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Repurposing Media's Architectures:
The Transformative Power of the Gimmick

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Abstract

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Gimmicks are both lauded and reviled as elaborations or exploitations placed upon texts in order to spurn engagement with those texts. In this thesis, I offer a more nuanced reading of the gimmick as it applies to specific media forms. Rather than applying gimmicks to texts, I instead engage with gimmicks as inextricable parts of texts that offer a new conceptualization of texts as experiences rather than objects.

I argue that these gimmick-texts specifically engage people by way of offering an experience contract to them. This dare on the part of the text encourages and comes to require consent by the patron or player to accept that something *different* will happen during engagement with these texts. This "something different" comes in the form of what I call a new "possibility architecture". The possibility architecture of a text is simply the total amount of possible things that can happen during engagement with that text. By providing new possibility architectures, gimmick-texts introduce something that violates typical architectures of convention, personal involvement, or physical construction.

I look to various media forms, but focus specifically on film and video games by looking precisely at what architectures can be and are changed within gimmick-texts from these forms. The first chapter looks to master showman William Castle's film *The Tingler* (1959) as a keystone of the gimmick mode. *The Tingler* challenges a plethora of film-going conventions as well as physical architecture by, among other things, employing buzzers underneath theater seats to shock people in concordance with the onscreen portion of the film. The second chapter looks to the video game *Monster Rancher* (1997) as a text that cannot be played without other media. *Monster Rancher* generates content in the game by requiring the player to open the game console and supply it with other CDs, which the game interprets within its own algorithm.

Finally, I argue that these texts produce generative environments in that those people that engage with these texts are part of producing these texts as experiences. These new possibility architectures necessitate additional, novel input from those people engaging with them.

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Introduction:
This Way to The Egress

“Can Navidson's house exist without the experience of itself?”

- Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves*

In 1841, P.T. Barnum bought Scudder’s American Museum in New York City to showcase his numerous oddities and exploitations to the public. Quickly though, he ran into a snag: Barnum’s museum had such long lines inside, as people dawdled at this weird thing or that peculiar thing. The throngs of people he had enticed with his advertisements of so many curiosities began to stack up outside of the museum. Barnum found that some possible patrons left the museum before ever even making it in (and paying the requisite quarter Barnum was after). He remedied this situation in a peculiar way. He modified the flow of humans in and out of the museum without changing the layout of his museum or its physical architecture. Barnum posted signs throughout the museum that read “This way to the Egress!” These signs then took those patrons interested in what an “Egress” was through the museum quicker as they attempted to follow these newly minted signs to find the mythic thing. Now, the word “egress” rings with a sort of possible mythology, like a phoenix or a Krampus. And Barnum counted on that with some of his patrons. As they wound their way around searching for it, they eventually found it: the exit out of the museum into an alleyway behind it. By Barnum’s logic, he was providing a dual-purpose experience. To those who knew that ‘egress’ meant ‘exit’, he was providing a way for them to leave. To those who didn’t, he was providing those people with a chance to chase that mythic *thing* while funneling people in and out more quickly. Barnum used conventions of language, curiosity, and physical

space to then modify those very things for awe, shock, humor, and the pragmatic need to get people in and out. And yes, when those people who found the egress wanted back in, Barnum rightfully charged them another quarter.

Barnum's unique novelty made out of necessity in his hall of novelties represents a very peculiar way of working and trading in scarcity and obsolescence. Those searching for the egress as well as those seeking out his other novelty items were searching for those things "***NEVER BEFORE SEEN!***" or at least, very rarely seen. And Barnum catered to that impulse people have to be awed, shocked, and experience something *new*. Though people laud Barnum for his intuition about what people are interested in, he is also eternally known as a huckster, someone peddling false goods, and a person whose character is of ill repute in the face of other entertainments that *don't stoop so low*.

Barnum's life and work are inextricably tied to the circus in its various incarnations, immortalized in the still-running Ringling Brothers & Barnum and Bailey circus. The circus has always been a place to see novel attractions: death-defying trapeze acts, men with makeup on, tightrope walkers, big vats of popcorn, and numerous other peculiarities. And if the circus is the easiest thing for most people to cull to mind when they think of novelty, the sideshow is quickly thereafter.

Sideshows function as an addendum to some circuses. While the circus has its own level of spectacle, the sideshow is given its own name to separate it from the *circus proper*. Those interested in seeing the sideshow know where to go based on the name. Those who want to avoid the literal contrasts in bigness and smallness know to stay out. But everyone who encounters something as sensational as a sideshow knows which side of the line is comfortable for them. The circus and the sideshow are also rooted to a space

for a given period of time before the company moves on to another town. They come into an area and condition that area for their own purposes before moving onto another space to repurpose. The sideshow relies on a series of gimmicks, not unlike Barnum's Museum—the bearded lady and the glass eater are not seen in Akron, OH, unless Jim Rose is in town.[1] A sideshow's novelty gimmick is a complex interrelation of creator and consumer, society and singularity, object and subject. The source of a lot of this novelty comes from the impossibility to see *these things* elsewhere besides the short run of the circus in whichever fairground, stadium, or city block it happens to be in. It is an environment, like Barnum's museum, constructed by gimmicks.

It is difficult to define the gimmick, though the term is applied very regularly and without qualification. With a gimmick, one wants to recognize definition and convention and at the same time, monkey with those structures somehow. Its ultimate aim is to cause 'un-indifference' and to be something that is not normal, banal, lame existence. But, it is first necessary to understand what it means to be lame, defined, and conventional before elaborating on these ideas. Therefore, The Oxford-English Dictionary provides multiple renderings of the word: "A gadget; *spec.* a contrivance for dishonestly regulating a gambling game, or an article used in a conjuring trick; now usu. a tricky or ingenious device, gadget, idea, etc., esp. one adopted for the purpose of attracting attention or publicity."[2] A word so replete with possible meanings, one constructed on top of the others, becomes naturally difficult to discern. Though the word's etymology is as uncertain as the myths surrounding most gimmicks, there are several recorded instances

[1] Jim Rose founded the Jim Rose Circus in the early 1990s, which functioned as a modern-day sideshow, featuring numerous performers and fringe artists.
[2] "Gimmick." *A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary, Volume 1*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972. *OED Online.* Web. 15 February 2013.

of the word. The earliest recorded, as quoted by the Oxford English Dictionary, comes from the 1926 version of the *Wisecrack Dictionary*: "a device for making a fair game crooked."[3] Though I will come to my own definition of the term, I find this first recorded appearance most useful in looking at texts as games that can be *played* and experienced.

Numerous, seemingly disparate items, campaigns, thoughts, and applications fall under the umbrella of what people typically describe as gimmicks. A child's toy might be brightly colored or ornately decorated in an attempt to appeal to a child's senses, not only when they play with it, but also when they choose it over some other toy in the department store aisle. A politician may suggest minting a trillion-dollar platinum coin to protect from hitting the debt ceiling and be accused of gimmick economics.[4] Seemingly, gimmicks are not limited to any form of representation or mode of expression. They are an applicable gesture to seemingly anything— Media forms: novels, films, books, architecture. Consumer goods: Charcoal, a Big Mac®, umbrellas, baby wipes, etcetera.

The search for salient features of the gimmick is further complicated by attitudes toward it.[5] Because of the "tricky" nature of a gimmick, the word is used largely in a manner akin to "knowing it when you see it," like that of obscenity or pornography. Included in this logic of knowing it when you see it is the thought that it is unnecessary to look to language to describe or define *why* something is a gimmick. Simply using the term is sufficient to describe a phenomenon without qualification. As it is written in these numerous definitions as something somewhat derisive, people generally associate the production of a gimmick as something pejorative—"a contrivance for dishonestly

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[3] Maines, Geroge H., Bruce Grant *Wisecrack Dictionary*, New York: Spot New Service, 1926. Print. See also online Oxford English Dictionary entry on "Gimmick"

[4] W.W. "The fiscal cliff: Bipolar disorder." *The Economist*. The Economist, 1 January 2013. Web. 15 February 2013.

