

Grieving and Griefing in Contested Zones: Negotiating the Rules of Play in Massively Multiplayer Online Games

Martin Gibbs

Department of Information Systems

The University of Melbourne

Grieving at-large

- Lament for loss of “community” in networked society
 - “Gone are the rituals of mourning, casting the bereaved adrift to face their loss alone.”
 - “Dear X, I just don’t know what to say...”
 - » (Jenni Russell – The Age 2009)
- Online media used during grieving – Facebook etc.

Online Memorials

New technologies do not immediately replace old technologies, they give rise to new practices that supplement (and perhaps eventually replace) previous practices

Vicarious grieving online

Facebook Memorials and defacement, trolling etc.

- Saxon Bird
- Trinity Bates
- Michelle Morissey Mudge
- Elliott Fletcher

Consensus on appropriate/inappropriate practices with new technologies process of negotiation

- What is (is not) appropriate, helpful, tasteful etc.
- Who has the legitimate right to publicly express grief?

History

History of this paper

Approach

Paratexts

Historical – trace evidence

Follow the controversy

Agnostic

Agnostic Approach

- Video provides an occasion for discussion
 - legitimacy of activities in MMOGs
 - Ontological status of MMOGs as merely games or something more
- Follow the forum debates without *a priori* judgments over morality, legitimacy etc. of actions
- Make sense of the blooming buzzing confusion

World of Warcraft



World of Warcraft

“*World of Warcraft* will eventually be recognized as a signature artistic, technological and sociological achievement of our time”

-- Edward Castronova

World of Warcraft (MMORPG)

- Massively • 10+ million players, 10k+ /server
- Multiplayer • Social interactions and organization
- Online • Persistent world
- Role • Two mutually antagonistic factions
- Playing • Cooperation, competition and conflict with others
- Game • Progress through game Tolkienesque world helping others (quests) and killing Mobs

Rules of Play

What are acceptable forms of play?

- Regulation of online behavior to prevent ‘social pathologies’ persistent problem for designers and researchers
- Freedoms verse abuse by minority

Magic circle - space of play where different rules apply

Constraints on online behavior

- Lessig - code, law, norms, market
- Material-semiotic imbroglios

Negotiation of legitimate activities as boundary work

Grieving

03-03-2006, 05:36 PM

#1



Yanoa
Healing the Grayrage
< The Select Few >

The profile card features a central image of a character with a question mark, flanked by smaller icons on the left and a decorative emblem on the right.

Member Since Jan 2006

Location: Knoxville, TN

Memorial to Fayejin

On Tuesday of February 28th Ilidan lost not only a good mage, but a good person. For those who knew her, Fayejin was one of the nicest people you could ever meet. On Tuesday she suffered from a stroke and passed away later that night.

I'm making this post basically to inform everyone that might have knew her. Also tomorrow, at 5:30 server time March, 4th. We will have an in game memorial for her so that her friends can pay their respects. We will be having it at the Frostfire Hot Springs in Winterspring, because she loved to fish in the game (she liked the sound of the water, it was calming for her) and she loved snow.

If you would like to come show your respects please do. 😊 Thanks everyone

Griefing

- Actions to deliberately frustrate, annoy or harm other players
 - (and gaining enjoyment, satisfaction, status affirmation, identity and/or membership etc. from those actions)
- Serenity Now actions clearly ‘griefing’ (and acknowledge as such)
- Attack was ‘wrong’ but ...



Sullen 04-12-2006

We did it because we knew it would be hilarious and because we knew it would generate idiotic responses like the ones in this thread with people bitching about us crashing a virtual funeral. Those responses keep the hilarity going and going and going. :lol

Gwynnie 05-03-2006

This was the perfect set up. We took the bait and rained on their parade. Sorry for the loss, but in-game memorials I think it's a bit much.

Harassment Policy

Zone/Area Disruption This category includes language and/or actions intended to disturb groups of players or areas of the world, such as:

- **Disruption of player sponsored events or gatherings**
- **Excessive use of in-game sounds or visuals**
- **Excessively casting spells with noticeable effects in crowded areas**
- **Impeding or blocking access to an NPC, doodad, doorway, or any other area of the world that a player would normally be able to access**

http://us.blizzard.com/support/article.xml?locale=en_US&articleId=20226#zonearea

Unfolding Controversy

- Illidrama forum threads explode in bitter acrimony
- Disrespect in forum regarded by many as being worse than the events themselves
- Video was one response and provocation in ongoing forum controversy

03-05-2006, 02:21 PM #292



Riise
Leagues?
ExEx-Xteamer

Member Since Nov 2005
Location: Austin, Texas

Re: Memorial to Fayejin

Regardless, you're acting like someone shot someone IRL. EVERYONE needs to chill. The SN guys need to stop being fucktards just to get a rise out of everyone else and you guys need to stop freaking out and egging them on.

