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AINULINDALĚ, THE LORD OF THE RINGS AND LOTRO: ABOUT TIME

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Abstract: According to Physics (HAWKING, 2017), time originated at the Big Bang. According to some religions, time originated at the moment God created the universe. Arda's time originated with the music sung by the Ainur and the counting of the days begun with Anar. In the following, I would like to offer a series of thoughts on the phenomenon of time comparing *The Lord of The Rings Online (Lotro)*, released by Turbine Inc. and now maintained by Standing Stone Games, to Tolkien's Arda. Also, I would like to introduce the idea that while time is originated both by the wonderful beings Ainur and Anar in the book, the player is the wonderful being that rules her/his own present time in *Lotro*. To do this, I proceed via a brief account of Stephen Hawking's and game researchers' considerations about time. I propose that even in their differences the dialogue established between the media (literature and video game) is successful. More specifically, I suggest that each medium has its particularities however from their dynamic dialogue fruitful intermediatic creations may emerge.

Keywords: Time, ainulindalĚ, Tolkien, *Lotro*.

Resumo: Segundo a Física (HAWKING, 2017), o tempo se originou no Big Bang. Segundo algumas religiões, o tempo se originou no momento em que Deus criou o universo. O tempo de Arda se originou com a música cantada pelos Ainur e a contagem dos dias foi iniciada com Anar. A seguir, gostaria de oferecer uma série de reflexões sobre o fenômeno do tempo comparando O Senhor dos Anéis Online (Lotro), lançado pela Turbine Inc. e agora mantido pela Standing Stone Games, para a Arda de Tolkien. Além disso, gostaria de apresentar a ideia de que enquanto o tempo é originado pelos maravilhosos seres Ainur e Anar no livro, o jogador é o ser maravilhoso que governa seu próprio tempo presente em Lotro. Para fazer isso, procuro por meio de uma breve descrição das considerações de Stephen Hawking e de pesquisadores de jogos de videogame sobre o tempo. Proponho que, mesmo em suas diferenças, o diálogo estabelecido entre as mídias (literatura e videogame) é bem-sucedido. Mais especificamente, sugiro que cada mídia tenha suas particularidades, mas que, a partir de seu diálogo dinâmico, podem surgir criações intermediárias frutíferas.

Palavras-chave: Tempo; ainulindalë; Tolkien, *Lotro*.

INTRODUCTION

The processes of adaptation and remediation of a literary work can be debated in many ways by the user (reader, spectator, player, etc.). According to intermedia studies, besides user's interpretations, scholars must explain the processes of dialogue without promoting value judgment. This means to understand that there are differences in the way each medium tends to produce its plurality of meanings. In a way that is appropriate to the circumstances, Linda Hutcheon (2013) explains that a story shown is not the same as a story told,

and none of them is the same as a story of which you participate or with which you interact:

To tell a story, as in novels, short stories, and even historical accounts, is to describe, explain, summarize, expand; the narrator has a point of view and great power to leap through time and space and sometimes to venture inside the minds of characters. To show a story, as in movies, ballets, radio and stage plays, musicals and operas, involves a direct aural and usually visual performance experienced in real time. (HUTCHEON, 2013, digital source)

Accordingly, the effect of reading will not be the same as watching or interacting. Among new media, digital media value interactivity. Becoming players in a product from a remediation process the users have the power to weave the story of their character (*avatar*) and interfere within the narrative(s). Pursuant to video games, a player is a user who projects herself/himself into a virtual world and has in her/his character the extension of her/his *self*. Considering the neurological level, the psychosomatic stimulus “allows us to feel our own body extending into the virtual environment through a kind of virtual tool-use” while the audiovisual stimulus “activates our own motor system as a response to observed motor systems” (GREGERSEN, GRODAL, 2009, p.69). The process develops “incarnation or personification”, i.e.,

when the player moves their body and an avatar moves in a corresponding way. The thumb pushes forward and the avatar walks [...]. My actions in the natural world extend into a virtual space. [...] Interactivity in games exhibit the same rhythm of the stable and precarious and it is this need that

allows room for authorial intent (DEEN, 2011, digital source).