[5] In addition to the various ways gimmicks can be utilized and made manifest.

regulating a gambling game." Though largely not a term of affection, it is also tinged with some sort of reverie about its construction or the thought process behind it—"a tricky or ingenious device… esp. one adopted for the purpose of attracting attention."

Here we see the duality of understanding such a device—reception is largely relayed by people entranced by the idea of the device and people interested in writing the device off as 'crooked'. And a good deal of the time, the same people pitch tents in both camps. Due to the supposed mysticism that the gimmick thrives on as well as the poor regard that gimmicks are held in, little has been done to look into gimmicks beyond the mere mention that they exist. In one instance, mentioning their existence satiates the person invested in that reverie about them. In another, mentioning them without elaboration serves the purposes of those seeking to deride them as well. Their novelty seems quantifiable only in *how many times we've seen this* and the experience they generate seems only qualifiable in *I've never experienced anything like that*.

The gimmick acts as a sort of pinnacle for most discussion of texts that include one. They cut off discussion in one way because people (authors as well audience) *want* them to be the last thing discussed in terms of propagating the text to others. They curtail discussion in another way when detractors want to write the text off as 'nothing but gimmicky [blank]'. Furthermore, the object often referred to as the gimmick also serves as shorthand for the type of involvement that the author(s) want audiences to have with a text. In any case, something is typically thought of or written about as a gimmick and that's that—it's a gimmick. And not much else.

In my conceptualization, a gimmick (at large) is an elaborative gesture on a text.[6] The gimmick is a technique that seeks to modify a text explicitly by exaggerating certain features of that text. This technique can come in the form of physical act, textual approach, or any other means of elaboration. The text in question stands without this elaborative gesture, while relating to it. A toothbrush still functions as a toothbrush without colorful packaging. Teeth-whitening strips still serve that function without being branded with label '3D-White' and the subsequent "what-does-that-even-mean?" line of questioning. From this notion of elaboration, we see that the gimmick dwells in scale—extremes of bigness and smallness. Normalcy is decidedly an enemy of the gimmick as is indifference. Because engagement with the gimmick is its stated intention (be it positive or negative), unresponsiveness is the only unfavorable interaction with it.

Also because gimmicks are these elaborative gestures, there are no naturally occurring gimmicks—all are man-made. Nature does not need to make a fair game crooked for it has no game to play. Even those things that seem like standouts or exemplars of natural phenomena, with somehow embellished features, (Niagara Falls, the Grand Canyon, Mount Everest) are only laden with gimmicks when humans apply their will to them—get your picture taken in front of this, send a postcard, buy a t-shirt, donkey rides to the bottom, put your country's flag at the top.

Because they are man-made, gimmicks are naturally associated with their authors. These authors attach their signatures to these devices and become strictly associated with the novelty surrounding the gesture. Because of their nature and the way that people see them as *just gimmicks* (with either positive or negative connotation), authors utilizing

[6] The word 'text' is used loosely here to describe seemingly anything from a soccer match to a Tiffany lamp.

them are seen only in relation to these gimmicks rather than how they work with any other aspect of the text they create. I posit that these authors actually create a complex set of interrelations between parts of their text that go largely unnoticed in the face of one portion of their text, Both those engaging with the text as well as those producing them treat the gimmick as an object or that shorthand for a total experience rather than invoking the experience itself.

Gimmicks are at once derided and championed for their spectacle and their ballyhoo. And as such, the authors of such texts are often regaled with terms like ‘showman’ and ‘huckster’. Throughout this paper I contend that the pieces of media I describe represent a strong knowledge of their respective media forms as well spectatorship of those forms. The authors of these kinds of texts go beyond mere hucksterism. The knowledge necessary to rig a game stems from knowledge of that game as it is normally played, at the very least.

Although the gimmick is linked to its author, it is also necessarily linked to those engaging it in various ways. Because of its violations of norms, conventions, architecture, and spectatorial practice, gimmicks often send a sort of invitation to their audience. This invitation calls participants into action, be it spurned through love of that thing or hatred of that thing. The experience of this new element often generates *something* in its audience, which I will describe subsequently.

Because of their reliance upon reaction from an audience, gimmicks may also force interested parties into collecting moments or places in time, as the gimmicks generate ephemera to cultivate. Though the gimmick largely relies upon *objects* to be

defined (what *thing* is elaborating on another *thing*), the gimmicks ultimately dwell and generate the experiential quotient of a text.

This relationship and blurring between author and audience, various spaces, object and experience, is what I will come to refer to as the "experience contract". Implicitly and some times very explicitly, a contract is signed between those people consuming these things with those people producing these things. These usually come first in the shape of a dare or warning that attracts an audience. Context about the gimmick informs this experience contract, based on typical convention, architecture, and ideas.

Though the gimmick is something that modifies a text, most renderings of gimmicks see them as a merely additive, without necessarily being substantive. However, what I will describe herein is a particular *type* of gimmick, one that violates my initial definition in a very important way: I will be looking at gimmicks as elaborative gestures applied to texts that paradoxically require this elaboration. These texts and their associated gimmicks represent *essential excess*.

To be clear, the things I am including in this paper are not mere paratexts—these are not things that people find useful in understanding a text. These *things* are the quintessence of these texts. As an example, *Star Wars* branded light saber toys or the many books that somehow expand/augment/or change the *Star Wars world* as established by its canonical films could be removed from this world without the bulk of fans being affected by it. *Star Wars* the film series is still *Star Wars* even without the existence of these *additional* things. However, the gestures and devices that I will be looking at fundamentally alter a text—without them, a film or a video game is not merely off-by-

one without them but that they *must* exist in reference to them. In short, these are part of the text, rather than supplemental. Merchandise and other paratextual devices are not of the same totality that the overstated special effects and in-theater presence of a text like a Grand Guginol theater piece.[7]

In the subsequent chapters, I look to how this specific type of gimmick becomes necessary to a text through the gimmick's manipulations of space and relationship to its audience. As I will define next, I argue that these gimmicks are *special* largely because they *repurpose* their surrounding architecture to form a relationship with that architecture as well as anything that comes into contact with it.

From this specific subset of gimmicks, we arrive at what they generate. The usage of a gimmick forces a set of parameters on that text that must be met in order to qualify as *that text*. As an example, picture this: you walk up to the box office of a movie theater for a screening of the film *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975). The attendant prints out a ticket, very drolly, and tells you its in theater two. You're very excited because you're bringing virgins to this show, people that have never been to a screening. Upon walking into the theater, you find that everyone else is seated in a very orderly fashion, waiting for the film to start. No transvestites attempted to carve the immortal 'V' into your friends' foreheads with their lipstick. No one did the Timewarp. No one sang. No one acted out the goings-on in front of the screen. As you exit, you're probably furious. At the very least, you explain to your friends *how it normally is*. Regardless of the

[7] The Grand Guginol Theater was a naturalist theater that specialized in plays of horrific nature. These plays often featured special effects that were reportedly so graphic that people would faint or throw up at the sight of them, with word of mouth spreading about them because of this. For further information, especially related to this topic of gimmicks, see *Cutting Edge* by Joan Hawkins.

producer or director's intention for the film, it has become commoditized and authored by those elaborating upon the screened experience of it.

Watching *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* in this way or on your smart phone does not convey what that film *is*, because it lacks necessary parts of that movie. Those additional gestures on top of and in reference to what is on the screen as well as things not on the screen are categorically necessary to understand what that film is.
This gives rise to how I will describe similar phenomena at the movies, playing a video a game, and other media experiences.

