

SOUND FANTASIES AND IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES. A CASE STUDY OF VIDEO GAME SOUNDTRACKS (1980-2010)

DOI
10.11606/issn.2525-3123.
gis.2024.217684

DOSSIER: "ETHNOGRAPHIES AT THE TOUCH
OF A SCREEN - EXPLORING ANTHROPOLO-
GICAL METHODS, ETHICS AND KNOWLEDGE
WITH SMARTPHONES"

ORCID
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2377-8045>

PAULA GUERRA

Universidade do Porto, Porto, Portugal - secdep@letras.up.pt

ORCID
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1455-359X>

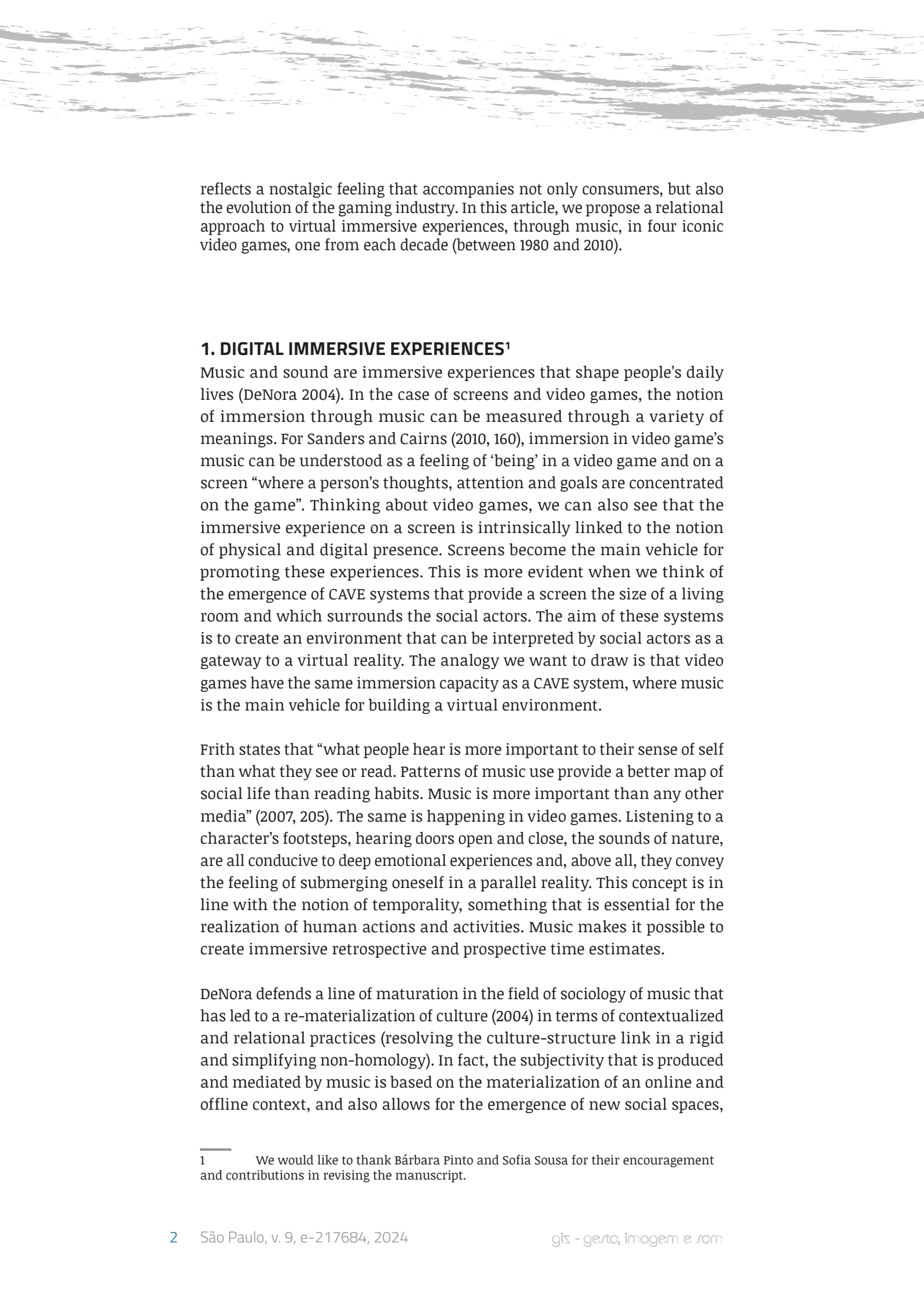
RODRIGO SERRA DIOGO

Independent Researcher, Porto, Portugal

ABSTRACT

One of the most prolix sources of approach to the practices of enjoyment by and on digital screens, comes from the consumption of video games. Therefore, our approach comes from the analysis of the ways in which the experience of enjoying video games can be influenced, particularly considering the sounds (soundtracks) that accompany and/or produce these immersive virtual scenarios, praising them as a significant way of conducting the virtual/digital behavior of social actors in a parallel reality. In this sense, we base ourselves on the concepts of identity, fruition, *nostalgia*, *retromania*, etc. The music that accompanies video games – combined with the need to preserve them as cultural heritage – reveals the role that video games have in reinforcing individual and collective identities in times of late modernity, as well as having a decisive role in the emergence of collective memories. Viewing video games as cultural heritage

KEYWORDS:
Videogames;
Music; Technology;
Immersive
Experiences.



reflects a nostalgic feeling that accompanies not only consumers, but also the evolution of the gaming industry. In this article, we propose a relational approach to virtual immersive experiences, through music, in four iconic video games, one from each decade (between 1980 and 2010).

1. DIGITAL IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES¹

Music and sound are immersive experiences that shape people's daily lives (DeNora 2004). In the case of screens and video games, the notion of immersion through music can be measured through a variety of meanings. For Sanders and Cairns (2010, 160), immersion in video game's music can be understood as a feeling of 'being' in a video game and on a screen "where a person's thoughts, attention and goals are concentrated on the game". Thinking about video games, we can also see that the immersive experience on a screen is intrinsically linked to the notion of physical and digital presence. Screens become the main vehicle for promoting these experiences. This is more evident when we think of the emergence of CAVE systems that provide a screen the size of a living room and which surrounds the social actors. The aim of these systems is to create an environment that can be interpreted by social actors as a gateway to a virtual reality. The analogy we want to draw is that video games have the same immersion capacity as a CAVE system, where music is the main vehicle for building a virtual environment.

Frith states that "what people hear is more important to their sense of self than what they see or read. Patterns of music use provide a better map of social life than reading habits. Music is more important than any other media" (2007, 205). The same is happening in video games. Listening to a character's footsteps, hearing doors open and close, the sounds of nature, are all conducive to deep emotional experiences and, above all, they convey the feeling of submerging oneself in a parallel reality. This concept is in line with the notion of temporality, something that is essential for the realization of human actions and activities. Music makes it possible to create immersive retrospective and prospective time estimates.

DeNora defends a line of maturation in the field of sociology of music that has led to a re-materialization of culture (2004) in terms of contextualized and relational practices (resolving the culture-structure link in a rigid and simplifying non-homology). In fact, the subjectivity that is produced and mediated by music is based on the materialization of an online and offline context, and also allows for the emergence of new social spaces,

¹ We would like to thank Bárbara Pinto and Sofia Sousa for their encouragement and contributions in revising the manuscript.

which are experienced through screens, allowing the (de)virtualization of social identities (Baycroft 2004). Music in the context of video games and as an immersive experience, permits the transformation of the identities of social actors into something that is expressed through a screen, that is, through a digital medium, allowing a process of *disembodying* (Samper-Martínez & García-Álvarez 2023, 104) identity.