“Interactive Fiction” (JUUL, 1998), in which Massively Multiplayer Online Role-playing Games (MMORPGs) are structured, is an attempt to combine games and fantastic narratives. According to Juul (1998), the combination of both media is “usually described as the best of both worlds, where the reader/player deeply concentrated can participate in a story that unfolds in new and ever more interesting patterns”.

In the following, I would like to offer a series of thoughts on the phenomenon of time comparing *The Lord of The Rings Online (Lotro)*, released by Turbine Inc. and now maintained by Standing Stone Games, to Tolkien’s Arda. To do this, I will proceed via a brief account of Stephen Hawking’s and game researchers’ considerations about time. I propose that despite the differences between the two media, the dialogue established between literature and video game is successful. More specifically, I will suggest that each medium has its particularities however from their dynamic dialogue fruitful intermedia creations may emerge.

I believe it is important to note that, for purposes of this text, Arda was considered an existing world, within its fantastic universe. Thus, all the descriptions found in *The Silmarillion* have been considered and applied in all their technicalities. Therefore, *The Silmarillion* was considered not only as a *fabularium* but as an expression of the truth concerning the cosmological genesis of Arda.

AINULINDALĒ

At first, Eru Ilúvatar was the One, until from his thoughts he created the Ainur, the Holy Ones. Then,

they sang before him, and he was glad. But for a long while they sang only each alone, or but few together, while the rest hearkened; for each comprehended only that part of the mind of Ilúvatar from which he came, and in the understanding of their brethren they grew but slowly. [...] Then Ilúvatar said to them: 'Of the theme that I have declared to you, I will now that ye make in harmony together a Great Music. And since I have kindled you with the Flame Imperishable, ye shall show forth your powers in adorning this theme, each with his own thoughts and devices, if he will. But I will sit and hearken, and be glad that through you great beauty has been wakened into song.' (TOLKIEN, 2017, digital source)

When the song came to its end, Ilúvatar rose and walked away from where the Ainur had always remained since their creation, and they accompanied him. When entering

the Void, Ilúvatar said to them: 'Behold your Music!' And he showed to them a vision, giving to them sight where before was only hearing; and they saw a new World made visible before them, and it was globed amid the Void, and it was sustained therein, but was not of it. And as they looked and wondered this World began to unfold its history, and it seemed to them that it lived and grew (TOLKIEN, 2017, digital source)

This world was Arda and what enveloped it was Ēa, the universe of everything that exists. And the world created by Tolkien has undergone several transformations over the years. Won and lost

continents, aged and saw great wars, just like our world. However, Arda underwent a structural transformation that obeys only the laws of Ilúvatar and that are not in the history of the Earth.

The Silmarillion tells that on an island on the Great Sea, between Aman and the Middle-earth, created by the Edain, there was Númenor. However, as a punishment, the island was destroyed when the Númenóreans rebelled and dared to sail towards Aman, the continent of Valinor, going against the law of the Valar by Melkor's influence.

With the destruction of Númenor, Arda, which was flat, became round. Aman was removed from the world and new lands and continents were created east and west of Middle-earth. Karen Wynn Fostand, the cartographer, comments in her cartographic study that

the consideration of whether this world was round or flat is inescapable for the cartographer attempting to map a world. One reference strongly indicated that Arda was originally flat: At the time of the fall of Númenor, Valinor was removed from Arda; then 'the world was indeed made round', although those permitted could still find the 'Straight Road' to Valinor. Prior to the change, the usage of the phrase 'Circle of the World' referred not to a planetary spherical shape, but rather to the physical outer limits or 'confines'. (FONSTAD, 1991, p.IX)

Also on that topic, Fonstad (1991) affirms that, despite being round, the maps of Arda provided by Tolkien in *The Lord of the Rings* describe it as flat, however, this would be more likely due to the fact that the author used to draw the maps with the intent of clarifying the world to his reader, than to represent the way its inhabitants

perceived it. Yet, if they perceived Arda as flat, “few of us really perceive ourselves as living on a rounded surface, even though we know it is!” (FONSTAD, 1991, p.IX).