Video game designer Will Wright (most well-known from the *SimCity* series, *The Sims*, *Spore*) has posited a concept called "possibility space" about the ways in which games function. In his conceptualization, a possibility space is a network of possible inputs and outputs for a given set of parameters.[8] There are a finite number of possible things that can happen within any possibility space, with any number of possible objects. Involvement with this space (be it play, scorn, work, anything) as a concept comes from these parameters as possibilities.

As a literary comparison, take a Shakespearean sonnet. The sonnet only has meaning or generates intrigue in relation to its structure, in the form of rhyme scheme and iambic pentameter. People are enthused by the words Shakespeare pens, but they are more enthused by those words in relation to their specific set of parameters. This is not to say that parameters are unchangeable, as we shall see. Merely, they provide scaffolding to construct an experience.

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[8] Jones, Steven E. *The Meaning of Video Games: Gaming and Textual Strategies.* New York: Routledge, 2008. Print. 15-18.

Picture a limitless possibility space, one supposedly free from parameters or rules. Perhaps the Holodeck from the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* series could serve as a suitable visualization, though it has its own set of constraints. The limitless potential of this space only *matters* when constraints are put upon it and choices are made as to what to include or exclude as a part of a given experience. This choice to include a certain object or a certain physical constraint (do you want normal gravity?, do you want to float on for infinity?, do your enemies spontaneously combust?, etc.) is what produces experiences in this limitless possibility space. In short, limits provide possibility. Limitless potential kills the gimmick, which in turn kills possibility space.

This possibility space is generated and can be changed over time. So, in relation to our earlier example of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, having the transvestite draw that 'V' on friends' foreheads derives possibility. This at once seems restrictive because it enforces a specific constraint on the text but at the same time, the object of the newly written 'V' represents a sort of novelty in relation to how other possibility spaces existed in the movie theater prior to the film. This parameter is generative in that audiences engage with an object in the theater that is not normally there.

In subsequent chapters, I come to tweak Wright's possibility space slightly. I pose these gimmick-texts as producing and relying upon a newly formed possibility architecture. I graft the word 'architecture' on here because I believe what these texts are doing is repurposing some sort of pre-existing space or architecture. These texts seek something new *from* something old.[9] I feel that architecture, more than space, represents this quality of both construction and reconstruction.

[9] By texts here I mean specifically those media objects that require a gimmick, including said gimmick.

As another reason for augmenting Wright's term, I feel that architecture more closely aligns itself with a variety of things that can be both built and then built upon, rather than *just* spaces—media, people, norms, conventions, etcetera. 'Space' seems to be obliquely defined but 'architecture' has a set of specific connotations that can be applied to things like gimmicks, game code, film reels, sheet music, and more, given its association with construction. This change to existing architectures comes directly from that experience contract that is drawn up between people interacting with the text, context, the author and the text itself. In short, this experience contract acts as the blueprint for possibility architecture. It should be noted though the term "possibility space" comes from discourse on video games, I will also be applying it, in concept, to Castle's film as I feel it best describes the state of engagement with that text.

As a corollary to Wright's possibility space, we can look at the oft-cited Johan Huizinga's concept of the 'magic circle' as a means to describe similar limits.[10] Huizinga makes the claim that play happens inside a space with parameters drawn both by nature (things that cannot be controlled by humans) as well as by any of the participants within that circle. People within the circle largely agree to the rules and limits set by this circle and breaking a rule typically constitutes a breach in play, especially in relation to others playing. Gimmicks interact with people as well as their text by providing a generative constraint on a given possibility architecture.

One of the possible etymologies of the word 'gimmick' comes from magicians who would use devices such as these: "The word *gimac* means 'a gadget'. It is an anagram of the word *magic*, and is used by magicians the same way as others use the word 'thing-a-

[10] Huizinga, Johan. *Homo Ludens*. Oxford: Routledge, 2008. Print. 28.

ma-bob'."[11] I would like to pose the possibility architecture as a functional anagram of Huizinga's magic circle. Possibility architecture is at once concerned with the space constructed for possibility as well as those things that happen in it. As well shall see, it takes work to draw a circle.

From these various posed possibility architectures, I argue that their authors as well as viewers, players, and contributors form a generative environment around these elaborative texts. Generative environments extend beyond typical formations of spectatorship in that they produce more than a sense of intrigue or wonderment at the piece of media in front of spectators. Instead, they engender audience participation and contribution in a way that typical, conventional wisdom of media environments does not. Generative environments do not necessarily generate something specific for each text. Rather, they force those viewers, players, and contributors to think about media forms and the environments where these forms are typically displayed as well as what is possible when we divert from what is traditionally sanctioned. From this, the generative environment allows for material, mental, and physical contributions from people seated within their confines. I use the concept of the generative environment to then explain how people begin to think and act differently as a result of where and when they experience a media object that employs a gimmick.

In chapter one, I look at William Castle's 1959 film *The Tingler* in reference to his supplemental gimmicks, both promotional and theatrical. Beyond bringing novelty to his film screenings with buzzing seats, flying skeletons, and insurance policies, I argue that Castle repurposes exhibition space with the additive effects from these gimmicks. Castle's Percepto apparatus and the marketing surrounding the device actively seek to

[11] "Gimmick". *OED Online*.

change the experience of going to the movies. By literally and figuratively augmenting various architectures (the theater, filmic convention, audience and spectacle relationship, among others), Castle produces a novel, generative space where people can experience and contribute. By adding to and augmenting these spaces, Castle in turn changes the role of the viewer, projectionist, and others in this newly constructed space. Castle implicates those people in his film by entering into a dare/contract with them. I look to concepts like Will Wright's possibility space in the videogame to comment on Castle's possibility architectures derived specifically from his gimmicks. In this way, Castle's gimmicks transcend supplemental status and become imperative to understanding Castle's repurposed spaces.

In chapter two, I expand upon Castle's repurposed space and possibility architecture by looking at the 1997 PlayStation game *Monster Rancher*. *Monster Rancher* uses its own gimmicks to produce a generative space and player. These players generate their own content and repurpose other content to play this game. Unlike other monster collecting games of the same period, *Monster Rancher* does not have the player seek monsters within the diegesis of the game world. Instead, monsters are unlocked from any CD the player may own or obtain. Players open up the PlayStation console and replace the *Monster Rancher* disc itself with another CD. *Monster Rancher* then employs the PlayStation's hardware to read a bit of code from the disc before it requests the original game disc again and generates a new monster in the game from this bit of code. The possibility architecture of *Monster Rancher* comes not only from how it repurposes the capabilities of the PlayStation's hardware but also from how it engenders the decidedly analog scavenger hunt for CDs to produce unique monsters. The space of the game is

repurposed by way of the parameters of the game. Lastly, I will discuss how the generative capacity of the text then extends into the online communities of players working together to understand the algorithm that produces this generative, repurposed space.

I have chosen these particular texts not only because they share a common bond in how their respective gimmicks interact with audience and space. These texts also exist across time and across media, which will help illustrate how this repurposing is not limited to one kind of text. In this way, the gimmick and its resultant architecture and environment act as a through line between seemingly disparate texts as well as media forms. It is a way to understand how these texts function experientially. By providing this through line for multiple kinds of texts, I am not attempting to unify them by sacrificing their respective novelties. Instead, this can be seen as a way of understanding how gimmicks function slightly differently from medium to medium, but have unifying features.

I introduce the concept with *The Tingler* and come to refine it with *Monster Rancher*. Both chapters follow the same structure in terms of understanding how each text processes information. I introduce both chapters by describing the gimmick followed by its context and the type of experience contract drawn up by all of the factors involved. I then go on to describe what this contract does in terms of repurposing certain things to produce new possibility architectures. These new possibility architectures then *generate* new generative environments.

