Why the Hell
Am I Playing This?

A defense of
Wrath Unleashed

by Anonymous

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What is **Wrath: Unleashed**?

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What is **Wrath Unleashed?**

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Why DID I Want to Play It?

• Because it’s unique
• Because I love board games
• Because I love fighters

• Because I wanted to know why nobody else plays / makes / enjoys this kind of game
Overview

• Wrath Unleashed has a huge problem

• So why did I finish it (and enjoy it)?

• The answer requires an addendum to our theories of “why we play” to understand
The Big Problem

• Wrath Unleashed has the worst narrative I have ever encountered

• It is Meager
• It is Predictable
• It is Deceptive
It is Meager

- There are four characters, but only two cut-scenes!
It is Predictable

• Every character has a very similar final battle (against the other three)

• Every character has the same ending
It is Deceptive

- The formal constraints do not match the material constraints

- Formal constraint – your goal is to fend off an ambush from the Earth Demigod

- Material constraint – you must kill the Earth Demigod or capture 7 of 9 temples
DRAW
YOU LOSE!
GAME OVER
The Narrative Fails

• Because it’s it does not provide any immersion

• Because there’s no motivation to find out what happens next

• Because beginners will be confused as to what their goals are
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Overview

• Wrath Unleashed has a huge problem

• So why did I finish it (and enjoy it)? Because it’s challenging

• It requires an addendum to our theories of “why we play” to understand
Strategic Elements

- Pieces have different strengths
- Hexes give elemental advantages
- Spells can be cast on the world map
- Maps have special hexes (temples, mana wats, amplifiers, nexus points, teleporters, etc.)
Adding to the Challenge

• Different goals on each map

• Limited number of turns

• Recognizable AI tendencies
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A New Category of Play (not covered by Callois)

- Not a meeting of equals on a field of battle
- Not a game of chance
- Not mimicry because there’s NO immersion
- Not much of an adrenaline rush (usually)
Player vs. Designer

• Player motivation comes from the challenge provided by the designer

• The two sides have different goals

• Popularized by video games
Examples

• Ancient arcade games
• Puzzle games
• Arcade shooters
• Platformers…?
But can you really play a game with no narrative?...
Jenkins’ Emergent Narratives

• These games provide a space to explore

• The player will make up narrative about themselves.
Even if the only characters are the player and the AI.
Juul on Players vs. Viewers

“The reader/viewer need an emotional motivation for investing energy in the movie or book; we need a human actant to identify with. This is probably also true for the computer game, only this actant is always present - it is the player. The player is motivated to invest energy in the game because the game evaluates the player's performance.”

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In Summary

• Games can be enjoyable without any formal narrative or constraints

• Video games have popularized a new type of play – Player vs. Designer

• The player remains engaged in these games because they construct narratives around themselves