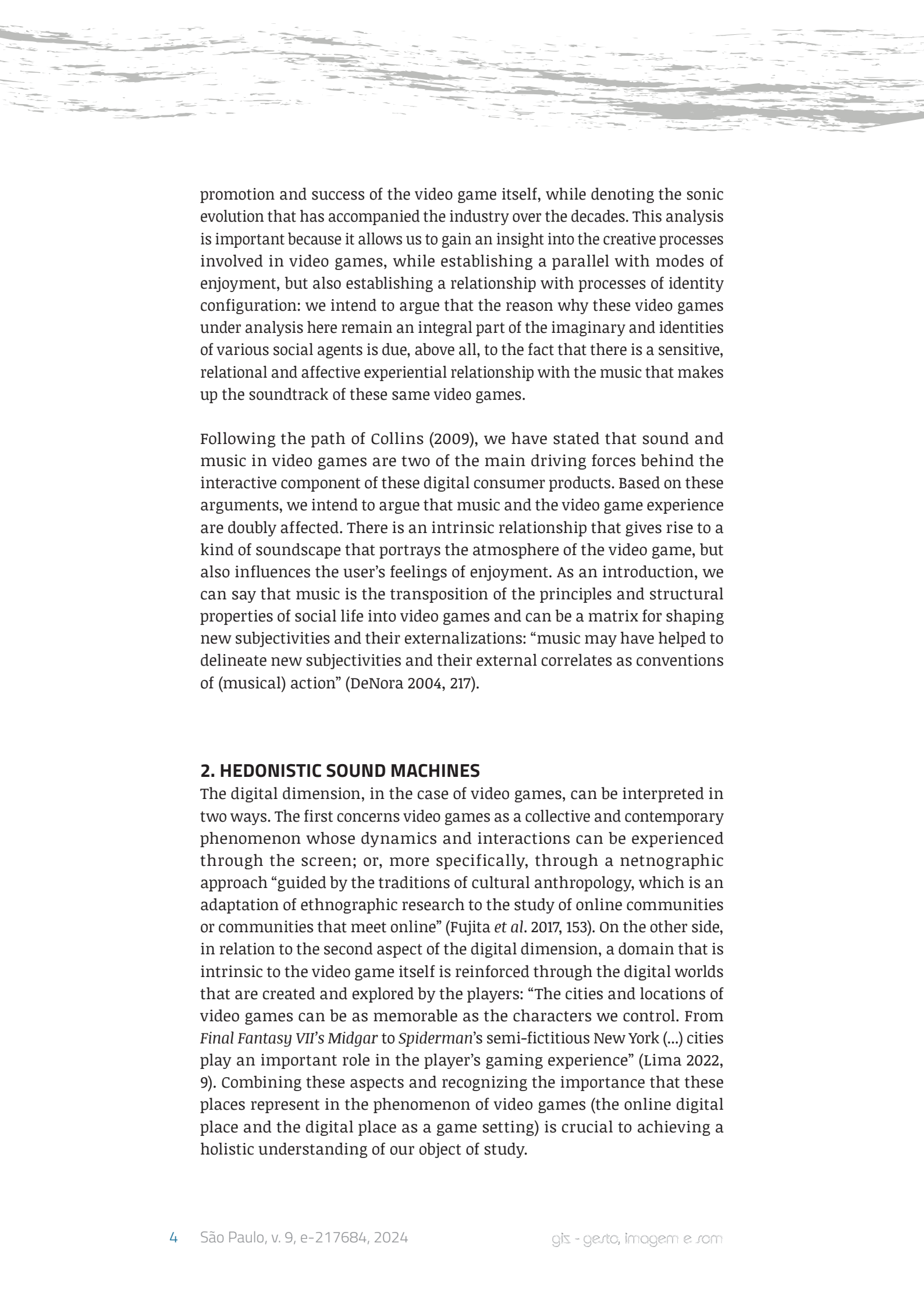
Places where musical practices are activated - such as video games - are privileged areas for the performative development of subjective strategies for affirming identity. Therefore, it's possible to adopt a historical approach that reconstructs musical interiority by analyzing the practical manifestations of a musical performance, as we do in this article. The taste and consumption of the music and soundtracks of iconic video games, such as *Super Mario* (1985) or, more recently, of video games like *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* (2011), lead to identities being created around the game. Communities are created around the consumption of these video games, as well as close relationships between individuals, due to the identification and/or consumption of video game soundtracks.

Martin (1995) advocates for a constructivist view of musical meaning, where the notions of intertextuality and subjectivity are central to the interpretation of musical meanings. Sound and soundtracks are sometimes even more relevant to gamers than the game itself. They refer to fields of affectivity and, if we consider video games from the 1980s, 1990s and even the early 2000s, we see a certain *nostalgia* (Reynolds 2011) associated with the feeling of preserving a cultural heritage. This is even more pressing if we think about the museums that have sprung up more recently, such as *Nostalgia, the Video Game Museum*² in Portugal, or *The National Videogame Museum*³ in the UK. Intertwined with this concept of *nostalgia* is the value of collective memory (Halbwachs 1992). This is relevant if we think about gamer communities and online events that bring together thousands of individuals. There's also a generational issue, in the sense that video games have the ability to mark a generation, especially young people, making video games into markers that remain evident in the memories carried over into adulthood.

In this way, the importance of music, sound, identity creation and nostalgia were the challenge for us to analyze a set of iconic video games from the last four decades: 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2010. The intent was to look at the importance of music and sound applied to games and, at the same time, understand to what extent sound has been a determining factor in the

2 See the following link: <https://nostalgica.pt/> Consulted on October 6, 2023.

3 See the following link: <http://nvmusa.org/> Consulted on October 6, 2023.



promotion and success of the video game itself, while denoting the sonic evolution that has accompanied the industry over the decades. This analysis is important because it allows us to gain an insight into the creative processes involved in video games, while establishing a parallel with modes of enjoyment, but also establishing a relationship with processes of identity configuration: we intend to argue that the reason why these video games under analysis here remain an integral part of the imaginary and identities of various social agents is due, above all, to the fact that there is a sensitive, relational and affective experiential relationship with the music that makes up the soundtrack of these same video games.

Following the path of Collins (2009), we have stated that sound and music in video games are two of the main driving forces behind the interactive component of these digital consumer products. Based on these arguments, we intend to argue that music and the video game experience are doubly affected. There is an intrinsic relationship that gives rise to a kind of soundscape that portrays the atmosphere of the video game, but also influences the user's feelings of enjoyment. As an introduction, we can say that music is the transposition of the principles and structural properties of social life into video games and can be a matrix for shaping new subjectivities and their externalizations: "music may have helped to delineate new subjectivities and their external correlates as conventions of (musical) action" (DeNora 2004, 217).

2. HEDONISTIC SOUND MACHINES

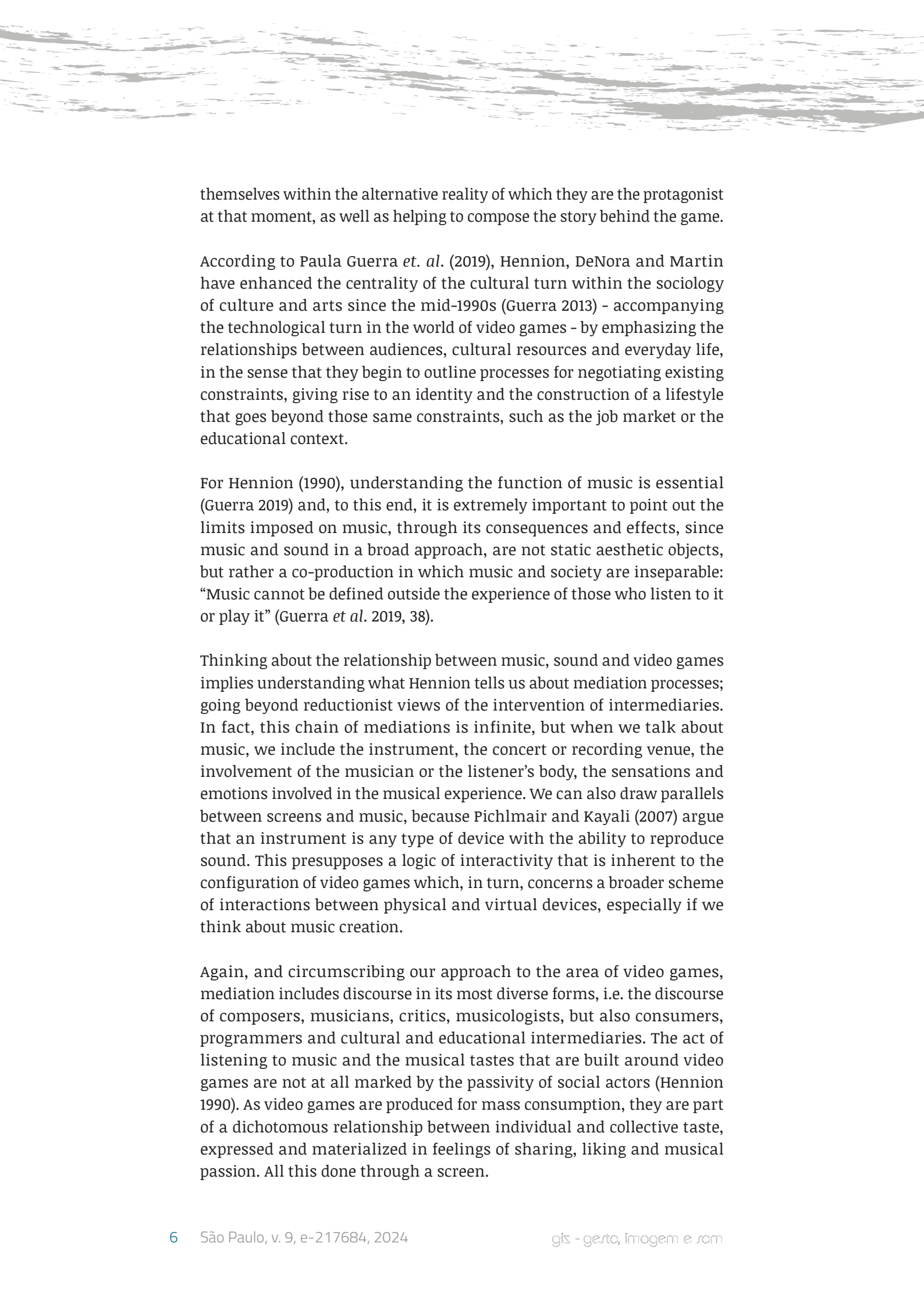
The digital dimension, in the case of video games, can be interpreted in two ways. The first concerns video games as a collective and contemporary phenomenon whose dynamics and interactions can be experienced through the screen; or, more specifically, through a netnographic approach "guided by the traditions of cultural anthropology, which is an adaptation of ethnographic research to the study of online communities or communities that meet online" (Fujita *et al.* 2017, 153). On the other side, in relation to the second aspect of the digital dimension, a domain that is intrinsic to the video game itself is reinforced through the digital worlds that are created and explored by the players: "The cities and locations of video games can be as memorable as the characters we control. From *Final Fantasy VII's* Midgar to *Spiderman's* semi-fictitious New York (...) cities play an important role in the player's gaming experience" (Lima 2022, 9). Combining these aspects and recognizing the importance that these places represent in the phenomenon of video games (the online digital place and the digital place as a game setting) is crucial to achieving a holistic understanding of our object of study.