It sucks, but its over. Let it go. ALL of you.

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Serenity Now bombs a World of Warcraft funeral



This is a video response to [WoW:yay_or_nay](#)

Rate: ★★★★★ 10,051 ratings

Views: 3,036,228

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(more share options)

Commentary

Statistics & Data

Video Responses: 0

Text Comments: 23,643

▶ Video Responses (0)

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▼ Text Comments (23,643)

Sign in to post a Comment

Show: average (-5 or better) Help



From: jon01

Joined: 2 years ago

Videos: 6

Subscribe

Added: March 19, 2006 (Less info)

Some girl who played World of Warcraft died in real life, and those horrible failures of human beings planned a funeral for her... RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF A PVP ZONE! They posted about the event on the messageboards and urged people not to bust it up.

I don't think I need to explain what happened; the video speaks for itself.

I didn't make the video.

Category: Comedy

Tags: world of warcraft funeral serenity now movie film funny

URL:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHJVolaC8pw

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<object width="425" height="344"><param name="movie" value="h

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WoW Funeral Raid
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Dracon86



The Siege of Ironforge
09:35
theonewolf



World of Warcraft - Karazhan Musical Chairs
04:07
Joreus



WoW: Super Mario Theme



300 World of Warcraft



That's the World of Warcraft That

Themes from forums

Schadenfreude

macky101 (4 months ago)

[Reply](#)

yea it was harsh but i think we can all agree that was funny as fuk

GreenJacketGuy (2 days ago)

[Reply](#)

AHAHAHAHAHA that made me laugh.... i remember the days i used to play that game....

pablondy (2 days ago)

[Reply](#)

0

marvelous, asewome, amazing, beautiful, i had to be there.

bandlten (2 days ago)

[Reply](#)

+1

5stars :)

Poisonlvvy (2 days ago)

[Reply](#)

+1

Lol! I'm sorry but thats just full of lulz!
It shouldn't have been in a pvp zone in the first place....

TyitupX (12 hours ago)

[Reply](#)

HAHAHAHAHAHAHA

Got what they deserved

- *Juppnup: “For the Alliance!” 4 weeks ago*
- *Knifemonkey: “Though this was an extremely horrid thing to do, I'm more annoyed and pissed off at all the ignorant assholes raging towards the Alliance as a whole due to this.” 4 weeks ago*
- *1337one1: “This is what horde gets for stealing the alliance cake. lol but really i thought the all alliance were good guys and horde were bad? Hmm funny.. 4 weeks ago*

– (YouTube 16-04-2010)

SNERTS

“Those who attacked are flat out ass-holes. It's really that simple, [...]” - megajoul

“So on the one hand, we are suffering from flaming ass-holes. On the other, we have people who are morons, not once considering what would happen if they WERE attacked.” - Objulen

“fucking with someone because they are losers is always childish, but it's the height of hilarity when people doing the mocking are equally pathetic” - Ben

“This has to be one of the best rucks ever planed on WoW and RESPECT, What an attack!”

Playing by the rules

- “PvP on a PvP server <gasp> !”
- “A pvp server is for world pvp... and SN demonstrated what true pvp is.”

RunWhiteBoyRun

04-12-2006 04:21 PM

So the grieving guild **ASSUMED** that everyone else would stop playing the game the way it's meant to be played, just because they lost someone? They like to blur the lines between the game and real life.. until they don't like the results.

Expected

- Naïve to hold memorial where it could be attacked

“From how I see it, expecting anything else to happen in a PVP environment is ignoring the entire history of MMOGs.” - Zabuni

“what did they expect to happen when they posted it in the forums AND made the funeral in a pvp area? everyone to act friendly?” – mertr01d


04-15-2006, 01:30 PM #20

Gordon Cameron
New Romantic

Join Date: Jun 2002
Location: Los Angeles
Posts: 6,159

I agree, if people want to congregate online to remember a dead friend -- whom they presumably knew best in the context of the videogame -- I don't have a problem with that. I don't hold relationships formed online to be inherently meaningless anymore than I would, say, relationships formed via correspondence. And any ritual has as much power or meaning as its participants choose to invest in it.

Nonetheless, I have no problem with Serenity Now doing what they did. It's a pvp server and they are being jerks, but that's the whole point of a videogame with a pvp server -- it allows people to be jerks and let the (virtual) consequences fall where they may. The hordies should have foreseen this and held the damn service in Mulgore or Durotar or wherever.