In my conclusion, I further qualify this tendency of the gimmick to repurpose space and audience relationship to the text. I provide more examples from other media

and explain how they adapt architectures to their own ends. We can then provide our own spaces for possibility based on these elaborative texts that are described herein.

Before writing about these specific texts, I find it necessary to discuss my own involvement with them. My notion of novelty and its importance comes initially from my own engagement with these texts. My initial interest in this topic came not from an area of study but because I find myself astonished by them, taken in by their novelty. Largely because of the ways in which gimmicks work, to engage with these texts necessarily implicates a reader as a part of them. Having such a strong personal connection to them is useful in my yearning to understand them as experiential occurrences rather than objects to be mentioned and then put away. My pursuit of the inner workings of these things comes from my personal attachment to them and I feel it would be duplicitous to efface that involvement with these sorts of texts.

Throughout the pages of this thesis, I attempt to illuminate these texts by a variety of means: historical research, critical theory, and biography as well as somewhat "first hand" accounts of these texts that I have been fortunate to have. In chapter one, I cite the experience of helping to put on a version of *The Tingler* at Emory University in the fall of 2012. I look to my own accounts of the trials of rigging certain features of the text up as well as responses from audience members, colleagues, and friends at the screening. In chapter two, I lean on my own observations from playing *Monster Rancher* as well as research and observations into the game from other fans in an online community. I look to these insights not merely to get my own thoughts into the paper but also because, as I shall come to argue, one inherent quality of the gimmick and its subsequent possibility architecture is that its elaborative intention requires the viewer to engage with it and

participate. Though it may color my rendering of these texts to include personal accounts of my own experiences, after researching this topic, I think not doing so is detrimental in a larger way.

Two appendices are provided to this thesis as well. The first is the transcription of a phone interview with Terry Castle, the daughter of the director William Castle, discussed herein. The second is an e-mail interview between the author and Lisa F. Shock, the moderator and long-time curator of the *Monster Rancher* online community Monster Rancher Metropolis. Both provide invaluable insights into these texts.

Though the claims in the following chapters are bold, they will be qualified and validated, something that some gimmicks cannot attest to. However, I must also put forth that this paper should serve as an exemplar of the gimmick mode: that more and more people are aware of *what these weird things are*. In this way, I present the gimmick as a feature of a text that one may deride or champion, but to criticize a gimmick necessitates propagating it.

Chapter One:
Tingling Space: Construction and Travel in *The Tingler*

After defining the gimmick, it is easy move to its greatest exemplar, William Castle, the self-styled showman of the 1950s and 60s. Castle's magnum opus *The Tingler* showcases the power and unique abilities of the gimmick by repurposing existing technology within the theater space to affect spectatorship. It is also a text that employs various types of gimmicks, making it at once very easy to understand as an exemplar and also very difficult in terms of parsing out the various architectures that it modifies. In contrast to the technological developments utilized by the bulk of Hollywood studios at this time, Castle makes his place among other memorable directors and producers by attempting to add what he refers to as "something extra" to that theater-going experience.

In *The Tingler*, Dr. Warren Chapin (Vincent Price) postulates that a creature in the base of the spinal cord generates human fear. The only way to get rid of this creature, dubbed "the tingler", is to scream. Chapin tests his hypotheses when he encounters Martha Higgins (Judith Evelyn), who is mute and therefore cannot scream. Chapin uses LSD to induce delusions and fear in Martha. Upon her death by fright, Chapin extracts her tingler. The tingler gets loose in a movie theater underneath the Higgins' apartment and subsequently terrorizes the audience.

The Tingler employs a wide variety of devices and novelties to achieve its desired effect. Perhaps chief among all of these things is what Castle dubs "Percepto". Castle and several others or theater staff themselves install electrical buzzing devices under several of the seats in a theater. These devices are linked to a switch in the projection booth that the projectionist hits corresponding to a time in the film when Chapin requests the

diegetic theater audience to scream for their lives. Seats of those watching *The Tingler* are then buzzed, giving patrons a jolt as their theater mimics the diegetic theater.[12]

The Tingler exemplifies how the movie theater can be utilized for its unique position and space as well as how that space is mutable and changeable. As I use this film as a prime example of the reconditioning and metamorphosing of theater spaces, I look to Castle's multiple gimmicks as a means for his manipulations of theaters and their patrons. Ultimately, the ways in which Castle reconfigures the space of the theater to produce a new sort of shock experience in the viewer are equally tied to increased sensory stimuli, a knowledge of the devices that will be producing shock, and awareness of spatial relationships between patrons, the screen, the environment and Castle himself.

Castle literally grafts onto existing architectures by selectively choosing chairs to be wired. This is a change to the theater space that will engage audiences in a way that cannot be achieved otherwise. Castle tailors his unique, singularizing experience to the largely unchanging quality of movie theater seats and their pragmatic purpose. This produces a necessity for the theater as well as the projection booth, where projectionists operate these Percepto devices. This reorganization and reorientation of space is truly Castle's contribution to cinema, beyond the sort of gimmickry that is typically met with open arms as much as shaking heads.

Though Percepto is the gimmick critics usually laud or laugh at most, there are several other gimmicks that Castle employs to generate his unique type of experience. Perhaps most closely tied to Percepto is the film-within-a-film. The diegetic audience in *The Tingler* is watching the silent film *Tol'able David* (1921). The patrons in this theater

[12]In his autobiography, Castle claims that his idea for Percepto came from the mundane task of switching a light bulb and being shocked by the socket. This reliance on the mundane or conventional will come to define how Castle performs his transformations.

experience the same sorts of sensory stimuli that some watching *The Tingler* are about to experience. When the screen in the *Tol'able David* screening goes black, the projectionist for *The Tingler* hits a button and patrons' butts are buzzed. Chapin's plea to those watching the *Tol'able David* screening not to panic but "scream for their lives" also doubles as a de facto warning to those sitting in the electrified seats in Castle's theaters about the impending shock to their behinds. Castle himself also appears at the beginning of his film to describe it and warns that some people viewing it may be more sensitive to the goings-on than others.[13] Castle's appearance is one of many throughout his career and marks a way in which Castle brands himself for his audiences as part of the experience of seeing his films and enjoying the spectacle of his theater.

Castle utilizes another gimmick as Martha experiences the nightmarish hallucinations that ultimately bring her to her death. *The Tingler* was shot on black and white film, with one exception. Martha watches blood flow from a bathroom sink's faucet and similarly watches as a human arm rises out of a crimson red blood-filled bathtub. The sequence is shot in color though the set pieces are painted black-and-white to achieve the same sort of monochrome pattern that black and white film produces. He also utilizes black-and-white makeup to produce the same effect on Martha.[14] It presents a dual gimmick in that it effectively becomes a color film with only one color.[15]

Lastly, Castle employs several plants throughout the theatrical run of *The Tingler*. High school theater kids, people looking to make a few dollars, or just those that are bored come to the movie specifically to faint on cue from the film. For some screenings,

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[13] In doing so, Castle relays only the possibility of something happening with patrons' chairs, owing to the fact that Castle did not outfit every chair in every theater with a Percepto buzzer.
[14] Heffernan, Kevin. *Ghouls, Gimmicks, and Gold*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004. Print. 102.
[15] *The Tingler* also marks the first appearance of LSD in a motion picture.

nurses stand by in the lobbies of the theaters to whisk these poor souls from the theater likely outside, where no wounds are looked at. It is the convergence of all of these techniques that assemble the emergence of Castle's film to change the experience of the theater by heightening and augmenting the space around patrons.[16] This space then forces those patrons to also necessarily become implicated in the film's gimmicks and become a part of generating the experience of the film.