To analyze the role that music and sound play in video games, we consider it extremely important to look at the contributions of Adorno (1976) in the light of the current digital and experiential dynamics that are felt in contemporary societies. This author is still a reference in the theoretical field of the links between cognitive habits, development and, ultimately, the links between these axes and music. According to Adorno, music is an essential element for looking at historical trajectories that can be traced back to Beethoven, an aspect that is preponderant in the sense that many video games have at some point, classical and/or erudite soundtracks, marked by the use of piano, as is the case with the theme of the game *Eternal Sonata* (2007), whose protagonist is a fantasy incarnation of Frédéric Chopin. Furthermore, Adorno's (1976) work also reflects on the force that music plays in social life, as a way of building material consciousness, but also as a social structure.

Starting from the premise of music as a driving force in social life, DeNora (2003) states that in Western cultures the metaphor that best describes music is related to the notion of transportation. Music can transport us from one place to another by inciting an emotional state, namely joy, satisfaction, revolt or frustration. Alongside the sound component, in the case of video games, there is always a visual component and, as such, music plays a key role here too, since it can be seen as a form of technological aestheticism (DeNora 2004, 7). Besides aesthetics, technology plays a key role, whether it's through the remastering of tracks, the possibility of immersion in futuristic dimensions of the game, or even the very possibility of immediate and constant consumption, independent and individualized from the act of playing.

Frith (1996) defended a relationship between popular music and written text (Guerra, 2020c, 2000e), in the sense that when we think of a song, we automatically remember its lyrics and what it means to us. Thinking about the case of video games, we can refer to the existence of a relationship at various levels, that is, between music, image, text and behavior. Let's see, if we think of a game from our childhood - *Counter Strike* (1999), *Sonic the Hedgehog* (1991) or *Street Fighter* (1991) - we automatically remember a specific sound or music, but memories related to a physical space, emotions, sensations and behaviors that we adopted while playing also emerge related to a physical space, emotions, sensations and behaviors that we adopted while playing. A song that emerges at a specific moment in a game, associated with a specific situation in the game or the story of a certain character, is determined by the rhetoric, the voices and the composition which, in many cases, not only reflects the personality of its producer, but is also an identifying element for those who listen to it. In fact, the saturation of a game is neither pleasurable nor a determining factor in its success. The music and sound allow the players to situate



themselves within the alternative reality of which they are the protagonist at that moment, as well as helping to compose the story behind the game.

According to Paula Guerra *et. al.* (2019), Hennion, DeNora and Martin have enhanced the centrality of the cultural turn within the sociology of culture and arts since the mid-1990s (Guerra 2013) - accompanying the technological turn in the world of video games - by emphasizing the relationships between audiences, cultural resources and everyday life, in the sense that they begin to outline processes for negotiating existing constraints, giving rise to an identity and the construction of a lifestyle that goes beyond those same constraints, such as the job market or the educational context.

For Hennion (1990), understanding the function of music is essential (Guerra 2019) and, to this end, it is extremely important to point out the limits imposed on music, through its consequences and effects, since music and sound in a broad approach, are not static aesthetic objects, but rather a co-production in which music and society are inseparable: “Music cannot be defined outside the experience of those who listen to it or play it” (Guerra *et al.* 2019, 38).

Thinking about the relationship between music, sound and video games implies understanding what Hennion tells us about mediation processes; going beyond reductionist views of the intervention of intermediaries. In fact, this chain of mediations is infinite, but when we talk about music, we include the instrument, the concert or recording venue, the involvement of the musician or the listener’s body, the sensations and emotions involved in the musical experience. We can also draw parallels between screens and music, because Pichlmair and Kayali (2007) argue that an instrument is any type of device with the ability to reproduce sound. This presupposes a logic of interactivity that is inherent to the configuration of video games which, in turn, concerns a broader scheme of interactions between physical and virtual devices, especially if we think about music creation.

Again, and circumscribing our approach to the area of video games, mediation includes discourse in its most diverse forms, i.e. the discourse of composers, musicians, critics, musicologists, but also consumers, programmers and cultural and educational intermediaries. The act of listening to music and the musical tastes that are built around video games are not at all marked by the passivity of social actors (Hennion 1990). As video games are produced for mass consumption, they are part of a dichotomous relationship between individual and collective taste, expressed and materialized in feelings of sharing, liking and musical passion. All this done through a screen.

The fact that we are analyzing the importance of music and sound in video games over four decades reveals the assumption of the existence of a type of practice that transcends orthodox attitudes towards music as a work of art to be admired in specific places, such as concert halls, bars or other situations, as well as going beyond traditional notions of musical creation and production. It refers to a collective activity (virtual and physical) that is seen as a vehicle for transmitting and aggregating identities (Guerra 2019). This new conception is based above all on the increasingly practical component that music has taken on, especially since a wide range of musical goods is available, referring to what has already been mentioned: that the choice of a particular video game can also fall on the soundtrack that is used, for example, in promotional teasers, or even sound agents⁴.

We intend to enunciate music - in these digital and technological contexts - as a “ceremony of pleasure”, that is, as “a series of small habits and ways of doing things in real life, [...] a set of routines, agreements and surprises” (Hennion 1990, 5). These dimensions are one of the starting points for understanding the relevance of music within videogames for each of the time periods listed above, since one of the main objectives of videogame creators is to make games that are appealing to the masses. As Lash and Urry (1994), we can question - especially for the 2000s and 2010s - the importance of concepts such as ‘expert systems’. We therefore return to the beginning of this section with Giddings (2007), as this author understands video games as Dionysian machines promoting simulation and simulacra (Deleuze & Krauss 1983): these machines have the ability to create storylines, and even transport individuals to parallel realities through sound.

3. METHOD [<INSERT TECHNIQUE>]

As we have mentioned, for the preparation of this article we considered it relevant to use a qualitative approach, analyzing a set of songs that refers to video games. To this end, referring to the theoretical contributions we have been making, we selected games that marked the decade in which they were released. Our analytical corpus is therefore the video games *The Legend of Zelda* (1986), *Final Fantasy VII* (1997), *Shadow of the Colossus* (2005) and *Persona 5* (2016)⁵. The selection of these video games was based

⁴ Sound agents refer to primary visual elements that accompany sound and create a sense of aura in the physical spaces where gamers are located.

⁵ These video games were selected because they were representative of key periods, namely the 1980s and 1990s, but also the early 2000s and a more recent period, 2016. With this selection, we wanted to demonstrate the ways in which the use of music in video games has evolved and, consequently, influenced users' modes of enjoyment, identities and feelings of nostalgia. At the same time, we also selected these video games

on a set of criteria that were created a priori, such as: i) the video games had to be representative of each historical and temporal era, with one video game being selected for each era; ii) The music and sound effects necessarily had to be a feature of particular importance in the context of the game, whether it was for the music itself or for the ambience that is built through the sound direction, giving rise to that question of immersion in a parallel reality; iii) The direction and sound quality of these games should be of considerable quality, as well as illustrating not only the technological evolution that has taken place over the decades, but also the ability of video games to provide artistic experiences through sound and music.

In Kawaf's (2019) view, there is an array of methodological alternatives that aim to respond to the growing demand for an analysis of virtual and digital content, despite the fact that, in most cases, there is a technical limitation that ignores the dynamic and visual nature of digital environments, as is the case with video games. One of the paradigmatic methodological examples of these issues is netnography, an approach coined by Kozinets (2015).