 Quote

Real Relationships

Oh well, they can justify it all they want, but the way people act in game usually mirrors their behavior in real life. Shows what kind of human beings they are. – Nami, Illidrama



Saddening to see

foxhound5100

Posted: 04/13/2006

I don't see the problem with a in-game funeral, nor the idea of people mourning the loss of somebody in that manner. When all you know is the person in game, what else are you to do? Those who were holding the funeral were doing what they could. Granted there are ways other than what they did to pay respect, its understandable.

Extension of Self

“This is an MMO, your character is quite literally an extension of yourself. If you’re trying to tell me that you’re a completely different person than what you appear to be in-game, I call bullshit.”

Real Life not Role Play

Ronok

04-11-2006 08:36 PM

Fularu

Quote:

How can you be laughing when he died in real life..... As in a person died..... And they ruined the way other people were paying respects to his life..... WTF is wrong with you people?

Originally Posted by **Kabuki Waq**

king

SiliconBean

04-11-2006 08:48 PM

I can't lie but the way they set up the presentation of the video was funny BUT..... Why do that to someone when they really died I can see if she was just never going to play again and they were like retiring her but no she really died! That was sick.

*mage in
ife issues
ith*

This is irrelevant, they weren't comemorating the mage, nor the avatar, they were commemorating the human beeing who used to play said avatar, can't you see the difference?

Get a Life

- 'These people really need to get a life!' GodOFTheStoners
- 'Once again, people who tell other people to "get a life" really do need to get a life' AMDnewbie2005

It's Only a Game

MaxFlared @adnemeister it's also unnecessary to plan a virtual funeral in a game. kinda disrespectful if you ask me. it is a game!!!!!!!!!!

BunnieA (2 days ago)

[Reply](#)

lol I think it is weird that they would have a funeral in a freaking computer game...it doesn't make any sense even if she did play WoW...it's a game...not RL =)



Hilarius

QuimStyle

Posted: 06/08/2007

Mad props to serenity now, for keeping wow what it should be, a light hearted game, not a virtual life. The mourners could have emailed the family, the mourning of a virtual corpse avatar is beyond pathetic.

Matter out of place

“The bombing of the disingenuous and disgusting representation of serious real life matter was planned and lead by me.” (Brominenman)

“You know what the act of disrespect was? The ridiculous ceremony in the first place.” (Lizard_King)

“Do I find 'their way' trivial? Nah. I find it mockable (perhaps even stomach-turningly pathetic). Apparently so did 20 other people. So they mocked it using the tools available.” (senator cthulhu)

“Never have a funeral in an online game. It's not like any of those people cared. And if they really cared enough to go to the funeral and actually weep about that person... they have no real friends or family. Be real and not pull this shit on an online game”

Over time... Shifting Arguments

- Form of much of the arguments remain the same over time
- No 'settlement' of the controversy on forums
- Note: new 'facts' are introduced ...
 - capnquack: This still makes me laugh my ass off. Note to crybabies: the now-dead player was well known for ganking and participating in PVP. Really, this was more appropriate than lining up to say goodbye! 9 hours ago (16-04-2010)

Discussion

Boundary Work

- Video provides opportunity for boundary work
- Four entwined issues being negotiated
 - Ethics: legitimate activities for MMOGs
 - Aesthetics: tasteful behavior in MMOGs
 - Identity: Stigmatized or celebrated, deviant or otherwise
 - Ontology:
 - Status of MMOGs as ‘games’
 - Reality/virtuality of the online

Ontological Negotiation

- Analysis shows uncertainty and conflict about ontological status of online world (MMOG) spaces
 - As games
 - As places of consequence
 - Relationship to 'real life'
 - Relationship between avatar and person

Ontological Uncertainty

- Gives rise to ambivalence, dispute over legitimacy of activities
 - Does ‘anything go’ within the ‘rules’ (code, law)?
 - Do serious matter have a place?
 - What is in poor taste?
- Situation is an ontological mess
- But, perhaps that is OK
- Opportunity for conversation and argument

Re-embedding

- Online memorials funerals etc. can be dis-embedded from ritual practices, material-semiotic-social networks of the deceased's milieu
- and re-embedding within a milieu with different rituals, different practices
- Response depends time (Graham 2010) and audience
 - E.g. relationship to deceased and stage in grieving trajectory

But... Re-embedding Problems

- Online memorials, funerals etc. can be re-embedding within an alternative milieu with different rituals, different practices
 - e.g. Within the traditionally masculine and adversarial world of the internet
- Overlap between networks but weak cut-points between the networks
 - Weakness of cut points, is one enabler of grieving the griever practices

Epilogue

In-game memorial service for Arrtemis

2:00 pm Sunday October 25th