International Edition. Particularly relevant is the choice between domesticating and foreignizing translation style. Foreignizing translation is where the audience moves to the text, and domesticating translation is where the text moves to the audience (Schleiermacher, 2004). Domesticating translation is the active adaptation of a product to fit into the target system: the foreign elements are eased into more understandable local contexts and guises. Such domestication is particularly lauded at present within the United States where it is far more economically viable than its opposite, foreignizing translations. Texts such as *Pokémon* and *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* are understood to have sold well in the United States because of their domestication (Kubo, 2000). While domestication might be familiar to some, its opposite, foreignization, is often ignored, or worse, seen as negative. Foreignizing translations, those that reek of foreign elements, are

understood to be poor sellers in the United States precisely because of the non-domesticating localization. Localization strategies for translations are not as simple within the Japanese market. A major selling point of the International Edition is its foreignization (language), indicating that localization is not necessarily best linked with domestication.

While gaming in English often renders foreign games indecipherable from local games through domesticating translations, Japanese games have recently come to play with the language within games as a means of further expression. Two game series developed by Capcom demonstrate the two extremes. The *Devil May Cry* series is filled with katakana and foreign elements. These aspects, as well as the Judeo-Christian implications of a character named Dante hunting devils, indicates a popularity of the foreign. In contrast, the *Onimusha* series uses semi archaic language (both grammar and kanji) and native mythical/historical elements in order to provoke a more 'oriental' feeling. This is further highlighted in *Onimusha 3* when Jean Reno, known for his voice as much as his rugged masculinity, is dubbed into Japanese after the initial scene in French due to a contrived in game translation method. The foreign is subsumed and replaced by an orientalized Japanese-ness. In the middle of these two extremes is what might be called the standard Square-Enix style and often associated with the *Final Fantasy* series. The majority of Square-Enix's games are best understood as hybridized between domestic and foreign. There are classic Western fantasy aspects, but also more local Japanese martial aspects; monotheism is often opposed to pantheism or Shinto-esque nature worship; the Excalibur and knight are opposed to the Masamune, samurai and ninja; and of course, the opposition of modernity and technology with tradition and nature. Such oppositional melding is the nature of cultural interactivity and postmodernity, but it also has importance in relation to Japanese modernity.

Japanese History is full of dialectical relationships. Primarily of importance is the relationship between native Japanese self and its antithesis, the foreign other. The International Edition can be understood as a particular instance of Japan's dealings with foreign cultures and foreign others at present.

For centuries Japan has synthesized the ideas and concepts of foreign others in ways that has greatly affected Japan as a country and those texts labeled Japanese. In *Fracture of Meaning* David Pollack understands the interaction of Japan and China between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries as the synthesis of alien form and native content (Pollack, 1986). This synthesis is seen in the molding of Chinese characters to fit the needs and bounds of Japanese oral language, and in the movement and alterations within Zen Buddhism. Through pounding out the foreign form a native content is made to fit, but as with all dialectic relationships the result is neither of the two originals, but a combination. This relationship between China and Japan becomes less important an opposition in the 1800s for the reason that Japan/China (*wakan*) has been synthesized into a more stabilized product, but also because the relationship between Japan and the West (*wayo*, where *yo*, the West, is a conglomeration that primarily consists of Dutch, German, English, French, Portuguese and American cultural influences) became more important.

Japan has had a dialectical relationship with the Western other from early interaction with Dutch traders during the Tokugawa period to Admiral Perry's incursion, which was followed by the Meiji restoration and subsequent late 19<sup>th</sup> century Westernization. Despite the great differences in resulting changes, the *wayo* relationship has many similarities to the *wakan* relationship. The content, spirit or heart is Japanese and the form or shape is foreign. Pollack notes that the phrase *wakon kansai* meaning Japanese spirit/heart and Chinese scholarship is, from the late 1800s changed to *wakon yosai*, meaning Japanese spirit and Western scholarship.

This switch was accompanied by the commonly used phrase, *datsu a, nyu o* (leave Asia, enter the West). That the term *datsu o, nyu a* (leave the West, enter Asia) has recently been increasingly used as a link to alternate globalizations further indicates that while there is a tangible push away from the dialectic between Japan and the West, it is accompanied by yet another dialectic between Japan and a new foreign other (Iwabuchi, 2002).

In *Re-made in Japan* Joseph Tobin argues that the flavor of synthesis during the modern period (after the Meiji restoration) come in two different types (Tobin, 1992, pp. 29-30). One is a self-orientalization where Japan sees, represents and defines itself as the object of Western desire. The other is a self-exoticism where the Japanese attempt to make themselves as Western as possible. Tobin argues that this opposition between self-exoticism and self-orientalism helps to define the modern Japanese condition and process of modernization/globalization. Periods and actions dominated by a single drive stand out as particularly momentous, but all are simple extensions of Pollack's dialectic of native content and foreign form.

Tobin explains that the moments of self-exoticism, those times when the native Japanese aspects are felt to be repugnant and in need of change, are most visible during the Meiji restoration and post WWII, both major periods of westernization that followed serious military and cultural loss. However, it is not simply massive change that marks self-exoticism. Rather, self-exoticism can be seen in even minor or personal actions throughout the 150-year period from the Meiji restoration to the present. More precise actions such as the controversial eyelid surgery to make the face look less "Japanese" are equally self-exoticizing. Perhaps more relevant, if slightly less striking, is the Meiji attempt to move from the Japanese language, with its 1000-year synthesis with Chinese, to English, which was repeated in spirit during the post WWII educational changes and within the 2000 Ministry of Education proposal (Kawai, 2000;

Seidensticker, 1983; Seidensticker, 1990). While the attempted language change failed officially, the rise of katakana and English foreign loan words in the 20<sup>th</sup> century indicates that English entered into and remains in the daily consciousness of the average citizen, and is both politically and socially important.