In this way, for the preparation of this article, we sought to combine the use of a qualitative approach with a netnographic or video-ethnographic approach (Kawaf 2019); the latter referring to an immersive and highly visual and sensitive scientific reading⁶. Therefore, from a methodological point of view, the video games were examined from a combined experience: the actual experience of playing and that of observing. This process was adopted to eliminate possible biased analyses of an inside gamer, but also because it was in our interest to delve into different dynamics of video game enjoyment, taking music and sound as a starting point (Horowitz & Loone, 2014).

Looking a little closer at netnography as a method of studying a virtual community (Kuluvuz-Ovnal 2023), we note the advantages that this method can offer for a phenomenological description of our overall object of study, and the parallels that can be drawn between the two facets of the digital. In other words, we can frame videogames as a cultural context that has evolved and proliferated considerably through the online world

because they have different narratives and game design/game play. It is also important to mention that the selection of these video games was articulated with the use of the video-ethnography technique, since it was a process that started from the user experience of one of the authors of the article, and from the observer experience of the other author of the article. As well as notions of temporality, we also found different dynamics of fruition.

⁶ In fact, this technique for collecting and analyzing information was selected because one of the authors of the article plays an active role as a gamer and, in this way, his analysis also contributed to the construction of an argument that supports the immersive, emotional and enjoyable nature of video games.

with a vast ethnographic potential. This can be especially relevant when we consider video games that are played online and the transposition of netnographic methods to this more specialized context: “as human behavior, communities and cultures on social media become increasingly fragmented and transformed (Kozinets 2015; Weijs et al. 2014), netnography has also evolved, allowing researchers to understand complex online phenomena” (Fujita, Harrigan & Soutar 2017, 153).

Going further, video ethnography can be defined as a research method that adopts a dynamic research logic, whose focus of analysis is moving images - and sounds, we add. The analysis of both sound and image, allows us to capture the interactions of social actors with screens and vice versa, but also interactions that occur only on a virtual and imaginary plane of exploration of sensations and sensitivities. We claim that these sensory experiences, which characterize the video games under analysis here, would be difficult to observe and capture using traditional methodologies. Furthermore, for Brown et al. (2009), this methodology can be seen as a method of presenting, discussing and projecting everything that is reproduced on screens. Therefore, for our empirical incursion, we used screen and sound recording systems which subsequently allowed us to carry out an immersive, sensitive and sensory analysis.

In relation to the previous theoretical section, we can introduce here the seminal works of Holbrook (2006), since the author argues that the dynamics of visual and audio experiences in a research project on digital media is decisive, not least because this same experiential dynamic will allow us to obtain a perspective of the symbolic, hedonic and aesthetic nature of the consumption of certain video games. This leads us to view gamers as rational consumers (Kawaf 2019). The role of experience and *sensoriality* in research of consumption patterns and dynamics, has grown considerably in various scientific areas such as marketing, but in the social sciences it is a topic that has not yet been explored. At the same time, we can use the contributions of Belk and Kozinets (2006), to point out that music, in the context of video games, allows the experience of physical and virtual interrelationships (digital space and the physical space of the act of playing), as well as enables the creation of virtual harmony narratives. We can also question the extent to which music in certain video games doesn't lead us into fields of personal renewal.

4.[R.]EVOLUTION 1980-1990

Starting our analysis with the 1980s, we highlight *The Legend of Zelda*. This game was released in 1986 for the *Nintendo Entertainment System* in Japan, and for the rest of the world in 1987. It's an action-adventure game

with a focus on exploration and non-linear progression. It was the first video game in the *Zelda* franchise. Since we are trying to understand the evolution of sound in video games, the choice of this game was not strictly based on the quality of its compositions, but rather on the context in which they appear. It is true that the technology available at the time of the video game's creation was considerably limited, so the angle of analysis relates to how both the soundtrack and the sound effects appeared in this game and their importance within it⁷.

It's possible to start describing the importance of this video game in terms of the (interactive) sound effects (Sweet, 2015) which, although they don't exactly contribute to the atmosphere of the game itself, they contribute to creating a feeling of satisfaction and pleasure in the player (Hennion 1990), as the player defeats enemies, solves puzzles, collects items such as the game's currency and, at other times, receives feedback through small sounds that signify their success during the multiple stages that appear throughout the game (Meneguette, 2011). This feeling of satisfaction enhanced by sound, is universal in video games. However, *The Legend of Zelda* was one of the first video games to use sound as a way of recognizing the player and, over the years, these sound effects have become particularly famous in the gaming world, especially the music that plays when the player solves a puzzle⁸. The music of *The Legend of Zelda*, like the franchise itself, is celebrated not only by the games industry, but also by popular culture as a whole: "Zelda's theme is one of the best-known melodies in the world of video games, perhaps even in popular culture" (Witt & Castro 2023, s/p).

Moving on to the music of the first game, there are a few aspects that should be highlighted. Firstly, in the tracks chosen for *Zelda*, the Title Theme⁹ is the first one the player hears when starting the game. This introductory track is a slower rendition of the music that plays when the player is exploring the game map, as well as accompanies the prologue text that explains the game's premise. This track introduces the player to the "world" they will soon be exploring, and the slower pace allows them to read the prologue more calmly to absorb and understand the story, setting the tone for entering and immersing themselves in the parallel reality of *Zelda's* world. Finally, he sets the epic tone of the quest: "So what makes the music of the *Zelda* franchise so good? Well, it happens by creating the perfect atmosphere. The player feels like they're on a medieval journey" (Witt & Castro 2023, s/p).

7 Interestingly, the music for *The Legend of Zelda* was composed by Koji Kondo, who contributed to several of the video games in the *Zelda* and *Super Mario* franchises.

8 See the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWw-m1ww2So>. Consulted on October 6, 2023.

9 Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HMR17a0ud3s&t=27s>. Consulted on October 6, 2023.

The track considered to be the most iconic in the game, namely the *Overworld theme*¹⁰, is very similar to the *Title Theme*. Perhaps the only difference that can be pointed out is the speed of each of them. Even so, *Zelda's Overworld* theme performs the role of exciting the players and encouraging them to explore, and the faster pace of this rendition is important for reminding the player that the journey has already begun, and that the dangers to be faced demand their attention. Here we can see the importance and impact of sound on players' psychology (Grimshaw & Schott, 2007). The relatively optimistic tone of the track may also be relevant, which again motivates the player to keep looking for different locations on the map.

This contrasts with the next track. *Zelda's Dungeon theme*¹¹, like the *Overworld theme*, is an iconic track in the *Zelda* franchise and throughout the history of video games, as it is the composition that plays when the player descends from the main map into one of the various dungeons. Despite being an 18-second loop, the track has some interesting features to note, such as the fact that it contains bass sounds and a more dark theme, reflecting that it is a more dangerous and mysterious place than the main map.

Finally, we'd like to highlight the track when the player is defeated, aptly named *Game Over*¹². It should be noted that the music that plays when the game is finished is a jovial version of this track. Despite being a track intended to accompany a supposedly frustrating moment for the player, the music is inviting and calming. In a way, considering the game's fantastic and non-violent tone, this choice is understandable, almost urging the player to pause and take a moment to relax. This contrasts with many other games where the act of losing, the character being defeated or even "dying" is accompanied by solemn and/or sad music.

The second game selected for this themed demonstration is *Final Fantasy VII*, the seventh edition of the eponymous saga, produced by Square Soft - now known as Square Enix. It was released in 1997 for the first *PlayStation*. Like the last game to be analyzed in this chapter, *Final Fantasy* is a *Japanese Role-Playing Game*¹³. The story takes place in an industrially advanced world, where a super-company - Shinra - controls the planet and exploits its natural resources, the *Lifestream*, to the point of exhaustion,

10 Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpEzYEoV9qY>. Consulted on October 6, 2023.

11 Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7T6ZNgp5M>. Consulted on October 6, 2023.

12 Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2yaRPgC15Us>. Consulted on October 6, 2023.

13 The music for *Final Fantasy VII* is composed by Nobuo Uematsu, a veteran composer of the franchise.

setting catastrophic events in motion. At the same time, we discover the plans of the game's true villain, Sephiroth. Here, it's up to the protagonist Cloud Strife - a mercenary - and his allies and companions, to save the planet from Shinra and Sephiroth. Immediately, once we've established that this is the seventh main game in the franchise and are given a brief summary of the story, it's important to observe a few points: i) the first is that, although there is a transversal and global mythology in the *Final Fantasy* universe, the games themselves, except for those that are clearly sequels¹⁴, don't have an explicit and/or necessary connection with each other; ii) *Final Fantasy VII* adopts a theme and setting that is closer to science fiction than the patented medieval fantasy of the older *Final Fantasy* games, which is reflected in the game's musical composition.

The second point raised serves as a good link to the first track of the game we're going to analyze because, although *Final Fantasy VII* is different from its predecessors in several respects, the music that plays when the game starts is the same that plays in all *Final Fantasy* games. Commonly appearing on the start screen of several of the games, but also on other occasions (such as at the end), this track has the simple name of Prelude¹⁵: "Final Fantasy is also defined by sound - in its menus and encounters. This is a truth that I would only discover years later, once I became familiar with the series. But in 1997, when I was entering its universe for the very first time, my definition of *Final Fantasy* began with the Prelude" (Ho Sang 2016, s/p).