A MATTER OF TIME

According to Stephen Hawking (2017), Aristotle, who already considered the hypothesis of the Earth being round, thought that our planet was stationary and that the Sun, the Moon, the planets and the stars moved in circular orbits around it. The theory was perfected in II A.D. by Ptolemy, who proposed a complete cosmologic system in which Earth was in the centre, surrounded by eight spheres that included the Moon, the Sun, the stars and the five planets known at the time: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn (HAWKING, 2017).

According to Hawking (2017), Aristotle believed in that because he felt, for mystical reasons, that the Earth was the centre of the universe and that the circular movement was the most perfect one, whereas the “Christian church” adopted Ptolemy’s model as the image of the universe that was according to the Scriptures, for it had the great advantage of leaving plenty of space beyond the sphere of fixed stars for heaven and hell (HAWKING, 2017).

Thus did Tolkien. Be it for a religious preference or for an accidental choice, Arda seems to be the centre of Eä. Even if it might not be possible to affirm the centrality of this world by its locus in the universe, it might be possible to affirm its relevance once no Eru Ilúvatar or Ainur activity associated to it is presented. No other world, planet or independent celestial body is presented in Eä.

The moment we are presented to Bilbo, in the Third Age, Arda is orbited by at least two other bodies that were created before the fall of Númenor: “Isil the Sheen the Vanyar of old named the Moon, flower of Telperion in Valinor; and Anar the Fire-golden, fruit of Laurelin, they named the Sun” (TOLKIEN, 2017, digital source). The bodies were guided by Tilion and Arien, respectively, and were created from the last breath of life of the trees Telperion and Laurelin which, before being destroyed by Melkor, once brought light into Valinor:

Isil was first wrought and made ready, and first rose into the realm of the stars, and was the elder of the new lights, as was Telperion of the Trees. Then for a while the world had moonlight, and many things stirred and woke that had waited long in the sleep of Yavanna. The servants of Morgoth were filled with amazement, but the Elves of the Outer Lands looked up in delight [...] Tilion had traversed the heaven seven times, and thus was in the furthest east, when the vessel of Arien was made ready. Then Anar arose in glory, and the first dawn of the Sun was like a great fire upon the towers of the Pelóri: the clouds of Middle-earth were kindled, and there was heard the sound of many waterfalls [...]. Now Varda purposed that the two vessels should journey in Ilmen and ever be aloft, but not together; each should pass from Valinor into the east and return, the one issuing from the west as the other turned from the east. Thus the first of the new days were reckoned after the manner of the Trees, from the mingling of the lights when Arien and Tilion passed in their courses, above the middle of the Earth. (TOLKIEN, 2017, digital source)

Tilion, however, presented an inconsistency in following his route and in his speed and did not follow the designated path. Moreover, he attempted to get closer to Arien, being attracted by her sumptuousness, even if Anar burned him and the island of the Moon became singed. Therefore,

because of the waywardness of Tilion [...] and yet more because of the prayers of Lórien and Estë, who said that sleep and rest had been banished from the Earth, and the stars were hidden, Varda changed her counsel, and allowed a time wherein the world should still have shadow and half-light. Anar rested therefore a while in Valinor, lying upon the cool bosom of the Outer Sea; and Evening, the time of the descent and resting of the Sun, was the hour of greatest light and joy in Aman. But soon the Sun was drawn down by the servants of Ulmo, and went then in haste under the Earth, and so came unseen to the east and there mounted the heaven again, lest night be over-long and evil walk under the Moon. [...] But Tilion went with uncertain pace, as yet he goes, and was still drawn towards Arien, as he shall ever be; so that often both may be seen above the Earth together, or at times it will chance that he comes so nigh that his shadow cuts off her brightness and there is a darkness amid the day. Therefore by the coming and going of Anar the Valar reckoned the days thereafter until the Change of the World. (TOLKIEN, 2017, digital source)

According to Physics (HAWKING, 2017), time originated at the Big Bang. According to religion, time originated at the moment God created the universe. According to Arda's inhabitants, time originated with the music sung by the Ainur and the counting of the days begins with Anar. Considering that the trajectory of the celestial

bodies has adapted to the new spherical shape after the Second Age, the counting of time is established, in regards to the passing of days, in a similar way to the one theorized by Aristotle and Ptolemy. That is, Anar and Isil would orbit that world in a circular trajectory. It cannot be determined if Anar would continue to rest in Valinor as it did when the world was flat. In fact, Aman's localization, from the moment it is removed from the world, becomes uncertain.