Applied Shock

I came to my own understanding of Castle's film first by being a fan of his films and watching them on DVD in my Atlanta apartment. However, I have never felt as though I have experienced one of Castle's films in the way they have come to be described by anyone who has ever written about the producer and director. My understanding of Castle and particularly *The Tingler* were refined when I helped to put on a production of that film at Emory University.[17] Bruce Goldstein oversaw the production of the film, providing certain cues for the film.[18] It is difficult to say whether or not this was a true screening of the film, because many of the Castle's gimmicks were missing. We were unable to employ Percepto, as it proved to be too difficult to produce "working" seats without any budget, other than for the 35mm print and a few modest consumables. We did however employ theater plants for the sequence in the film where the tingler breaks loose. These plants acted as theater ushers using flashlights to "find" the tingler in

[16] Castle, William. *Step Right Up!: I'm Gonna Scare The Pants Off America*. William Castle Productions, 2010. Print. 159-165.
[17] I use the phrase "put on a production" rather than screening, because Castle's film cannot be screened in traditional fashion.
[18] Bruce Goldstein is the director of repertory programming at Film Forum and has put on numerous production of Castle's films all over the world.

the audience of the film. We also implanted some of our own elaborations to Castle's architecture by utilizing a dancing skeleton and color psychedelic visualizations during the LSD sequences as well as a stuffed model of a tingler that "attacked" a member of the audience, driving her out of the theater. As I will suggest later, Castle's possibility architecture allows and ultimately encourages these kind of elaborative moves on his own text.

In all of these ways, Castle elevates the gimmick's importance to the film. The material on the screen exists as merely part of the experience that the gimmick brings to further prominence. With the exclusion of either, the text ceases to function in the way that it should, as outlined by the experience contract between Castle and his audience. Castle uses this new possibility architecture to merge what is happening on the screen with what is happening in the theater space as well outside the theater. The ease of Castle's screen is what allows the viewer to ascribe meaning to the space of this experience. Castle makes it abundantly clear that people are entering into a new type of space, if not by his daring advertising copy then at the very least by his direct address in the film. The screen does not become indiscernible from the theater space, but instead we are given that as a possibility to choose from.

As with any gimmick, Castle's require a context. *The Tingler* engages with several contexts, chiefly historical contexts like production and exhibition practices in the 1950s and 1960s. Castle's films also stand in comparison to other filmmakers' of similar genres. Lastly, *The Tingler* stands in context to the rest of Castle's other films and gimmicks.

Age of Innocence

As historical context, movie theaters were in danger at the time of *The Tingler*'s release. Television threatened theatrical exhibition as it afforded people the opportunity to watch content without leaving their homes. Though there were originally intentions of marrying television and movie theaters via broadcast networks, tenuous relationships as well as the Paramount decision forced the two mediums apart. As Thomas Schatz writes, "By the early 1950s, television had become overwhelmingly oriented toward the family home. Not even a single theater added video projection in 1953, and the system slowly disappeared, replaced in theaters by new exhibition technologies like Cinemascope and 3-D."[19] Most attempts to differentiate the theater from television relied upon experiential differences of large-scale experience at the movies versus the small-screen experience at home. To wit, Hollywood began promoting many widescreen different formats and processes associated with film exhibition: Cinemascope, Vistavision, Superscope, etc.

3-D films also saw a proliferation at this time. Horror films like *House of Wax* (1953) and cheap science fiction films like *Robot Monster (1953)* seemed apt for the three-dimensional treatment, owing to their cheap budgets and possible 'need' for added value to draw people to see them. However, prestige pictures were also made utilizing three-dimensional technology, like Hitchcock's *Dial M for Murder* (1954). Seemingly, Hollywood at all levels was embracing advancements in technology and promoting those advancements alongside its films as a means to keep butts in seats.

Large-scale epics also sprang up, with sprawling budgets and runtimes. These films located the theater as a place of experience in terms of scale and duration. Movies like *Around the World in 80 Days* (1956), *Ben Hur* (1959) and *The Ten Commandments*

[19] Schatz, Thomas. *Boom and Bust.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1997. Print. 435.

(1959) were held up as blockbuster events to *attend* at the theater**,** thus shifting the emphasis from the film itself to seeing that film in its 'proper' environment.

Castle also appealed to the emerging teenage audience of filmgoers at this time. Castle's audience first simply sought to be out of the house on dates rather than at home with the family. Kevin Heffernan writes, "…the postwar ticket-buying public had changed from a general audience to one consisting largely of teenagers, and they didn't want to stay at home and watch TV."[20] Beyond that, Castle supplied them with a new type of experience that was different than either what was common practice or what was possible on the television. Fellow schlock producer Samuel Arkoff refers to the relationship between the B-movie and this new audience in his autobiography: "Since we have no big-name stars, no bestselling books, no hit plays, or well-known directors, the title and the ads are going to have to get young people into the theaters…"[21]

Castle looked to appeal to this teenage market by placing emphasis in his films on the experience of watching others react in the theater. Castle remarked to his wife about this emerging audience as they exited a screening of Clouzot's *Diabolique* (1955): "Did you ever see anything like what happened tonight? Those kids wanted to be scared… They loved it! They probably have never seen a real horror film—it's been ten years or more, in face, since Lorre, Lugosi, or Karloff… Young audiences are starving for this type of picture, and I want to be the one to satisfy their hunger."[22] Castle's pursuit of capturing a young audience hinged on the horror genre as something appealing to this demographic.

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[20] Heffernan, 67.
[21] Arkoff, Sam, and Richard Trubo. *Flying Through Hollywood By the Seat of My Pants*. New York: Birch Lane Press, 1992. Print. 37-39.
[22] Castle, 150.

Once Castle began his gimmick cycle of films, beyond citing these new developments as perhaps interesting curios, criticism of his films continued to place little emphasis on the screened portion of his films. Beyond the devices and techniques Castle employed within the theater itself, Castle largely represented one of the many stabled studio directors or producers that generated films that were generally bankable with little substance. Praise for directors working within the same horror genre as Castle was generally reserved for directors held in high esteem by both critics and audiences. Two of the most prominent directors receiving this praise were Alfred Hitchcock and Clouzot. In his autobiography, Castle cites both filmmakers as being extremely influential in his own work. Castle himself refers to Hitchcock as "the master" in his autobiography and, as mentioned, writes at length about attending a screening of Clouzot's *Diabolique*.

Standing in the shadow of such cinematic giants, Castle's cinematic creativity and genius moves not toward the screen, but rather into the audience. The monster we see onscreen in *The Tingler* does not necessarily instill the fear or paranoia that perhaps Clouzot and Hitchcock's films instill, largely because we come to understand the artifice of the tingler as we see it: the tingler inches along a carpet, its clear strings visible in restored prints. The tingler is not menacing on the screen once it has been actualized. It is something to look at, perhaps laugh about. It is, however the relationship between Castle's strictly competent (as opposed to masterful in the case of Hitchcock) onscreen depiction of a monster and its sensorial affect within the space of the theater, that we find both the authorial vision of Castle as well as the possibility of shock in this film. In comparison to his more esteemed contemporaries, Castle focuses on what is not on the screen. Castle's competency without prestige also informs the experience contract that

people look to in watching his films— the banality of the image on the screen *gives way* to the spectacle in the theater. Castle's competent image is necessary to hold attention, but not overwhelming in a way that allows patrons to look around the theater with expectation as well as feel Percepto as part of the film. By way of further example as well as an additional context, we can look to some of the numerous gimmicks that Castle employed during his career.

A Lifetime of Showmansihp

Castle's first 'gimmick picture' was *Macabre* (1958). For *Macabre*, Castle appealed to insurance firm Lloyd's of London to insure all of the possible theater patrons of his film against "death by fright". The policy taken out on these theatergoers would pay out to their families in the event that they died from being too scared of the film. "Carefully reading the policies, they signed their names at the bottom and clutching the official paper, secretly hoped that some member of the audience—not themselves—would collect that night. Anything for excitement."[23] This also represents one of the many explicit experience contracts Castle would have patrons sign upon entering his theater environments.