Final Fantasy Prelude is an important track on several levels. Not entirely unlike *Zelda's Title Theme*, the Prelude contributes to the game's atmospheric value and sets a distinctive tone. However, whereas *Zelda's* track could be a kind of epic geared towards an adventure focused on exploration and discovery, *Final Fantasy's* Prelude is restrained and mysterious, in the sense that it subtly transitions from higher to lower tones and introduces a diverse instrumental accompaniment throughout the track. It is these two final elements that hint at the serious and heavy story the player will experience. In addition, this music helps to maintain the continuity of the franchise, as it serves to keep players familiar with *Final Fantasy*.

Another track from the saga is the *Battle Theme*¹⁶. Unlike the *Prelude*, which is relatively similar throughout almost all of the games, the *Battle Theme* shows considerable variation. Speaking specifically of *Final Fantasy VII*, the *Battle Theme* appears whenever the player starts a battle with normal

14 Such as *Final Fantasy X-2*, which is a direct sequel to *Final Fantasy X*. Consulted on October 6, 2023.

15 Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WPx3h5bwXVQ&t=2s>. Consulted on October 6, 2023.

16 Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYIVetd7OCs>. Consulted on October 6, 2023.



enemies. The occasional *crescendo* of the instruments and the fast pace of the track build the sense of urgency in the combat, as well as adding to the epic quality of the confrontation.

While the previous tracks are recurring in the saga¹⁷, the next and third track appears in a unique and original location in *Final Fantasy VII*: an industrial reactor. This is where Shinra processes the planet's fossil and ancestral energy and converts it into electricity to power the city and the various amenities the population enjoys. The ominous tone of the track, however, makes it clear that this is not an inviting place. Mako Reactor's track uses bells, choirs and instrumentation to create a decidedly oppressive atmosphere, thus helping the player to understand the gravity of the process taking place in the reactor. What's more, the feeling the track causes in the player can even be extrapolated into a feeling of antagonism towards Shinra - a feeling shared by the narrative's heroes.

Going beyond the game's intrinsic narrative, *Final Fantasy VII* carries a theme that highlights the weaknesses and flaws of the modern industrial world, emphasizing why this track has such dark undertones: "*Final Fantasy VII* is an iconic RPG that tackles environmental issues, capitalism and class inequality all at once. It's a story that seems to encompass everything, with its finger on the pulse of seemingly every social problem. According to *Final Fantasy VII* Remake producer Yoshinori Kitase, this is by design" (Colantonio 2022, s/p).

The last track we will analyze in *Final Fantasy VII* is probably the most infamous in the game, as it acts as the accompaniment to the final confrontation and as the iconic theme of the game's villain, Sephiroth. Sephiroth can be seen as Shinra's ultimate creation: when he was in his mother's womb, the company inserted alien DNA into the antagonist, leading to his superhuman attributes. When Sephiroth discovers what has been done to him, he swears revenge not only on Shinra, but on the entire planet, setting the apocalyptic story in motion. The name of the track is *One-Winged Angel*, referring to Sephiroth's appearance at the end of the game. It's interesting to note that *One-Winged Angel*'s lyrics are sung in Latin and reflect not only the villain's anger, but also his desire for immortality.

Estuans interius [Burning inside]
Ira vehementi [With violent rage]
Sephiroth
Sephiroth
(...)

¹⁷ Every *Final Fantasy* game has a *Prelude* and a *Battle Theme*.

Sors immanis [Monstrous fate]
Et inanis [And empty]
 (...)
Veni, veni, venias [Come, come, come]
Ne me mori facias [Don't let me die]
 (*Final Fantasy VII, One-Winged Angel, 1997*)



FIGURE 1
 Battle against the antagonist *Sephiroth* as the track *One-Winged Angel* plays.
 Source: authors.

The chorus throughout the track also sings Sephiroth's name, almost a kind of reference and cult to the villain, reflecting his power and status as a superhuman being. By the end of the game, Sephiroth is practically a divine entity, and can make use of supernatural powers and invocations, such as creating illusions, alternative dimensions and summoning meteors. In this light, the Latin and the choir, which are sometimes associated with religious chants and even the obscure, enhance Sephiroth's image as a mythical being, hence the title *One-Winged Angel*. For atmospheric and thematic purposes, this track also provokes some fear and anxiety in the player, as the name of the villain appears in the song itself as if it were praising him. The Latin chant, which for most players is an unfamiliar language, is also the generally oppressive composition that culminates in the player's intentional fear. *One Winged Angel*¹⁸ is characterized, in terms of sensations, by fear of the unknown,

¹⁸ Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSXj_FjjMAw. Consulted on October 6, 2023.

unpredictability and Sephiroth's cult of personality: “*One Winged Angel*’ is the story of Sephiroth, his tragic past and dark future if he achieves his plan to absorb the *Lifestream*” (Baird 2021, n/p).

5.[RE.]/BACK. 2000-2010

Shadow of the Colossus is an open-world action-adventure game with puzzle elements, originally released for PlayStation 2 in 2005. It was produced by the Japanese team Team Ico. *Shadow of the Colossus* acts as a kind of spiritual sequel to the video game *Ico*, produced by the same team and released in 2001. The game tells the story of Wander, a young man who travels to an abandoned peninsula known as the *Forbidden Lands* to resurrect a young girl called Mono. Although it is never explicitly stated throughout the game what the relationship between Wander and Mono is, everything points to it being a romantic connection.

In the *Shadow of the Colossus* universe, there is a legend that in these *Lands* an entity known as Dormin has the power to raise the dead. However, the mere act of entering the place is strictly forbidden. Upon arriving in the *Forbidden Lands*, Dormin notices that Wander holds a weapon known as the *Ancestral Sword* and offers the following proposal: if the young man defeats the 16 giant creatures, known as *Colossi*, scattered throughout the *Lands*, Dormin will bring Mono back to life. However, the enigmatic God warns Wander that the price he will have to pay could be high.

Before proceeding to explore the game's sound direction, it's important to elaborate a little more on the narrative and even the mechanics of the game, in order to achieve a more complete understanding of *Shadow of the Colossus*, offering a framework for its soundtrack. The game follows a minimalist approach in its execution, in the sense that it contains very few cutscenes and characters, little exposition of the story elements and, finally, the *Forbidden Lands* have no inhabitants of any kind, apart from the *Colossi* and the scarce wildlife. Some places in the *Lands*, where the *Colossi* live, leave clues and traces of a civilization that may have inhabited the peninsula a long time ago. Questions such as who Dormin is, who Wander is and where he came from, how the *Colossi* were created and what happened to the civilization that inhabited the *Forbidden Lands*, are left up to the players to decide, making it possible for them to construct their own narrative.

As far as the theme of this text is concerned, the game is almost entirely silent. Apart from the cutscenes and the battles against the *Colossi*, music is completely absent as the player explores the world, the focus being on the sounds of nature and the protagonist. The only comforting companion



Wander has his Agro - his mare - who helps him in some battles against the *Colossi* and in traversing the vast *Forbidden Lands*. All these elements culminate in a strong sense of loneliness and smallness for the player. What's more, it's interesting to note that *Shadow of the Colossus* seems to have taken inspiration from the biblical story of King Nimrod and the Tower of Babel.

The story goes that Nimrod was the first powerful being on Earth and, as such, he conquered several cities. Nimrod became so powerful that he decided to build a tower tall enough to reach Heaven and confront God. However, God made all the workers speak different languages so that the tower would never be completed, also serving as the biblical explanation of why there are different languages in the world. The people revolted against Nimrod and, after killing the tyrant, they separated his body into several parts, fearing that he was powerful enough to be resurrected. The parallels in *Shadow of the Colossus* are the following: i) 'Dormin' is 'Nimrod' spelled backwards; ii) Dormin speaks to Wander in the tallest structure in the entire game; iii) the 16 *Colossi* are a part of his essence; iv) the end of the game reveals that by killing the *Colossi*, Wander accidentally resurrects Dormin and becomes possessed by him.

With this context in mind, it may seem almost ironic that *Shadow of the Colossus* has a soundtrack that is not only vast, but also highly acclaimed by the video game industry: "The music guides the players and helps them imagine how the protagonist feels, what he has been through and his hopes. From this point of view, Kow Otani's compositions are incredibly powerful" (Fourcade 2014, s/p). Furthermore, in 2005, the American magazine *Electronic Gaming Monthly* chose the *Shadow of the Colossus* album, dubbed *Roar of the Earth*, as Soundtrack of the Year¹⁹. The first track we're going to analyze is the one that first appears in the game, known as *To the Ancient Land*²⁰, and it appears in the prologue that shows Wander's journey to the *Forbidden Lands*.