LOTRO, AN INTERACTIVE FICTION

In "On Fairy-Stories", J. R. R. Tolkien interprets fantastic universes and offers a proposition of characterization as a counterpoint to the real world, called "Primary World". Certainly, J. R. R. Tolkien theorized about the literary universe, but it seems like he introduces the understanding of experience site, which would be possible through video game: "Enchantment produces a Secondary World into which both designer and spectator can enter, to the satisfaction of their senses while they are inside; but in its purity it is artistic in desire and purpose" (TOLKIEN, 2012, digital source).

MMORPGs generate digital universes in which the programmers and the players find themselves connected. If, in literature, the Enchantment produces the Secondary World, in video games, the game (Secondary World) aims to be the path towards Enchantment. In the creation process of games, elements from other media are crossed and re-signified, provoking feelings and perceptions of the user who is used to a different interaction position in relation to the book and that, now, assumes a position of interaction, as an attempt of sensorial projection of the created universe. Thus, in this new world, it does not matter who practices the "Magic", even

amongst the players and the non-player characters (NPCs), those who are controlled through the software's artificial intelligence and that give the Interactive Fiction a sense of continuity, "fay or mortal [...] its desire is power in this world, domination of things and wills" (TOLKIEN, 2012, digital source).

With the opposition between Primary and Secondary Worlds in mind, Jesper Juul, in the introduction of his book *Half-Real*, explains the "half-reality" present in the act of playing:

Half-real refers to the fact that video games are two different things at the same time: video games are real in that they consist of real rules with which players actually interact, and in that winning or losing a game is a real event. However, when winning a game by slaying a dragon, the dragon is not a real dragon but a fictional one. To play a video game is therefore to interact with real rules while imagining a fictional world, and a video game is a set of rules as well as a fictional world. (JUUL, 2011, p.1)

In a way that, in order for the interaction with the rules to be successful, they need to be well-defined, so the player does not feel bothered or constantly struggling with them while playing the game. Because, as in literature, one can construct a totally unreal world, as Umberto Eco (1984) suggests, in which donkeys fly and the princesses are resurrected by a kiss, and still, it is necessary that this world, merely possible and unreal, exists, according to previously defined structures (we must know if in this world a princess can be resurrected only by the kiss of a prince or another being, and if the kiss of a princess turns into a prince only the frogs or other animals).

Regarding video games, rules vary from establishing the dimension of the game (platform games, for instance, are played in two dimensions, and the player can only move right or left - right is usually preferred by the developers), to the goal of the game (in *Sonic the Hedgehog*, for instance, there is no doubt that the goal of the game is to collect the biggest number of points in order to pass the levels and unlock bonus levels, and not only to make Sonic walk from one end to another, in the game).

Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games “run continuously 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and which are so large, that no one can ever see all the events occurring, nor can the game be restarted and replayed; they can only be experienced once in real time just like historical events, and each player’s experiences will be unique” (WOLF, 2008, p.23).

Thus, MMOs present broader objectives and even a multiplicity of possible goals to be chosen by the player, but they still have specific rules. In *Lotro*, the player is presented to a character creation screen where they can name their future avatar and choose its race (hobbit, elf, dwarf, beorning or man), its physical characteristics (eye and hair colour, the shape of face etc.) and the place of birth.

Along with these options, the user also must choose a class skill for their avatar. The class skills in *Lotro* are inspired by John Tolkien’s characters. Thus, the options for classes and places of birth are linked to the race, as it is described in Tolkien’s books. Therefore, an elf cannot be a burglar, playable only with man and hobbits, nor can it be born in Iron Hills or Erebor, both Dwarf homes. Another important rule is related to the names; each character created by

the player is unique; therefore, cloned names among the players are not possible, neither is the use of names created by Tolkien or names already used by the programmers in the NPCs. The players can create more than five characters for themselves, with names, classes, races etc. all of them different, to their choice.

