Introduction

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An edited collection that focuses upon transporting games beyond the digital seems an odd precept, given that the advent of videogames stems from the 1950s. Boardgames are not new to the gaming world. A frieze from from approx 4000 BC contains a glyph depicting Senet, whilst an image of Nefertari playing the game is prominent within her tomb. Go is thought to have originated between 3000 - 4000 years ago. The internationalism of images, references and depictions of boardgames demonstrates that gaming was a universal activity, and from this it is not unrealistic to see boardgames crossing cultures, passing along across trade routes and gift exchanges. If play is universal, then the desire to share different ways of playing, or draw people together around an object like a board, appears to follow as a natural byproduct of human curiosity, companionship and competition. However, whilst these games are in themselves masterpieces of strategy and depth, it is not until recently that boardgaming has expanded in multiple new directions, creating a far more diverse genre than before.

In recent years, there has been a huge upsurge in the sales and creation of boardgames, and the market has been deluged with thousands of new titles. The global boardgame market is growing exponentially, and is estimated to reach $8 billion in revenue by 2021 (Technavio 2016). Innovations in design and development have changed the timbre of games, producing new types of boardgame experiences and experimenting with novel types of play. Whilst the mainstream media was slow to catch on to this trend, with articles expressing surprise that boardgames were not simply limited to *Monopoly* and *Scrabble* (Boycott-Owen 2018), the

boardgames industry and its consumers have snowballed in size. In 2017, the Games category of Kickstarter accumulated 26% of all the money pledged (approx $1.5 billion), and hosted 15% of the total funded projects (Bidaux 2018).

The need for physical proximity and space in order to play a boardgame has led to a number of subsidiary activities surrounding the gaming capital (Consalvo, 2007) of the genre. These have affected the design of games, and the ways in which boardgames are played both publicly and privately. Gaming conventions, many of which were well established but fairly stable in terms of numbers, have found demand outstripping growth. In 2017, Gencon sold out before the event took place, selling just under 208 000 tickets. In the UK, attendance numbers at UK Games Expo rose from about 2000 in 2008, to 39 000 in 2017 (UKGE Exhibitor's Guide 2018). There has also been rapid growth in smaller conventions and events. However, these events are not so much competitive as an opportunity for fans to try new titles and make purchases. Tournaments often take place - especially in the related area of Collectable Card Games - but are not the main feature of these events.

Instead, boardgaming is seen as a social activity rather than a purely adversarial one - possibly encouraged by the growth of cooperative boardgames, where players work together towards shared objectives. The growth of boardgame cafes provides players with a library of games from which to borrow, and a place to sit, eat and play, and has given players publicly endorsed places to meet. This is coupled with the rise of events such as meet-ups or regular clubs. In the UK, a downturn in economic spending meant that boardgame afternoons or evenings became a viable revenue stream for publicans, cafe owners and boardgame shops with premises large enough to hold tables. These places either charge a flat rate for the day,

or simply allow gamers to use their premises with the understanding that they will make a minimal purchase of food or drink.

The growth of baordgaming, especially in public spaces, is symptomatic of spreadable growth in 'geek' culture, whereby videogames and their topics - science fiction and fantasy - have moved prominently into the mainstream. The growth of boardgames additionally coincides with a spread of media culture beyond this popularism, that does not rely on mainstream sources to act as a purveyor of taste or to direct sales revenue. Instead, popularity is endorsed by fans, by now a large enough group to drive sufficient revenue. As examples, the rise in science fiction and fantasy television series, growth of viewing via Twitch and other non syndicated broadcasts, and importance of crowdfunded projects in dictating boardgaming taste, have all provided areas where boardgame knowledge can be transferred. Adaptations and related works are popular aspects of these genres. As Paul Booth argues, there is a connection between gameplay and the dissemination of modern media texts that builds an intrinsic modern relationship between the two:

> The contemporary media scene is complex, and rapidly becoming dependent on a culture of ludism: today's media field is fun, playful and exuberant. More so than any other time, the media we use in our everyday lives has been personalized, individualized and made pleasurable to use.
>
> (Booth 2010, 2)

Within boardgaming, this playfulness has lead to distinct cultural outputs. The growth of gaming events and conventions, as well as the upswell of crowdfunded publications through

sites like *IndiGoGo* and *Kickstarter*, is accompanied by developmental growth, whereby boardgaming ludically expands on its own conceits, forms and play types. Once again, the evolution of design is driven by fans; both thematically, with games featuring certain topics or situations, or through the development of certain types of play and design technique.