The policy was a dare for the audience to see who, if anyone, would drop dead at the film. *Macabre*'s plot was a fairly conventional one at best, and at worst something wholly recycled from the decades of horror genre conventions and codes.[24] It would be largely forgettable had Castle not applied his gimmick to it. Without *Macabre*'s onscreen,

[23] Castle,159.
[24] This is also a way that Castle utilized convention in order to repurpose it within his environment.

banal, generic competency however, Castle's spectacular gimmick could not function. It gives the audience space to breathe and sense ephemera.

House on Haunted Hill (1959) employed "Emergo" technology, where "the terror zooms right out at you" as promotions say. In the film, a skeleton flew toward the audience. In the theater, a large luminescent skeleton then moved toward the projection booth via a system of pulleys and rope, suspended over the audience of the film. The hack to existing architecture is obvious in the case of the skeleton, which is not a construction of the typical theater space. Several different renderings of how this affected audiences have been given. A *New York Times* movie reviewer referred to how the skeleton "slid straight forward to the balcony, blankly eyed the first row customers, and slid back"[25] Mark Thomas McGee writes that "A demonstration of Emergo was given to the folks on the ZIV lot… [Samuel] Goldwyn was not impressed when Castle's luminous skeleton came wobbling and squeaking from its concealed box at the top of the screen. Nor was he happy when the skeleton fell on his head."[26] However, filmmaker John Waters goes on to describe young audiences at the film after the bugs were worked out: "The kids went wild. They screamed. They hugged their girlfriends. They threw popcorn boxes at the skeleton. Most important, they spent their allowances and made the film a huge hit. Was this not the first film to utilize audience participation to an absurd length?"[27]

This gimmick does more than engage a film viewer with the knowledge of something outside of the theater, like in *Macabre*'s insurance policy. Instead it physically

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[25] Brottman, Mikita. *Offensive Films: Toward an Anthropology of Cinéma Vomitif.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997. Print. 60.
[26] McGee, Mark Thomas. *Beyond Ballyhoo: Motion Picture Promotion and Gimmicks*. Jefferson, NC: Mcfarland & Company Incorporated Publishing, 2001. Print. 27.
[27] Waters, John. *Crackpot: The Obsessions of John Waters*. New York: Scribner. Print. 16.

infiltrates the space of the viewer and forces viewers' eyes from the screen to something else within the space of that theater. Castle literally grafts his skeleton onto the existing architectures of theaters. Because of this, Waters remarks the film as an experience where the audience is in relationship with the screen as well as the new material that Castle provides. Here we see the experience contract in full effect. Audiences are primed for the new possibility architecture that Castle generates by knowing certain possibilities in advance, but lacking the specific knowledge of *when, where,* and *how*.

For *Thirteen Ghosts* (1960), Castle again called upon his ability to promote proprietary experience, by modifying 3-D glasses for "Illusion-O", where one could look through one color of the glasses to see the ghosts in the movie or if the film proved to be "too much" for a viewer, they could simply switch their glasses around to the other color and go through the film without having to see the ghosts.[28] Here, Castle effectively augments even the convention of seemingly *novel* 3-D glasses. He uses the same technology to hide certain pieces of information from the viewer. This is also a literal change in architecture of the glasses technology as they are repurposed with a technical process of film exposure to produce a new possibility architecture for patrons.

Castle modified architecture in several other ways throughout the rest of his film career, which has been described elsewhere.[29] However, these specific contexts attest to how Castle modified the specific architectures of theatrical and exhibitional convention in the 1950s in 1960s as well as material architectures by augmenting the spaces where

[28] In his autobiography, Castle also claims that this idea came from a trip to the ophthalmologist where he was slightly disoriented by the various corrective lenses he was trying on. Castle seemingly finds and augments mundane, traditional experience by relocating it within new possibility architectures.
[29] See Brottman, Heffernan, or Castle.

patrons sit and/or engage with a film text. He used this modification of architecture to produce his own new possibility architecture, which is most palpable in *The Tingler*.

Though *The Tingler* is remembered first for Percepto, the synthesis of Castle's multiple gimmicks produces a specific possibility architecture. We are engaged with them because we have agreed to their possibility as parts of the film that we are watching. Castle is at once seen as responsible for his environment as the author of the text as well as its gimmick.[30]

The Electric Chair: A Dare

In many of the promotional materials for the film, only words like the title of the film and Vincent Price's name accompany the only image of the poster: a movie theater chair. Paired with dares like "Can you take Percepto?", "Can you take it when the Tingler breaks loose?", and "Do you have the guts to sit in this chair?", Castle centers his film around fear and intrigue about the act of sitting in the theater, rather than intrigue into what is necessarily up on the screen. "Amazing NEW TERROR device makes you a living participant in the FLESH-CRAWLING ACTION" reads some more promotional text, effectively detailing Castle's look to engage the participant not in entertaining them, but by bringing them into the film in a way that they are part of the entertainment. Castle incites the experience contract of this film with his marketing dares to his audience.

Castle's dares upon the audience are not merely associated with their capacity to withstand the terror or horror of the sensations he creates with Percepto. On the contrary,

[30] In contrast to Castle's decidedly authored gimmicks, gimmicks can come about by accident or can be authored by someone other than the original creators of a text. For examples of these audience-authored or accidental gimmicks, see the example of *Rocky Horror Picture Show* in the introduction of this thesis as well as fan discourse on the film *The Room* (2003).

Castle also engages his gimmick with some humor. In description of Castle's teenage audience, Heffernan writes, "…the growing sophistication of this young audience is underscored by its ability to maintain an ironic distance from the horrific content of the films: the social ritual of horror movie attendance was often an occasion for laughter."[31] In one of his ads, Castle shows the cheekiest of his tongue and cheek by using the phrase "Bring your date and watch her tingle", engaging the film itself as a dare as well as engaging the teen audience he is looking to serve, while getting laughs about the possible tingling going on after the film (or in the dark corners of the theater itself).

Regardless, Castle's focus remains on the gimmicks he is using to sell the film rather than the plot or characters in story. As we see, this experience contract is not simply in relation to the rhetoric of the dare. Castle also allows for points of entry into his possibility architecture by making jokes about the possibilities of the date in the movie theater. In several of these same ads, Castle provides a guarantee that the tingler will break out in the theater that patrons go to, forcing them to interact with it. Also, Castle tells possible patrons that they will receive instructions when they get into the theater. Patrons must pay the price of admission in order to learn how to even view the film. *The Tingler* is one of a few films that require instructions in order to understand what is possible with it. Game theorist Alexander Galloway characterizes film and literature in relation to video games by saying that, "…Certainly with literature or cinema there are important connections to the action of the author, or with the structure of discourse and its acted utterances, or with the action of reading, but *as texts* they are not action-based

[31] Heffernan, 68.

media…"[32] On the contrary, Castle's instructions give patrons agency as well as the opportunity to bring action to his films by participating. It is true that these films can run without the action or input of their patrons, however, the texts come to be defined specifically by that possible action.

In other print ads for showtimes, Castle utilized the image of Martha looking into the bathtub as Castle's copy reads "See the screen's first blood-bath IN COLOR". Castle's understanding of his film centers on the spectacle of new experiences that stem from the unknown (what exactly will happen with this chair?) as well as the unseen (the "never-before-seen" novel effect of the blood being in color or perhaps the less-than-marketable first use of LSD in a national motion picture) in familiar spaces such as the theater. Castle's promotional materials dare possible patrons to enter into the theater and experience the possibilities therein.