The goals of the game are wide, and each player ends up finding their own motives to keep on playing. Because it is a Massively Multiplayer Online Role-playing Game, *Lotro* allows the player to live a life, the one of their characters, and, because of that, it gives the players the chance to perform ordinary tasks, such as buying and decorating a house, having a job (cook, farmer, jeweller etc.), having a family with up to nine generations with the same last name and adopting other players' characters, among other chores. The player travels through Middle-earth and has the opportunity of becoming a recognized hero when helping the Free Peoples in missions and stories that, at multiple points, follow Tolkien's narrative or, at other times, cross that narrative but with additions created by the developers.

There is a significant number of time differences between video games and narratives to consider. The first one is the fact that the narrative has a beginning and an ending, even if the ending is open to interpretation and the beginning may not be the actual start of a storyline, in the case of narratives that start *in media res*. The narrative starts and ends, even if, for the character, the ending is a metaphor for a new start, as in Michael Laub's *Diary Of the Fall*, in which the reader, in the end, discovers that a new life presents itself to the narrator with the arrival of a son.

Considering the temporality that is characteristic to the narrative, Christian Metz argues that it is a “double temporal sequel”, because

there is the time of the thing told and the time of the telling (the time of the significate and the time of the signifier). This duality not only renders possible all the temporal distortions that are commonplace in narratives (three years of the hero's life summed up in two sentences of a novel or in a few shots of a “frequentative” montage in film, etc.). More basically, it invites us to consider that one of the functions of narrative is to invent one time scheme in terms of another time scheme. (METZ, 1991, p.18)

In Metz's citation, there is an opposition in the time of the discourse and the time of the story that coexist. In literature, time presents itself, according to Calvino (1990), as a richness which anyone may use with prodigality and indifference: it is not about being the first to reach a predefined limit; on the contrary, time-saving is something good, because the more we save our time, the more time we may lose. The reader does not wish to achieve goals during his reading process, the player does. The player always has somewhere to go, someone to talk to, an enemy to defeat.

Juul points out that, whilst reading a romance, the reader edifies a plot from the discourse exposed to her/him - most of it in a non-chronological order: “part of the traditional novel-format is a narrator recounting previously happened events. So, we get the time of the narrated, the time of the narration and the time of the reading” (JUUL, 1998, digital source).

Anyways, types and styles there may exist for narratives' beginnings and endings, the dynamics are opposed to those of a

world in which the user herself/himself develops her/his narrative, as narrator and protagonist at the same time, from her/his own choices, while living with other users as a collaborator, as supporting characters. Lately, I have been attempting to formalize the idea that these games are universes widely developed and that they present themselves in many different aspects. In the words of Helena Cole and Mark D. Griffiths, MMORPGs “are fully developed multiplayer universes with an advanced and detailed visual and auditory world in which players create an individualistic character”; thus, they “provide the only setting in which millions of users voluntarily immerse themselves in a graphical virtual environment and interact with each other through avatars on a daily basis” (COLE; GRIFFITHS, 2007, p. 575-576).

This interaction between the users themselves and between the users and the software makes the perception of time more complex in MMORPGs. In the following, I present some time-related peculiarities that can be found specifically on *The Lord of the Rings Online* in comparison to J. R. R. Tolkien’s book.

THE HOURS OF THE DAY AND THE DAYS OF THE YEAR

Players have their real time - the time that they are living, as people, their daily routine. When interacting with other players as the real person they are – not interpreting the character’s role –, they interact with people all around the globe that also have their own real time, that is, their own time zone and their own daily routine. The game also has its own time zone, called *game time*, and the player can see Anar (the sun) and Isil (the moon) circling around Arda’s sky many times while playing. A whole day, according

to *Lotro's* game time, lasts 3 hours and 6 minutes of the player's real time, in which 1 hour, 42 minutes and 20 seconds regard to daytime, and 1 hour, 23 minutes and 40 seconds regard to night-time.