Why Boardgames?

During the creation of this book, we were repeatedly asked why we were showcasing boardgames as separate, both theoretically and stylistically, from other forms of gaming. Why not follow the conventions of other texts and journals, who in recent years have adapted to the growth of analog gaming by opening up their submissions with a broader remit beyond the digital, or include this writing alongside other critical gaming discussions? When we began writing, scholars welcomed boardgaming social events at conferences, there seemed a curious reluctance to look directly at the games themselves and their importance in changing the gaming landscape. However, gamers and colleagues being what they are, as time passed, we noticed that increasingly, boardgames were not only growing in scope and type, but they were also increasingly becoming a contested topic of debate in panels, papers and game jams.

Another strong reason to separate boardgames from their digital counterparts is the ludic complexities arising from the physicality of boardgames as a played entity. The elements of communication, cooperation and competition that take place in boardgames are negotiated strongly through not only the presence of the player, but the tangible nature of the board and its components. This ranges from social behaviours; a controversy during the writing of this book in the *Magic The Gathering* (Wizards of the Coast, 1993) community had each side

arguing about the social etiquette of shaking hands after a match (Vyper 2018), to the representation of both abstract and concrete ideas and objects within games (discussed more fully in Rogerson et. als chapter on boardgame artefacts). Responding to these issues, we wanted to give these debates a place within an edited collection that encapsulated some of the directions in which criticism was being directed, and drew out the nuances unique to these games.

This, then, forms the basis for the chapters within this book, which aims to turn a critical eye on boardgames and boardgaming practices, with minimal recourse to their digital counterparts. Whilst we have played rather fast and loose with the definition of 'boardgame', primarily to address a growing genre (see below), we have done this with the intention of specifically addressing this form of gaming as defined by players, rather than the strict delliniation of using a 'board', and in order to accommodate developments in the genre, for example the use of app technology to support gaming in the physical sphere. Overall, the collection provides a strong introduction to several core ideas surrounding the design and theoretical practices emerging around this genre.

Literature Review

We do not see boardgames as paving new theoretical pathways entirely separate from the rest of gaming, however we do see them as critical texts in their own right, and in possessive of specific differentiating elements. We seek to unpick some of these as well as follow some of the developing cognate fields within them. Our remit is to argue that boardgames are as complex as their digital counterparts, and to identify ways in which they can be considered.

Similarly, rather than reinventing the theoretical wheel, we see a number of complex theories emerging within boardgaming scholarship that integrate or bowlderize existing critical writing about the digital sphere. We found that authors were building on composite ideas of digital, psychoanalytical and gaming capital (Consalvo 2007) in order to develop the ideas about play within the boardgaming arena. Interestingly, however, whilst Caillois & Huzingha in particular dwell on ideas of physical make-believe or play in their definitions of play types we see these ideas extrapolated into more recent theoretical ideas; for example those of Sicart (2014) and Flanagan (2009). We see these discussions as exhibiting the maturity of Game Studies critique, as well as engaging with the wider contexts of gaming - for example as subversive or politicised entities.

Boardgaming theory also draws from a number of key texts. David Parlett's writing on the history of board and cardgames provided many people with historical context for the genre, as well as underlining a number of key play themes within games. Discussions of analog play are also covered in Jon Peterson's *Playing at the World* (2012).

Boardgames have also seen the emergence a distinct lexicon to describe different aspects: monikers such as 'Eurogames', 'Ameritrash', 'party games' and 'traitor mechanic games' started to form around a growing esoteric community. For an excellent account of the term Eurogame, and the typical mechanics of a heavy strategy Eurogame, see Woods (2012). These subgenres in turn contain definitions borrowed and repurposed from other games or words unique to boardgaming. As with videogame terms, this lead us to question the ways in which boardgames problematize genre expectations.

Summary of Chapters

When soliciting content, we split our request into four major themes, hoping to direct authors to submit a variety of different pieces, and to encourage different critical approaches in their writing. To our surprise, the accepted submissions were almost evenly spread amongst these four areas.