It's interesting to compare this track with the Prelude from *Final Fantasy VII* and the Title Theme from *The Legend of Zelda*. All three tracks accompany the beginning of the games and establish a distinct atmospheric quality from the start. Similarly, it's interesting to see the technological progress from the 1980s to the PlayStation 2 generation, where it was already possible to put music that was considered real and orchestrated on a DVD for the player to enjoy, with expert systems in play here.

19 Available at: https://teamico.fandom.com/wiki/Shadow_of_the_Colossus. Consulted on October 6, 2023.

20 Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRnIRjV1-Ow>. Consulted on October 6, 2023.

In the specifics of *To the Ancient Land* and having already given some context to the plot of *Shadow of the Colossus*, this is a distinctly heavy, solemn, slow and mysterious track, reflecting not only the metaphorical and literal weight that Wander carries in Mono, but also acting as a preface to the player and protagonist's exploration of a place full of secrets and mysteries, *The Forbidden Lands*.

It is possible to argue that the gracefulness or even the sublimeness (Bourdieu 1996) of this track intensifies the rich and organic ambience that we see in the prologue and throughout the game. Finally, it is curious to note that in the final part of the track the music rises a little, coordinated with the moment when Wander finally crosses the bridge and enters the *Lands*, allowing the player to take a glimpse of the scenery: "The prologue (called "*To the Ancient Land*" as a time travel), which plays right at the beginning, offers the game a color of sadness, but evolves throughout its variations towards the evocation of a continuous journey and the discovery of a new place. The sadness dissolves, giving way to the unknown (...) The melancholic tone of this intro really evokes times past and times yet to come" (Fourcade 2014, s/p).

Moving on to a track that accompanies moments of the gameplay, we have *Despair Filled Farewell*²¹. Despite appearing more than once throughout the game, this track is strongly associated with the fifth colossus (a kind of giant bird), and appears when the player finally manages to master it. The first thing that stands out is the sense of urgency and danger with which the track begins, and lasts for approximately the first minute. This first minute can capture the feeling and experience of the player being lifted off the ground and into the sky by their opponent. The rest of the track, however, adds a different aspect to the confrontation, as if the player has overcome the initial shock and anxiety, and now feels the adrenaline and excitement that is the speed of flight and combat against the opponent. As if the game itself recognized the importance of the moment, it even introduces some choir notes just before the track goes into a loop.

Although the fights in *Shadow of the Colossus* are universally considered to be the game's great and defining moments, it's also possible to argue that Wander is nevertheless making a mistake by chasing down and killing these creatures. These confrontations end in euphoria and enthusiasm for the players, replacing them with introspection and even regret for the act committed. This brings us to the third track to analyze, *Demise of the Ritual*²², which plays during the battle against the last colossus in the game. The contrast with the previous track is immediately noticeable: while

²¹ Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p8UqJKY_HVU&t=31s. Consulted on October 6, 2023.

²² Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pTjTs5AbVIg>. Consulted on 23 October 2023.

Despair Filled Farewell is characterized by its strong and epic orchestra, *Demise of the Ritual* highlights the heavy and serious side of Wander's task.

The appearance of the last colossus can also intensify this aspect because, after killing 15 beasts, it is ironic that Wander kills the most human-looking colossus in the game last, therefore ending his own humanity. The depressing and somber tone of the track looks forward to Wander's outcome after completing his journey. Finally, this track suits the atmosphere of the last confrontation in the game, given that the final arena is located at the absolute southern tip of the *Forbidden Lands*, the only place where night exists, where it rains and thunders, this being a stark contrast to the cloudy, gray day that is the rest of the game. It can be said that, while the second track allows the player to appreciate the epic and impressive qualities of the journey, the third offers a space to reflect on the path that Wander has traveled, ponder the justice of his actions and, finally, what will be the price to pay that Dormin mentions. This brings us to the final track of *Shadow of the Colossus*. Just as the opening track was reserved for the game's prologue, it's interesting to analyze the track reserved for the end, nicknamed *Sunlit Earth*²³.

This track and the scene that accompanies it are important on different levels. Although the game ends on an uncertainty note, hope seems to persist. In other words, the truth is that Wander has successfully completed his task because Mono has been resurrected and, from a certain point of view, the hero has been given a second chance at life by being reincarnated as a baby. So *Sunlit Earth*, rather than being gloomy or melancholic, is a triumphant track, because the ending scene that accompanies it is not tragic. Dormin seems to have disappeared for good and the *Colossi* no longer roam the *Forbidden Lands*, opening the possibility for new life to inhabit the forgotten peninsula and start a new cycle, as the final scene shows, with the deer, birds and squirrels surrounding Mono, Agro and baby Wander.

Shadow of the Colossus ends with almost as many - if not more - doubts for the player as when it began, but *Sunlit Earth* gives players hope that their actions, however morally ambiguous, were not in vain and that they may have given a new chance to the *Lands* in which they wandered and fought for so many hours: "The piece that concludes the epilogue, entitled "*Sunlit Earth*", reminds us of the predominance of sunlight in this world and offers the player a feeling of peace: we have eventually escaped the worst and life can go on even though this piece, during the credits sequence, ends on a less optimistic note (violins serious and sad, thunder rumbles)" (Fourcade 2014, s/p).

23 Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tl6qvsXx-7c&ab_channel=TheOSTmaster Consulted on 23 October 2023.



Finally, we come to *Persona 5*. This is a video game released in 2016 in Japan, and in 2017 in the rest of the world, by Japanese producer Atlus. It is the sixth entry in the *Persona* JRPG (*Japanese role-playing game*) series. A *Role Playing Game*, is a game where the player controls one or more characters in a pre-established world, generally accompanied by an overall narrative. *Persona 5* is characterized by its gameplay being divided into two very distinct strands: the first is a classic system of turn-based combat and exploration of dungeons and palaces and the other half, a kind of real-life simulator where the protagonist takes part in different everyday activities. Developing a little further, it's about a 16-17 year-old boy who lives in Tokyo. The protagonist attends high school, works part-time, socializes with friends and classmates with the aim of developing and strengthening his personal characteristics and qualities, which then help him in his double life as the leader of a team of students who try to fight the evils of society using supernatural powers, called the *Phantom Thieves*. In fact, this duality already reflects the way *Persona 5*'s music accompanies the game as its story progresses.

Persona 5's musical repertoire consists of 110 soundtracks. It's important to make a distinction here in relation to the approach taken to soundtrack direction in video games in general. On the one hand, we can invoke the video game mentioned first, *The Legend of Zelda*, with a reasonably short soundtrack, with only seven tracks, and focused on the generic theme of exploring and discovering. Regardless of which region of the global map the player is in, the music is always the same, changing only when the player descends into dungeons or performs very specific actions. On the other hand, *Persona 5*'s music changes almost constantly and dynamically, depending on the player's actions, i.e. when they enter combat, when they visit a store, among other examples. Furthermore, there may even be different versions of the same song depending on the weather that day. This is one of the explanatory factors for the vast selection of music in *Persona 5* and in JRPG games: "listening to these songs on their own can be a joy in itself, but the juxtaposition of these orchestrations within the moments of the game makes these tracks very impactful. Like many JRPGs, the music in *Persona* is an essential part of the experience, but the series' composer, Shoji Meguro, raises the bar by creating a whole world around his orchestrations" (Dolen 2021, s/p).

Music plays a major role in the players' ability to immerse themselves and perform a roleplay. The music is closely related to the theme of the game, which is characterized by being narrative, visual and sonically focused on contrast. The contrast is especially present in the fact that the main characters lead a double life, because when the action takes place during the protagonist's ordinary daily life, the music that accompanies these moments is jazz and beats that invoke some relaxation. At other times, such as combat or exploration, the music switches to rock and more intense rhythms.

Translated by Ana
Letícia de Fiori,
except the movie
quotes, which have
been extracted
from the official
subtitles.

Let's make this explanation more concrete by looking at some of the music in the game. Four songs have been chosen to illustrate the singularities inherent to the game. Let us start with the track *Beneath the Mask*²⁴, composed by Shoji Meguro, lyrics by Rike Schmalz and sung by Lyn Inaizumi. This track is usually reserved for moments in the game that take place in the protagonist's daily life; moments of dark, somber retrospection. The music itself can be characterized as calm, with a light and relatively slow rhythm. However, the analytical focus can be more strongly on the lyrics present (Guerra 2000b, 2000c, 2020e), where several verses allude to the protagonist's double identity. In fact, the very title *Beneath the Mask* makes this clear, since the protagonist and his teammates wear different masks and uniforms as *Phantom Thieves*. From a certain point of view, it's possible to interpret the lyrics of this song as an exaggerated and metaphorical version of the protagonist's inner thoughts,

*I'm a shape shifter
At Poe's masquerade
Hiding both face and mind
(Persona 5, Beneath the Mask, 2016)*



FIGURE 2

Rainy day in *Persona 5*, typically accompanied by a calm and slow version of *Beneath the Mask*.

Source: authors.

24 Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iqy3E5sAa6Y> Consulted on September 23, 2023.