Because of the similarity of Isil and Anar's path to the sun and the moon's path, or even because of the omission of information on *The Hobbit* and on *The Lord of The Rings*, it is probable that the reader interprets the counting of the hours of a day in Arda as the counting of the hours of a day on Earth. In the narrative, it is through Anar's paths that the Valar counted the days from there until the "Change of the World". In the game, unlike the counting of the hours, the counting of the days is not that clear.

THE COUNTING OF THE DAYS

Given its peculiarities and different nomenclature, the Middle-earth calendars created by Tolkien and presented on the "Appendix D" of *The Lord of the Rings* - which includes the Shire Reckoning, the Calendar of Imladris, and the King's Reckoning (current in Númenor, Arnor and Gondor) - had the same amount of days in a year as the Gregorian calendar. However, each one of them would adjust the spare hours by withdrawing or attaching days in its own way. The Shire Reckoning was the one with more similarities with the Gregorian calendar on the counting of spare hours, with the year containing 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes and 46 seconds (TOLKIEN, 2005, digital source).

In *Lotro*, it is harder to understand what day it is than to understand the hour of the day in which the character is in. An example of the calendar's inaccuracy can be seen in the letters, which is one of the means of communication between players. In a world

with no e-mails, players must go to mailboxes scattered around the regions to send messages. The mail makes communication easier because it allows the writing of long messages to other players or group of players, the sending of messages to offline players and the attachment of items to the mail. The addressee of the letter, when online, receives it immediately along with a notification on their Alert Panel, but the mailbox indicates that the mail would have been sent over a month earlier - more precisely, one month one week and five days. Therefore, some hours of the player's real-time can be interpreted as several days in the virtual Arda.

Furthermore, if we consider the seasons of the year, which *Lotro* follows accordingly to the Northern Hemisphere and that are set with the arrival of correspondent festivals in the game, we can conclude, based on the correspondence panel that a year has more than 365 days. That is to say, if every time Spring starts, in the Earth's Northern Hemisphere, the Spring festival starts on *Lotro*, and if all mail sent in the player's real-time appears in the virtual Arda as if it had been sent a month earlier, one hour of the player's time may be considered as 30 days to their avatar and, therefore, there are more months between the seasons in the online world than on Earth and, consequently, in Tolkien's Arda.

NONCHRONOLOGICAL TEMPORALITY

Another peculiarity is that, when transiting through the Middle-earth, the player's character "travels through time" several times when encountering Gandalf and his companions. Frodo, for instance, can be seen in Rivendell before the creation of the Fellowship of the Ring; in Lothlórien, after Gandalf's battle with

Balrog; in East Rohan, before Boromir's death and in other future locations. Every time the player guides their avatar to Rivendell, Frodo and Gandalf will be there waiting to know what the future holds, even if the player had met him recently mourning the death of the wizard in Lothlórien.

The player's character can also be transported to the past or to the present through the memories of the NPCs when they ask you to hear their stories, such as when Bósi tells the player about the death of the last members of Balin's company in the Chamber of Mazarbul, or even being transported to a time different from the game time by entering an instance with a defined time to occur, like Helm's Deep Epic Battles that always happen at night, as in the book:

It was now past midnight. The sky was utterly dark, and the stillness of the heavy air foreboded storm. Suddenly the clouds were seared by a blinding flash. Branched lightning smote down upon the eastward hills. For a staring moment the watchers on the walls saw all the space between them and the Dike lit with white light: it was boiling and crawling with black shapes, some squat and broad, some tall and grim, with high helms and sable shields. Hundreds and hundreds more were pouring over the Dike and through the breach. The dark tide flowed up to the walls from cliff to cliff. Thunder rolled in the valley. Rain came lashing down. Arrows thick as the rain came whistling over the battlements, and fell clinking and glancing on the stones. Some found a mark. The assault on Helm's Deep had begun (...)
(TOLKIEN, 2005, digital source)

The aspects mentioned above and so many others regarding time in *Lotro* end up pointing to one cause: interactivity. Juul goes

further in the reflexion about the time of the player's present action and how the time of the Interactive Fiction opposes to the narrative:

You can press the control key, a gun will be fired, and this will affect what's happening on the screen. What you see on the screen can't be past or future, but must be present, since we can influence it. So the three times, the time of the narrated, time of the narration and time of the reading implode in a game, and every time you have interactivity. (JUUL, 1998, digital source)

Therefore, it can be said that the temporal distances of the narrative are not present in the video game. Every time the player's avatar is able to influence the environment, it will be in the present, even if just for that moment and if the character already experienced that event in the future. According to Juul (1998), the pair storyline/discourse is meaningless in a computer game since it simply does not have a dualism so active. In an Interactive Fiction, past, present and future occur concomitantly in a constant movement of conversion and diversion.

SOME OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: REMEMBERING A PAST NOT LIVED

Often the game references Tolkien's narrative, restricting it as a universe by itself and another medium. In 2017, to celebrate the ten years of *The Lord of The Rings Online*, the developers programmed a series of free-quests with the objective to remember stories, moments and regions of the already remediated map. The player chooses between the sequences *Tales*, *Travels* and *Trifles*¹ (LOTRO,

1 The player can switch between them whenever he wants, as long as he respects the numerical sequence, that is, after completing quest # 1 of one of the sequences, he can do the #1 of the others or choose between one of #2. The player can only perform #3 after completing a #2.

10th Anniversary Scavenger Hunt quests, (29.9S, 71. 5W)). All three of them are found in parchments hanging on the Party Tree.

The *Tales* sequence proposes a strong dialogue with John Tolkien's narrative. In it, the players are led to remember the experiences they had in *Lotro* and also the ones they had as readers. The players will follow through different important moments from different characters narratives, such as Legolas, Pippin and Aragorn. In the first quest, the players are invited to retrace some of Frodo's achievements, such as enjoy a meal in Tom Bombadil's house, or to accomplish things not even the hobbit was able to, like pet farmer Maggot's "ferocious dogs" which had orders to "eat him" at sight (TOLKIEN, 2005). The players are also supposed to "gather remembrances in Bag End for three times" but it is not said what exactly must be "remembered". However, it is important to say that Bag End is not a location where the player can interact. The hole recreated by *Lotro* presents a fixed structural characteristic in other words, it is a place where the player could not accomplish anything. Therefore, the player's character would have almost no memory of that place. Before entering Bag End to fulfil the quest, the avatar must speak again to Lobelia Sackville-Baggins, who had, so far, ignored the player in all the attempts at interacting with her. However, she, who is permanently in front of the Bag End, will now start to do nothing but complain about how Frodo left the sink filled with dirty dishes when he departed to the East. Once inside the house, the player will find three shiny floating books. When touching them, the avatar places itself in each one of the books for four seconds as if remembering something.

However, considering the avatar as a character in that world, which life experiences would it have to remember if it had not experienced any events there? In all other quests in this sequence, the player will be invited to make their character remember something which she/he did not experience. I believe that *Tales* works beyond the universe of the video game, because it, in fact, invites the player/reader to remember ('gather remembrance') and, in this manner, exposes its structure as a medium, acting beyond this structure, acting in the "in-between locus"² of the dialogue with literature.

Thus, the once reader and now player's "backpack" – metaphor created by Umberto Eco in *VI Walks in the Fictional Woods* – is triggered by *Lotro's* developers from tasks that explore the narratives that were not remediated. These narratives have not been previously presented to the player because they result from stories lived by characters that are not their own, but by supporting characters created by Tolkien.

Nevertheless, in the theoretical perspectives of media and remediation, the fact that the player is not reliving the events that happened to Frodo and to the other characters from the book does not mean that *The Lord of The Rings Online* fails at the attempt to remediate Arda, the creatures created by Tolkien, not even the habits that involve them. If the time is originated both by the wonderful beings Ainur and Anar, in *Lotro*, the player is the wonderful being that rules her/his own present time.

2 In naming the "in-between locus" space, I am appropriating the term used in Portuguese by Silviano Santiago in "O entre lugar do discurso latino-americano" to describe what is transgressive, "in-between" and belongs to both (SANTIAGO, 2000, p.9-27).

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