Japanese is the sole national language Japan, and there are no official second languages. However, both English and Chinese are important for different reasons. The spoken Japanese language is native to the islands with a host of foreign loanwords. Chinese words taken into general usage in the past millennia are written in Chinese characters but considered a native part of the language (回復、攻撃、防御、魔法). In opposition, the more modern loanwords (the current majority come from English) are written in the *katakana* syllabary and are more distanced from the native language (キュア、ヒール、アタック、ガード). The written language is of Chinese origin with alterations to work with native content using a Japanese derived *hiragana* syllabary. Chinese characters (*kanji*) were brought into the language and used to pronounce the native words. For example, the character meaning heart was plugged into the Japanese word for heart (*kokoro*), but it also maintained the sound it had in Chinese (*shin*) when used to make other combination words (*honshin, kanshin, shinzou*). Over the last millennia this disconcerting combination of Chinese form/writing was made to work with Japanese content/language so that it has become a workable written and spoken language highly altered from both the ancient Japanese and ancient Chinese systems. This is Pollack's dialectic between China and Japan that has resulted in the modern Japanese condition (Pollack, 1986). However, interaction with the West has also affected the language. During the Meiji restoration and westernization a major question was whether the Japanese language would be dropped entirely and replaced with English (Seidensticker, 1983). One major discourse at the time held it

impossible to “modernize,” or become technologically and militarily dominant was through complete adoption of Western customs and practices including a switch to English language. As Tobin understood, this proposition drips of self-exoticism. The complete switch to English was not made, but it was also neither forgotten nor abandoned. Similar trends are present both with the mandatory English education in the Middle School curriculum, and the Prime Minister’s 2000 proposal to make English an official second language (Kawai, 2000). Because Japan’s political history is tied to its language one may understand the use of English as a locally named, international standard as a self-exoticising act.

The opposing, self-orientalizing moments can be seen in the anachronistic 20<sup>th</sup> century obsession with *Bushido*. The obsession is demonstrated by Yukio Mishima’s “samurai” machismo, which is in no way unique or ultimately Japanese, but is instead “heavily influenced by [his] awareness of the West as [his] potential critics and consumers” (Tobin, 1992, p. 30). Self-orientalism can also be seen in the 1980s *nihonjinron* (theories of Japanese uniqueness) discourse, which was a popular theory at the peak of Japan’s economic rise (Befu, 2001; Doi, 1973). *Nihonjinron* attempted to justify/explain the nation’s late 20<sup>th</sup> century economic success by claiming that Japan was racially and culturally unique. The concept of national uniqueness resulted in a type of ultra Japaneseness that links to Tobin’s concept of self-orientalism.

Tobin’s drives, self-exoticism and self-orientalism, which can be seen at their extremes in the Capcom games *Devil May Cry* and *Onimusha*, are also visible in the current International Edition video games. The English within the International Edition recreates a self-exoticism that echoes back through the previous attempts to install English as a national language to the beginnings of the Japanese language and its ties to Chinese. The International Edition’s content and limited release act as a layer of assured uniqueness that relates to self-orientalism. The two

aspects interact with each other in a single text. Through its localization strategy and its melding of Tobin's two extreme drives, the International Edition demonstrates to the gamer audience a certain relationship between Japan and the rest of the global world.

### **Japanese Globalization and the International Edition**

The International Edition has no meaning or future as an internationally distributed product. No longer as self-orientalizing or domesticating as *Onimusha* in that the foreign is allowed to exist, nor as self-exoticizing and foreignizing as *Devil May Cry* as Japanese remains an integral aspect to the text both in the menus and content, the International Editions mixes the native and foreign both visually and linguistically as a tempered middle ground between Tobin's two extremes. The International Edition is an example of current Japanese relationship to globalization. By giving the Japanese audience a special edition that contains English language it raises the local Japanese product to a higher level of local importance (it is special), but through so doing it forces the Japanese gamer to confront his or her own alienation through interacting with the text in English. The gamer is shown that while Japan must interact with the foreign, global world, the nation is not conquered, but tempered and spry in its ability to recover, to continue on, to *ganbaru* as should be the gamer his or herself.

The International Edition's use of language to provoke a meaningful result in its audience is unusual and worth learning from. The use of language in Japanese International Editions demonstrates that it is possible to obtain results in the audience through the medium of gaming that are quite unlike the more common results that come from narrative, gameplay and graphics, upon which current gaming production and theory focus. Language has many possibilities, but only through acknowledging its importance can benefits be reached. Similarly, while widened

the focus to include language would be a boon to cultural interaction, continuing to ignore the extents of gaming as a medium will only lead to its continued ideological misuse or its permanent relegation to “mere play.”

The study of gaming as a medium must be expanded beyond graphics, gameplay and narrative to see the aspects of the production, dissemination and consumption that have, like language, been overlooked. For example, in production, coding is mandatory to understand just as filming (and now digital filming) is of crucial importance to the study of cinema. Only through understanding all of the aspects of gaming as a medium can it be fully used as a form of communication.

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