These verses can be connected to the dissimulation that the protagonist uses to hide his identity. In addition to the mask hiding his identity, he is also forced to hide his feelings and act as normal as possible: “This jazz melody is not only charming, gentle and easy to listen to, but it also serves as a theme for the protagonist. The hero of *Persona 5* puts on many physical and metaphorical masks throughout the story, and while Joker (as his friends call him in the *Metaverse*) is a dashing and fearless leader, the protagonist is ultimately an ordinary high school student forced to deal with an extraordinary situation” (Corbett 2021, s/p). This interpretation connects with the following two verses that refer to the protagonist’s need to preserve his identity and his supernatural secrets, see “Please don’t take off my mask/ Revealing darkness” (*Persona 5, Beneath the Mask*, 2016). Finally, with regard to this track in particular, the following verses are relevant to the overall thematic demonstration of *Persona 5*,

*Moments of calm
Nothing left to be found
A mirror right in front of me
That’s where I find
An empty glass
Reflecting the sad truth
It’s telling words not to be told
I need the mask
(Persona 5, Beneath the Mask, 2016)*

In these verses, it is possible to recognize not only the calm and gloomy tone of this track - “Moments of calm”, “...sad truth” - but also a small reference to the urban and impersonal setting in which the game takes place through the verse “An empty glass”. Tokyo, like any big city, has several bars and cafés and they are closely associated with the atmospheric and visual panorama of a big city; in fact, the protagonist, throughout the game, lives in the attic of a café called “Leblanc”.

Moving on to the next track, *Tokyo Daylight*²⁵, which appears during everyday moments, also composed by Shoji Meguro and sung by Lyn Inazumi. An interesting feature is the scat singing technique used by the vocalist. This technique is common in jazz music. As far as the track itself is concerned, it’s worth observing the youthful and cheerful quality of the song’s composition. The track tends to be reserved for moments when there are no imminent dangers or particularly pleasant days for the protagonist and his friends and is a contrast to the previous track. It is even possible to observe that *Beneath the Mask* corresponds to the daily

25 Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vI9u_IeYJfi&t=69s Consulted on September 23, 2023.

life that the protagonist lives when he feels the weight of his double life and *Tokyo Daylight* reflects another daily life, the one that the protagonist witnesses as a mundane teenager.

While these first two tracks take place in the everyday moments of the game, the next two correspond to moments of battle, specifically when the protagonist and his team act as *Phantom Thieves*. The first of the two is the track *Last surprise*²⁶, composed by Shoji Meguro, lyrics by Benjamin Franklin and performed by Lyn Inaizumi. The lyrics of this song make it possible to correlate it with one of the previous tracks, *Beneath the Mask*, mainly because the lyrics of this song can be seen as an exaggerated dialog between the protagonist and his team and their enemies. The rhythm, lyrics and action that accompany the music invoke not only the frenetic quality of combat, but also the aesthetic and element of surprise inherent to the game's artistic direction. The title effectively evades this observation, as the act of fighting with the protagonist and his allies is the “last surprise” that the enemies will experience.



FIGURE 3
Typical moment of battle in *Persona 5*, the context in which the track *Last Surprise* appears.
Source: authors.

You'll never see it coming
You'll see that my mind is too fast for eyes
You're done in
By the time it's hit you, your last surprise
(*Persona 5, Last Surprise, 2016*)

²⁶ Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_WLNdxQCr04 Consulted on September 23, 2023.

The commitment made to style and a certain eccentricity, both on the part of the game and on the part of the *Phantom Thieves* themselves, in their performance and the way they present themselves, is revealed, not only in this verse presented, but in others. The opening verses of the song exemplify this point.

*You try to run me through
Hold on
Think again
Don't you know
What you're starting
But ... you sure ain't got a clue
How bad
This will go
Don't you know
Know my art
(Art of war)
(Persona 5, Last Surprise, 2016)*

At first glance, it's possible to identify a curious detail, which is that the music and lyrical delivery is considerably accelerated and with few words per verse, reflecting the speed of combat. There is also a subversion of expectations in the ambush of the enemy. Although it is the *Phantom Thieves* who are infiltrating the enemy(s)' home, it is implied that it would be smart of them to leave us alone ("Hold on, Think again, Don't you know, What you're starting"; "...you sure ain't got a clue"). Finally, it is in this verse that we can also see that even the act of fighting is seen as something splendid for the protagonists, being compared to an art: "Know my art, (Art of War)", also serving as a reference to the book written by military strategist Sun Tzu "The Art of War".

As for the last track selected for *Persona 5* and keeping with the theme of the game's balanced thematic demo; the last track is, like the previous one, one that accompanies moments of battle, called *Blooming Villain* ²⁷, composed by Shoji Meguro. As the name suggests, it's the track that plays when you're in combat with one of the various villains throughout the game. Listening to this track, you can find quite a few differences from the previous one, even though they were produced to accompany combat. *Blooming Villain* reveals more intense and heavy rock elements, without lyrics and/or vocal elements, perhaps to convey some added seriousness and fading the jocular tone of *Last Surprise*, being a fight with a villain and not with a banal enemy who is, in comparison, seen as something

²⁷ Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ItxWMuW3jQg> Consulted on October 6, 2023.

easy for the player. In these final moments of confrontation in order to triumph, the *Phantom Thieves* need to be at the top of their skills, just as the player in real life is rushed and pressured by the urgent tone in order to “feel the skin” of the protagonist’s feelings.

6. THE SOUND OF THE END

After this analysis, it becomes possible to see the importance of music and sounds within video games, namely by interpreting them as Dionysian machines, but it also allows us to get a glimpse of the role that sound plays in designing processes of fruition, and also at the level of identity construction processes, since music, by contributing to the success of the video game, marks the construction of an affective scenario. This importance has become even more relevant as the degree of realism in games has increased, as can be seen in the case studies selected for this article. As we have seen, the degree of realism of the music and sounds contributes to creating an immersive atmosphere for players (Boury & Mustaro 2013). The emergence of museums dedicated to the presentation of video games all over the world has emphasized the idea that video games can be considered cultural artefacts, as well as manifestations and materializations of a material and immaterial cultural heritage (Heinich 2010). Thinking of games like *The Legend of Zelda* from the 1980s, but also *Final Fantasy VII*, released in the 1990s, reflects the idea of nostalgia (Sloan 2014), which focuses on the importance of preserving a cultural and artistic legacy, which has a broad and multifaceted character. We can see the importance of the technological and digital presence within video games, as a means of promoting immersion in a parallel and alternative reality, allowing them to escape their daily lives - sometimes controversial and difficult - and replacing them with the experience of embodying other individuals in other stories: from young people with a sword in their hand exploring unknown places to wandering the stylized streets of Tokyo in *Persona 5*.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

- Adorno, T. 1976. *Introduction to the sociology of music*. New York: Seabury.
- Baird, S. 2021. FF7: The English Lyrics for sephiroth’s theme & what they mean. *Screen Rant*, 26/02/2021. Available at: <https://screenrant.com/f77-sephiroth-one-winged-angel-english-translation-meaning/> Accessed on: 10 October 2023.
- Belk, R. e Kozinets, R. 2006. Introduction to the Resonant Representations Issue of Consumption, Markets and Culture. *Consumption, Markets & Culture*, vol. 8, n.º 8: 195-203.
- Bourdieu, P. 1996. *As regras da arte: gênese e estrutura do campo literário*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.

