The Gorean Community in Second Life: Rules of Sexual Inspired Role-Play

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Abstract

Gor is one of the most successful role-play themes in the Virtual World of Second Life (SL). In this theme, player-characters act out a barbaric world of sexual slavery that is based on the novels of John Norman. Norman’s narrative comes alive in privately owned 3D simulations (SIMs) that depict settlements in Roman, Viking, or tribal style. This paper gives insight into the construction of Gorean role-play, and positions it within the discourse on role-play in Virtual Worlds. The role-play was studied by undertaking an ethnographic participant-observation. Moreover, the rules of the city of Veroda (a pseudonym) are analysed in detail. The analysis shows that Veroda’s rules aim at immersion in the role-play experience and are concerned with the power structure of the SIM, as well as with the personal power relationships of its members. In conclusion, Gorean SIM communities are closed or semi-closed social groups that act as real communities “living” in a particular shared online place. Whereas within gaming worlds the play occurs under the rules of game-design, Gorean role-play groups in Second Life construct their own social rules and play. In doing so, they create and maintain a vibrant community life.

Keywords

Second Life; Virtual World; Role-play; Ethnography; Community; Rules

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