Our first theme engages with the analysis of play and player behaviour, most notable in regard to the three C's (and one S!) of Sociality, Conflict, Competition and Cooperation. Legacy games (whereby play is episodic and has permanent effects on the board, including the destruction of cards, marking of the board and permanent death of playable characters), have become a popular form of play despite their singular nature, and the first two chapters of this collection both touch on these in some way.

Paul Booth's opening chapter additionally uses these games to explore the notion of time and temporality in boardgames. His previous writing on the paratextuality of gaming and other popular media, especially those mediated through the lens of fandom, is the backdrop for his work here on the relationship of games to time. He examines how time is used as a thematic motif in boardgames, and what this implies in a genre where play is essentially linear in nature. The second aspect of the paper continues this debate by examining the part that legacy games have to play in undermining fixed notions of time in games and breaking this pattern through the changing nature of play that they engender. Again, these types of time

manipulation have broader cultural implications within the medium of boardgaming, but also relating to the nature of playfulness in general.

José Zagal's paper follows on from his earlier work of nearly a decade previous to this publication, where he made a number of key assertions about the nature of players and their responses to cooperative play. Since this writing, the number of cooperative games has dramatically increased, and it is obvious that they are a popular types boardgaming. By challenging his previous assertion that players are inherently cooperative, Zagal posits a number of key lessons taken from games in subsequent years, examining how constraints on collaborative play encourage satisfactory play. His rebuttal examines how hindering or allowing the triad of information and communication, trust, and taskwork affect cooperative games and the play that takes place within them. Devising ways in which to make these elements difficult, but still achievable, lies at the heart of a strong cooperative game.

'*Twilight Struggle,* or: How We Stopped Worrying about the Hexagons' by Giaime Alonge and Riccardo Fassone investigates an area that we were expecting - a discussion of a furiously complex game often seen as one of the high points of current boardgame design.*Twilight Struggle* (GMT Games, 2005) is a two player game in which opponents play two opposing sides of an incipient Cold War. The authors examine the games antecedents, and ask whether *Twilight Struggle* epitomises a historical war game, or develops more along the lines of boardgaming strategy play. Whilst the game appears to dovetail with a historicised representation of war, the authors ask whether this is an accurate way to approach the game, or whether it has a deeper import within the boardgaming canon.

Systems

Our next section examines more ludological perspectives, including game design, mechanical readings of rules and play, and the use of other technologies to augment gameplay and game design. This section produced two very different perspectives on the physicality of the game, as well as discussions on the introduction of technological aspects such as apps or computer controlled players and organisers.

Joe Wasserman argues that play is mediated through its physicality. Using the ideas of Lars Elleström's media modalities (2010), he argues that games transmit core ideas through a player's interaction with the game components, and that this allows the transmission of ludically complex ideas. This chapter is presented as a conceptual framework for debate and extrapolation, providing an early taxonomy from which to assess boardgame play.

Rogerson, Gibbs and Smith take a different approach in the understanding of tangible play and argue that to understand boardgame play, it is essential to understand the complex relationship of the player with the boardgame and its components. The authors discuss a number of ways in which pieces can be used through detailed observation over a period of five years, allowing them to integrate arguments about the development of these artefacts, their rhetorical purpose and their broader meaning in terms of playful theory and design. Again, this chapter provides useful ways forwards when critically examining the physical aspects of boardgaming play, especially when these aspects may be in flux as games develop over time.

Increasingly, apps or other electronic supplements are and increasing aspect of boardgames. In *Mansions of Madness 2ed* (Fantasy Flight Games 2016) and *One Night Ultimate Werewolf* series (Bezier Games 2014) the role of the Dungeon Master (DM) is now taken by an accompanying app, and a fan made app for *Tales of the Arabian Nights* (Z-Man Games) helps players quickly orientate the correct entry in the Book of Tales. Elsewhere, apps like *Chwazi* provide incontrovertible ways in which to determine player order. Karl Bergström and Staffan Björk in their chapter 'A Mixed Blessing? Exploring the Use of Computers to Augment and Mediate Board Games' explore these developments but also question how far they should be integrated into boardgaming play.

Experiences

The third section of this collection involves boardgame experiences - most notably through cultural experiences of play. Souvik Mukerjee opens this section with an in depth look at *Gyan Chaupar*, analysing the impact this game has had on an international scale, as well as examining the more esoteric aspects of the game as a cultural signifier for living a virtuous life. Mukerjee examines the rich philosophical implications of the game, as well as providing a rich history of *Gyan Chaupar* as a cornerstone of the gaming experience.

