

LIBERTY AND LIMITATION: THE MULTIFACETED REPRESENTATION OF THE SEA IN VIDEO GAMES

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Abstract: *Acknowledged as cultural artefacts only in the late 20th century, video games have since then translated a plethora of great human themes and motifs into an altogether novel medium. In numerous titles, the motif of the sea with its vast symbolism represents one such borrowing. However, compared to literature or painting, for example, video games as a form of artistic expression are merely in their infancy, and this is readily detectable in their endeavour to represent the marine expanse. In fact, in most cases, although the sea is beautifully depicted on the horizon, it is actually used by game designers to signal the end of the traversable world or, in other words, to signal a limit. The aim of this paper is to explore the tension that is thus created between the symbolically charged representation of the sea, most commonly associated with liberty, adventure and the great unknown, and the basic game mechanics that disturb this representation. Furthermore, we examine several titles that attempt a more authentic approach to the matter in order to gauge whether video games are or ever will be able to receive and to continue the rich tradition that has rendered the multifaceted sea across the arts.*

Keywords: *representations of the sea, metaphors of the sea, the sea in video games, video game culture, game philology*