Here we see that Castle's dare structure that he employs for his film is not entirely based on a macabre sense of marketing. In fact, Castle works with conventions of movie-going habit to develop both his authorial signature as manipulations of spaces we are used to as well as a dual-purpose aesthetic that serves both the sense of the macabre as well as a tendency to laugh at these experiences. Castle makes both of these salient features manifest in the way he produces films.

Our Generous Host

For instance, Castle's direct address to the audience at the beginning of the film echoes his promotional guarantee about the Tingler getting loose in the theater. His image

[32] Galloway, Alexander R., *Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006. Print. 14.

and self-branding promote but also solidify the film as "something else". It is very rare that a director comes to essentially offer and warn his audience about the film they are watching. Though these instructions thwart convention, they are at the same time reliant upon the conventions of traditional Hollywood film. Castle's gimmick and film need these conventions in order to augment and repurpose them. Castle is assuredly part of the contract as he is the one dictating the rules of the space in the film's first few minutes.

Castle's presence serves as a warning, like his promotional material has also warned, that the space of *this* theater at *this* time is different than people have experienced.[33] Castle appears before a blank screen, pointing to it when he says that "I feel obligated to warn you that some of the sensations, some of the physical reactions which the actors on the *screen* will also be experienced for the first time in motion picture history by certain members of this audience ... some people are more sensitive to these mysterious electronic impulses than others...". Castle goes on to tell the audience that to relieve any tension certain more sensitive folks might feel, screaming will lessen the effect. "A scream at the right time just might save your life." His invocation of the screen as something *behind* him rather than claiming that he himself is on the screen, echoes Vincent Price's later remarks and veiled direct address to the audience of the Castle film.

Castle thwarts typical filmic expectation not by merely appearing but by providing those instructions for experiencing the film. He engenders an audience to prepare for so many possible scenarios in order to power such a radical change in the alignment of viewer and screen and space. This preparation for the shock of spatial

[33] Castle branded his own films with his trademark appearance. Castle's films could be differentiated from traditional films of this time not only because of what happened within the space of the theater but also because those seeking his films out could look to Castle himself as part of that theater-going experience.

change colors Castle as having a new conventional language of cinema that thrives upon being in opposition to conventional cinema while at the same time utilizing those same conventions in his films. Perhaps without this direct address, the onscreen portion of the film largely plays out as a very conventional monster B-movie with a less-than-threatening monster. Castle uses this to play with his audience and also prepare them to play. The introduction by Castle is not an addendum to the film, but part of it, a necessity.

Vincent Price's two addresses to the diegetic audience watching *Tol'able David* serve as a similar warning to Castle's, though these come in the form of a projectionist's interruption to the film. Castle uses these interruptions to deliver information about a threat to those in both theaters. Price's tone mimics the tone of the authority over the loudspeaker, trying to quell resistance from those irritated about their movie being interrupted. However, Price's address plays on Castle's nod to the blank screen behind him as the screen in which the movie takes place. The film produces this screen confusion by having the lights turned out as Price makes the announcement, thus effectively turning the black screen of *Tol'able David* into the black screen of *The Tingler*. As this is the moment in the film where Percepto comes into play, Price's move to bring both of the screens in question into some sort of mimesis is the merger by which the tingler finds its way into our screening. The audience is at the same time aware of what Castle's gesture infers, especially at the moment of the shocking jolt they receive, and aware that what they are experiencing is part of Castle's production— there is not really a tingler loose in the theater, but patrons delight in both thinking that there *could be* within this possibility architecture as well laughing at themselves and others for having an actual reaction to some sort of artificial stimulus.

Something in the Air

Castle's blood bath further characterizes this grafting onto existing convention and architectures by thwarting those same conventions. Castle's sanguine acid trip utilizes the only piece of color film in the entire movie. Castle challenges convention by including this scene as an outlier in his film, the color generated by the LSD Martha has taken, though we also experience this color. Castle's gimmick does not work without the history of black-and-white films being shown in theaters during this time period to carry it as the norm that Castle violates. As novel as the blood bath is, its presence is only useful *because* of the architecture it is grafted onto.

Similarly, Castle requires the theater environment to implant selected chairs with the Percepto device. Castle provides this service as part of that experience contract. Castle constructs an architecture where people are primed for *something* without knowing exactly what. Castle promises to provide something extra or something different in the space of the theater and the audience promises to react to that, whether it be positively or negatively.

Interestingly, this environment also welcomes accident as part of the text. The earlier examples of the *House on Haunted Hill* skeleton falling into audiences or kids coming equipped to knock it down depict Castle's audience as primed for this "something extra", even if the "something extra" does not work according to Castle's outline. One interesting thing that this environment generates is that accidental and purposeful actions are nearly indistinguishable. In comparison to someone like Hitchcock, who is largely seen as in control of the screening he is composing, Castle

instead produces an environment where creation on the part of the audience is as important as the parameters he has given them.

As an example, at the screening that I helped produce, there were slight technical difficulties near the time of the tingler's arrival in the *Tol'able David* screening. There was slight unrest about the silence in the theater that gave way to laughter as it was thought that perhaps an additional gimmick was made out of the film's lack of sound and the fact that *Tol'able David* is a silent film. Though totally unplanned and unprepared for, Castle's environment of shock-possibility gives allowance to this idea that those in seats generate in their thought processes of the film experience. Further, some patrons commented upon the state that the environment put them in: one person thought that perhaps different odors were somehow being pumped into the theater and affecting the experience (none were).

Other environments cannot sustain this because they do not establish the same sort of experience contract that Castle does. Castle cites a theater that was outfitted with Percepto but was exhibiting a different picture: "*The Nun's Story* [1959], starring Audrey Hepburn, was playing. During a matinee filled with women, the bored projectionist… pushed the switch during a scene where Hepburn and the nuns were praying. The proper Bostonian ladies got the shock of their lives."[34]

Regardless of the legitimacy of the injuries and emotions of theater patrons at *The Tingler*, Castle relied on newspaper reports the very next day of screams, faintings, and other physical involvement to heighten numbers at the box office. People were interested in what was happening within the space of the theater as an extension of what was going

[34] Castle, 168.

on in the film, as well as what Castle had said would happen in regards to the film experience.

Too Scary to *Not* Look Away

Theater plants and fake nurses do more than collapse space between the screen of the film and the audience of the film. In fact, as it is an extension of this now combined theatrical space of *The Tingler, Tol'able David*, and Castle's own elaborations: this brings the space of the theater and its screen out into the lobby and beyond. More than a poster or cardboard cutout detailing the devices or plot of the film, this movement to corners beyond the traditional theater space aids in creating that generative effect on the part of those watching the film (be it in the used-to-be-lobby space or the used-to-be theater space) that they are somehow *contributing* to the experience. They are capable of somehow adding to the experience. Castle does this by giving those who pay admission agency about precisely *where* they would like to be situated for a given portion of the screening as well as certain actions they are allowed to perform for that screening. This displacement inherent in multiple vantage points of Castle's film forces the audience into a constructive role of the film. People either miss out on some portion on the screen, in the theater, in the lobby, or someplace else. However, there is an awareness of the possibility of those spaces.

As Castle dictates at the beginning of the film, some of the people in the audience feel the sensations that those people on the screen do. Regardless of whether or not a person in the audience is seated in a seat outfitted with one of Castle's Percepto devices, patrons take part in the film by attending to Castle's dare and contract, in coming to see

what is going to happen. Upon screaming for their lives, people in the theater shift emphasis from the screen to the other people in the theater, watching to see the reactions of the literally shocked audience. Also the shock is performed by the projectionist rather than regulated by some piece of machinery. As such, it is largely variable in the way it cam be employed, be it in intensity or in the number of times a theater is buzzed.