Dean Bowman takes a different route in his study of *Archipelago* (Ludically 2012). The game contains a number of elements that draw attention to the problematic history of colonization and encourages the player to engage with aspects of colonialism and slavery. Buying more into the romanticised notion of this period of history as an age of discovery, the game elides many of the issues of the time, including a problematic game mechanic which reduces and

subjugates the local population as colonisation increases. Through the lens of procedural rhetoric, Bowman unpacks how a playing of the game can bring these issues to the surface, providing an unsettling play experience, and examines how critical debate such as Astrid Erll's debates on cultural memory (Erll 2011) can be applied to games of this nature in a broader theoretical context.

In 'Playing Games, Splitting Selves', C. Thi Nguyen observes how more traditional gaming theory can be applied to social gaming. Using a number of critical examples, Nguyen draws boardgaming through the lens of Calliosian and Suits' definitions of play, examining how this affects social play. In most cases, the direct contact involved with gaming creates a strong social formation with its own temporal structure, as well as developing a series of interlinked communicative strategies that inform both play, and the perception of how that play was formed throughout each game.

Design

The last section closes this collection with a look at the ways in which design is iterated, and how it changes via boardgaming mechanisms. Chapter 10 examines Malcolm Ryan's *The Road* discussing how it moved through design and development, aspects of emergent play that changed the game, and how to engineer a specific experience within play. By examining how the game developed, Ryan was able to iterate a series of socially challenging circumstances, aimed to make players move beyond traditional play styles. By arguing for the deployment of a systemic narrative - the creation of stories that are the result of carefully

designed systems and which use emergent play and a viable design tool, Ryan outlines a system of narrative driven design.

Finally, Owen Gottlieb and Ian Schreiber turn to the practice of designing learning games, again through investigative practice work with two games in the authors' own series *Lost & Found*. The games attempted to teach players about Islamic law through a number of different play styles, which the authors variously describe their attempts to balance aspects like community awareness with the mechanics needed for a traditional Eurogame. In doing so, the authors developed a number of approaches aimed at mitigating the need to convey historical or legal information, and the need to adhere to predetermined game styles.

Definitions and Referencing

We have used the term 'boardgames' flexibly, as many titles fall under this moniker but do not fit the specific criteria of using a 'board'. Games like *Splendor* (Space Cowboys 2014), *Forbidden Island* (Gamewright 2010), *Century: Spice Road* (Plan B Games 2017) and *Codenames* (IELLO 2015) construct a playing area by laying tiles or cards on a flat surface, for example, which form a board-like shape that changes or moves as cards are exchanged, moved or purchased. Other games, such as *Carcassonne* (Hans im Glück 2000), involve laying tiles to create maps, which differ during each play session. These games are considered by players to be boardgames, despite not using a conventional 'board' surface to play from, and this type of play is an established trope within the canon of boardgaming play. Additionally, the genre is rapidly evolving, and as a result, producing novel ways to play.

Having said this, however, we have tried to avoid games comprised entirely of cards such as *Magic the Gathering* (Wizards of the Coast 1993), *Happy Salmon* (Stoneblade Entertainment 2016) or LCG games such as *Arkham Horror the Card Game* (Fantasy Flight Games 2016) for space reasons rather than anything else. Similarly, we did not want to engage with games that involved gambling for money (taking risks, and chancing one's luck, yes, but not for financial gain beyond the remits of the game itself). Overall, this means that the collection is largely focussed on recent developments in boardgames and boardgame design, rather than taking deep dives into elements like game balancing, strategising by players or competitive gaming. All of these discussions have started to emerge as topics of thoughtful critique elsewhere (see for example, the *Analog Games Studies* journal http://analoggamestudies.org/).