- Boury, E.S. e Mustaro, P.N. 2013. Um estudo sobre áudio como elemento imersivo em jogos eletrônicos. *SBC – Proceedings of SBC Games 2013, Art & Design Track*: 345–352. Available at: <https://www.sbgames.org/sbgames2013/proceedings/artedesign/41-dt-paper.pdf> Accessed on: 10 October 2023.
- Brown, A.; Luterbach, K. e Sugar, W. 2009. *The Current State of Screencast Technology and What is Known About its Instructional Effectiveness*. Waynsville: Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE). <https://www.learntechlib.org/primary/p/30870/>
- Colantonio, G. 2022. Final Fantasy VII is more relevant than ever, 25 years later. *Digital Trends*, 31/01/2022. <https://www.digitaltrends.com/gaming/final-fantasy-vii-25-years/> Accessed on: 7 October 2023.
- Collins, K. 2009. An Introduction to procedural music in video games. *Contemporary Music Review*, 28, 5–15.
- Corbett, N. 2021. How Persona 5 Royal's Soundtrack Tells the Game's Story. *CBR*, 21/06/2021. Available at: <https://www.cbr.com/persona-5-soundtrack-important-songs/> Accessed on: 8 October 2023.
- Deleuze, G. e Krauss, R. 1983. Plato and the Simulacrum. *October*, vol. 27: 45–56.
- DeNora, T. 2004. *Music in everyday life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- DeNora, T. 2003. After Adorno: rethinking music sociology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dolen, R. 2021. The Impact of Music in the Persona Series. *Game Rant*, 5/01/2021. <https://gamerant.com/persona-series-music-soundtrack-impact/> Accessed on: 9 October 2023.
- Frith, S. 2007. *Taking popular music seriously*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh.
- Frith, S. 1996. *Performing rites: Evaluating popular music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fourcade, F. 2014. The Art of Shadow of the Colossus (5/6): Music. *Game Developer*, 14/04/2014. <https://www.gamedeveloper.com/audio/the-art-of-shadow-of-the-colossus-5-6-music> Accessed on: 8 October 2023.
- Fujita, M.; Harrigan, P. & Soutar, G. 2017. A netnography of a university's social media brand community: Exploring collaborative co-creation tactics. *Journal of Global Scholars of Marketing Science* vol. 27, n.º 2: 148–164. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21639159.2017.1283798>
- Giddings, S. 2007. Dionysiac Machines: Videogames and the triumph of the simulacra. *Convergence: The international Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, vol. 13, n.º 4: 417–431.
- Grimshaw, M. & Schott, G. 2007. Situating gaming as a sonic experience: The acoustic ecology of First Person Shooters [Electronic version]. Situated Play, Digital Games Research Association. Tokyo: The University of Tokyo, 474 481. <http://www.digra.org/dl/db/07311.06195.pdf>
- Guerra, P. 2020a. Another music in a different (and unstable) room: A route through underground music scenes in contemporary Portuguese society. In Treece, D. (Ed.) (2020) - *Music scenes and migrations. Space and transnationalism in Brazil, Portugal and the Atlantic*, 185–194. London: Anthem Press.
- Guerra, P. 2020b. Under-Connected: Youth subcultures, resistance and sociability in the internet age. In Gildart, K.; Gough-Yates, A.; Lincoln, S.; Osgerby, B.; Robinson, L.; Street, J.; Webb, P. & Worley, M. (Eds.) (2020). *Hebdige and Subculture in the Twenty-First Century. Through the Subcultural Lens*. Palgrave Studies in the History of Subcultures and Popular Music, 207–230. London: Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
- Guerra, P. 2020c. Other Scenes, Other Cities and Other Sounds in the Global South: DIY music scenes beyond the creative city. *Journal of Arts Management and Cultural Policy*, 2020, vol. 1: Special Issue Creative Cities off the Beaten Path: 55–75.

- Guerra, P. 2020d. Um lugar sem lugar... No rock português. *Outros Tempos – Pesquisa em Foco*, vol. 2, n.º 25: 181-204.
- Guerra, P. 2020e. The Song Is Still a 'Weapon': The Portuguese identity in times of crises. *YOUNG – Nordic Journal of Youth Research*, vol. 28, n.º 1: 1-18.
- Guerra, P. 2019. Espaços liminares de sociabilidade contemporânea. O caso ilustrativo do Festival Paredes de Coura, Portugal. *Estudos de Sociologia, Recife*, vol. 2, n.º 25: 51-88.
- Guerra, P. 2013. *A instável leveza do rock*. Porto: Edições Afrontamento.
- Guerra, P.; Sarrouy, A.D. & Brandão, M.D. (2019). Antoine Hennion: música, mediação e amadores. *Estudos de Sociologia*, vol. 2, n.º 25: 29-49.
- Halbwachs, M. 1992. *On collective memory*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Heinich, N. 2010. *La Fabrique du patrimoine. De la cathédrale à la petite cuillère*. Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.
- Hennion, A. 1990. The production of success: An antimusicology of the pop song. In Frith, S. & Goodwin, A. (eds.). *On record: rock, pop and the written word*, 180-206. London, New York: Routledge.
- Horowitz, S. & Loone, S. 2014. *The essential guide to game audio: the theory and practice of sound for games*. Burlington: Focal Press.
- Kawaf, F. 2019. Capturing digital experience: The method of screencast videography. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, vol. 36, n.º 2: 169-184.
- Kozinets, R. V. 2015. *Netnography: redefined*. London: Sage.
- Lash, S. & Urry, J. 1994. *Economies of signs and space*. London: Sage.
- Ho Sang, N. 2016. The amazing music of *Final Fantasy VII*. *Kotaku* 29/05/2016. <https://kotaku.com/the-amazing-music-of-final-fantasy-vii-1779348070> Accessed on: 7 October 2023.
- Holbrook, M. D. 2006. Consumption experience, customer value, and subjective personal introspection: An illustrative photographic essay. *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 59, n.º 6: 714-725.
- Lima, F. M. A. 2022. *Cultura de fãs – uma perspectiva sobre as comunidades e eventos de gaming*. Tese de Mestrado, Escola Superior de Comunicação Social, Lisboa.
- Martin, P. J. 1995. *Sounds and society: themes in the sociology of music*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Meneguet, L. C. 2011. Dead Space: estudo de caso e reflexões sobre áudio dinâmico. In: *IV Gamepad - Seminário de games, comunicação e tecnologia*. Novo Hamburgo, RS.
- Pichlmair, M. & Kayali, F. 2007. Levels of sound: On the principles of interactivity in music video games. *Digital Games Research Association*: 424-430.
- Reynolds, S. 2011. *Retromania: Pop Culture's Addiction to Its Own Past*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Samper-Martínez, A. & García-Álvarez, E. 2023. Netnography: a route to explore identity evolution as online videogames develop. In Winkler, E.; Reissner, S. & Cascón-Pereira, R. (eds). *Handbook of Research Methods for Studying Identity In and Around Organizations*, 104-116. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Sanders, T. & Cairn, P. 2010. Time perception, immersion and music in videogames. *BCS '10: Proceedings of the 24th BCS Interaction Specialist Group Conference*: 160-167.
- Sloan, R. J. 2014. Videogames as remediated memories: Commodified nostalgia and hyperreality in *Far Cry 3: Blood Dragon* and *Gone Home*. *Games and Culture*, vol. 10, n.º 6: 525-550.
- Sveistrup, H. 2004. Motor rehabilitation using virtual reality. *Journal of NeuroEngineering and Rehabilitation*, vol. 1, n.º 10. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1743-0003-1-10>

Witt, L. & Castro, K. 2023. What Makes Legend of Zelda Music So Good. *Pianote*. 18/08/2023. <https://www.pianote.com/blog/zelda-soundtrack-koji-kondo/> Accessed on: 6 October 2023.

VIDEOGRAPHY

Counter-Strike. 1999. *Counter-Strike*. Bellevue, Washington, EUA: Valve

Eternal Sonata. 2007. *Eternal Sonata*. Tokyo: tri-Crescendo.

Final Fantasy VII. 1997. *Final Fantasy VII*. Tokyo: Squaresoft.

Ico. 2001. *Ico*. Tokyo: SCE Japan Studio (Team Ico).

Persona 5. 2016. *Persona 5*. Tokyo: P-Studio.

Shadow of Colossus. 2005. *Shadow of Colossus*. Tokyo: SCE Japan Studio (Team Ico).

Sonic the Hedgehog. 1991. *Sonic the Hedgehog*. Kyoto: Nintendo EAD.

Street Fighter II. 1991. *Street Fighter II*. Osaka: Capcom.

Super Mario Bros. 1985. *Super Mario Bros*. Kyoto: Nintendo EAD

The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim. 2011. *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*. Rockville, Maryland, EUA: Bethesda Game Studios.

The Legend of Zelda. 1986. *The Legend of Zelda*. Kyoto: Nintendo EAD.



Paula Guerra is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Porto and Researcher at the Institute of Sociology at the same University. Paula is also an Adjunct Associate Professor at the Griffith Center for Social and Cultural Research at Griffith University in Australia. She is a researcher at CITCEM – Center for Transdisciplinary Research on Culture, Space and Memory, at the Center for Geography and Spatial Planning Studies (CEGOT) and at DIN MIA'CET – Iscte, Center for Studies on Socioeconomic Change and Territory. She is the founder/coordinator of Rede Todas as Artes: Rede Luso-Afro-Brasileira de Sociologia da Cultura e das Artes and KISMIF (kismifconference.com and kismifcommunity.com). He is president of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM) Portugal and is a member of the board of the Research Network on Sociology of Art of the European Sociological Association. Coordinates several research projects related to youth cultures, sociology of arts and culture, co-creation, research methodologies and techniques, DIY cultures, among other topics. He has also supervised several master's, doctoral and post-doctoral projects in the aforementioned areas. Paula is editor-in-chief (with Andy Bennett) of the SAGE DIY magazine, Alternative Cultures and Society. E-mail: mariadeguerra@gmail.com

Rodrigo Serra Diogo has a Master's degree in Sociology from the Faculty of Arts of the University of Porto. Rodrigo also has a degree in Sociology. His research interests include youth cultures, the sociology of arts and culture, the sociology of video games and the sociology of music.

Use license. This article is licensed under the Creative Commons CC-BY License. With this license you can share, adapt, create for any purpose, as long as you attribute the authorship of the work.

Submitted: 10/25/2023
Resubmitted: 04/11/2024
Accepted: 04/24/2024