Throughout this collection, readers may notice some differences in referencing games as variously created by games publishing houses, individuals and sometimes larger conglomerates such a Fantasy Flight Games or Asmodee. Although we have tried to give credence to individuals where possible, and initially encouraged the use of Parlett's convention when referencing ie. - title of game in italics: author if known, publishing house and year, for eg. *Pandemic* (Leacock, Z-Man Games, 2008), with historical games capitalised as proper nouns and also in italics, for eg. *Chess*, we quickly found that this was impractical. The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, games are sometimes updated and changed or added to over time - for example the game *Tajemnicze Domostwo* (Nevskiy and Sidorenko 2013), became *Mysterium* (Asmodee, 2016) when bought up by the larger company for international distribution. The game underwent substantial revision in rules, artistic style and physical components when this transfer happened. A more complex, but by no means unique example

is *Sherlock Holmes, Consulting Detective*; originally published in 1981 by Sleuth Publications and then translated into French by Ystari in 2011. The game was then re-translated into English (Ystari 2014) but contained a number of errors that made solving three of the ten cases very difficult. These omissions and elissions were subsequently modified in subsequent versions, and when Asmodee bought the company and started to produce new expansions (which were different from those produced for the 1981 version), the entire series was repackaged and given a makeover - for example the 'London Directory' was reproduced in a larger format, making it easier to read. Throughout this convoluted process, the authors of the original text are not mentioned, and translators not always credited. Other games in the collection, most notably *The Road* (Ryan REF), did not have a publisher beyond the author, with the chapter focussing on design methods and practice that required that developers take precedence in the referencing within.

Consistency of referencing for a single text was also problematic. Whilst videogame developers have become used to releasing games with the expectation that changes may take place through patching and expansions, this flexibility is not financially or physically viable for many boardgames. Boardgame publishers try where possible to release a complete version with a final version of the rules. However, this does not always withstand first contact with the player, and tweaks to terminology, or simply the passage of time means that popular games are often refigured as they pass from company or company, or are simply updated and clarified in subsequent printings. These different editions are rarely noted on the publication or box details, however. Bruno Faidutti's *Citadels*, initially released in 2000, underwent a huge change when Asmodee bought and reissued the title in 2016.Asmodee completely changed the games' art style, and added more gameplay beyond Faidutti's original version.

The second edition has more diverse artwork and significantly develops the rules. This change enabled the removal of socially objectionable content (previously, the only two female characters were negatively illustrated,, and there were no people of colour depicted at all). The 2016 version relaunched the game in a more progressive context. Whereas videogames might be able to market this as a patch or expansion (for example the revision and updating of character models in *WoW* or the release of more content for *Smash Bros.*), and have an accompanying version number or name that a scholar could reference, this does not happen in boardgames. This meant that often we were received multiple references for what was ostensibly the same game. With the two previous examples, *Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective* underwent a minor title change to *Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective - The Thames Murders and Other Cases* (Asmodee 2016) to distinguish it from the other two expansions, but *Citadels* saw no titular change at all. Similarly, versions in translation were also used by our authors; producing yet more versions of the game with the same reference.

Secondly, in the late 2010s, a landgrab of games, their developers and production houses lead to a rapid shift in the boardgame publishing scene. Both the aforementioned Fantasy Flight Games and Asmodee purchased a broad spectrum of games and design houses, re-releasing many titles under their own label. There are often small differences in these versions; variations in rule explanations, new artwork and sometimes radical overhauls of the games themselves. The various editions of *Twilight Imperium* (Petersen, Fantasy Flight Games 1997, 2000, 2005, 2017), for example, carry the same title but have radically different contents, art, rules and layouts. Similarly some games needed revision, clarification, updating, or simply used the name alone - *Arkham Horror* (Krank et al, Chaosium 1987;

Launius & Wilson, Fantasy Flight Games 2005; Launius, Vales and Wilson, Fantasy Flight Games 2018) repeats characters and locations, but is otherwise a vastly different type of game within its three iterations. Boardgames are also often changed from country to country according to which themes are more popular for the retail audience - for example *Century: Spice Road* (Plan B Games 2017) was also released as *Century: Golem Edition* (Plan B Games 2017), switching the theme entirely from the collection and trade of spices, to the mining of precious rocks for trolls and orcs.

Where possible, we have directed the reader to the version that the authors used when writing, rather than asking them to reference an original version. This may mean that dates differ from chapter to chapter, and some developers may not be present / the authors may have decided not to name them within their writing. We hope that readers will forgive us this inconsistency, and in all cases we would refer them to the excellent site *BoardGameGeek* (*BGG*), which often contains images of different versions and a collection of publication dates / issuing companies / translations.

Gameology

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