All of this breeds a peculiar effect on people watching the film: eyes must move from the screen to other parts of the theater and even outside the theater proper to experience the effect that Castle wishes to generate. People look at each other and at their own bodies while experiencing the effect of Percepto, to other patrons screaming and fainting, to the nurses in the lobby, etc. Naturally, given the emergence of the possible effects in the film, a patron at *The Tingler* cannot simply stare at the movie screen and glean all about the film. In contrast, those watching must actively look away from the screen to fully comprehend the experience of the film.

In view of traditional notions of movie-going, with chief investment placed on the relationship between a *viewer*'s eyes and the *film*'s screen, *The Tingler* seems to call upon Tom Gunning's notion of the cinema of attractions. The cinema of attractions is a theory of film that looks to a film's "ability to *show* something." Gunning discusses early film by calling into question notions that critics and theorists retroactively apply to those films and relationship to narrative. Gunning writes,

> Whatever differences one might find between Lumière and Méliès, they should not represent the opposition between narrative and non-narrative filmmaking, at least as it is understood today. Rather one can unite them in a conception that sees cinema less as a way of telling stories than as a way of presenting a series of views to an audience, fascinating because of their illusory power and exoticism.[35]

[35] Gunning, Tom. "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator, and the Avant-Garde." *Wide Angle* 8.3-4 1986: 64. Print.

Here, we see Castle aligned with the cinema of attractions by way of what the film shows and does. Gunning describes how so-called "trick films" of this early period also relied on additional devices: "…the early showmen exhibitors exerted a great deal of control over the shows they presented… supplying a series of off-screen supplements, such as sound effects and spoken commentary."[36] Gunning here focuses on the tricks, views, and fascinations of the early cinema to characterize it, similar to Castle's reliance upon gimmicks for his texts to function.

In our consideration of Castle's film, the film on the screen is but one part of the experience that we are having. Castle uses onscreen elements to influence in-theater elements. The ease of Castle's onscreen portion gives room for the patron to look at the spectacle of the theater. Its banality *allows* for the elaborations Castle makes in the theater. The need to move our eyes from the screen to other avenues associated with the film comes from the decidedly competent filmmaking that satisfies the basic requirements of genre and audience expectation, without the clout of prestige direction. Far from a sort of tabula rasa but at the same time far from prestige direction, Castle's screen points to the audience and those devices in the audience, so that patrons may enjoy the film by what is *not* onscreen and instead what is around them. In contrast, the onscreen portion of a Clouzot or Hitchcock film is traditionally rendered somehow prestigious and attention is to be paid to that quotient of the film experience specifically. More interestingly, Castle does not need to rely on the screen like these directors do in order to generate intrigue. His architecture allows for play within the space of the screening as well as other outposts he has established where these others do not. Beyond

[36] Gunning, 65.

the shock of the initial gut reaction, Castle's film relies upon the shock of new experiences based upon the conventions and norms of old experiences.

Playing With Your Tingler

Castle's actions entrench these two discrete architectures in each other to the degree that one has to recognize both as the architecture of the film. Castle provides entry points and doorways between the screen and the theater, the theater and the lobby, the projection booth and the theater, etc. Our possible mimesis of the woman onscreen being accosted by the tingler works strictly because of the similarity of circumstance and space between that theater and ours. It is perhaps another instructive moment on the part of Castle, in that he shows a proper reaction to the tingler before Percepto kicks in and we are in the grips of it ourselves.

Castle produces a space that invites and demands various types of physical involvement on the part of the audience. It is difficult to discern what Castle's audience even is, largely because those people in the theater as well as the occasional person in the lobby are all implicated the film itself. This generative environment that gives Castle's patrons agency and relative autonomy is novel because although it enforces new parameters like the buzzers on the chairs, it frees audiences from persistent focus on the screen. Persistent focus on the screen rather than focus on the experience as a totality is a possibility at a Castle film, though one would miss the interplay between the screen and other elements, something inherent to what Castle is attempting to create. Though there is an emergent quality to all of these forces playing together, the experience has that level of emergence precisely because it is impossible to see and do *everything* at a William Castle

screening. The fact that you *might* miss something at a screening of Psycho by being late pales in comparison to knowing that you *have* to miss something at a screening of *The Tingler* even if you arrive early. Whether you experience getting shocked on the butt or not, you are necessarily engaged with whether or not *others* experience it.

The Tingler further blurs what the audience is on the basis of these generative effects. Projectionists generate the physical shocks by flipping the switch for the Percepto devices. They have agency in how the film is going to progress. Furthermore, a theater plant is paid or rehearsed to know about the film in advance, perhaps in contrast to the "others" in the theater. However, Castle's manipulations of theater space prime those "not in the know" to these same possibilities of acting while in the theater. The dare structure Castle imposes upon the theater space of *The Tingler* enforces a sort of play on the part of both those hired and rehearsed plants as well as people that paid that price of admission. The theater plant then comes to represent a cheerleader of sorts for the fun and games of the electrified screening. The plant performance shapes the performance of the others in the theater and, in effect, reinforces Castle's message about sanctioning some of the actions that are typically deemed unbecoming of the theatergoer.

Because of the requirement of performed actions on the part of all those involved with the exhibition of Castle's film due to Castle's augmentations on space, convention, and normative conditions, *The Tingler* cannot be considered or evaluated by typical filmic means. As dependent as patrons are upon Castle to provide both a generative space as well as parameters for that space, people are dependent on each other reacting and contingent upon the other people in the theater, the projection booth, and even the lobby

as *part of the film*. Castle's space is *generative* by the notion that somehow all those in attendance are implicated viscerally in the production of experience at the film.

From this, we can look to a study of Castle's film as a peculiar outlier to familiar convention and concepts of film criticism. For a Castle film, mise-en-scène as a descriptive effort of *what is going on in a film* as a totality is wholly insufficient. Instead, the theater and other possibly affected spaces each have their own mise-en-scène that people can either explore or leave unexplored. Because of their interrelations and the variability of their production, they are impossible to be completely explored, especially when experiencing the film once.

In films like *Psycho* (1960) or *Diabolique*, action of the films builds to brief moments of shock that act as crescendos, punctuating shock. In Castle's shock, our notion of setup and payoff suspense comes from within the theater as well as the peculiar (and sometimes literalized) contract between Castle and the audience as determined by his advertising. Rather than relying upon a crescendo structure, Castle instead produces a space that requires an odyssey to look for possible shock. This environment of shock-possibility is contingent upon the unknowing of what precisely will go on within the space of the theater. The idea of a film-as-dare is necessary to the environment of shock-possibility that Castle creates. The "what is happening?" and "what will happen next?" comes as a relation between onscreen cues and in-theater referents. Traditional horror cinema asks us to fixate upon the screen to find out what happens next and it generates moments of shock in this way. To look away is the hallmark that something is *too shocking* for an audience. *The Tingler* inverts this structure, forcing us to look away from

the screen and instead at our own bodies, other patrons, and our environment at the moment of shock.

The generative environment of Castle's possibility architecture in *The Tingler* attests to the mutability, movability, and ephemeral non-permanence of a Castle screening. Though devices are installed with specific purpose, they are quickly uninstalled as they are part of and go with the film. This mutability allows people other than Castle to bring what they have to the film experience in the theater. This comes to be indicative of Castle's authorial signature even more than his often-cited gimmicks. There is no difficulty in discerning the authored status of a Hitchcock film, regardless of where it is projected. In contrast, the ephemeral quality of Castle's possibility architecture lends itself to change and adoption by others in their performative allowances. Hitchcock's appearance exhibits his dominion and control over an audience. Castle instead invites us to play. Castle's signature also becomes his erasure and effacement *during* the film.

For instance, for *The Tingler* at Emory, in lieu of Castle's elaborative gesture, Goldstein employed some of his own. During the scene in which Chapin himself tests the LSD, which prominently features a human skeletal model, a skeleton was lowered from the rafters of our screening room in White Hall at Emory. The skeleton danced back and forth before being pulled back up and out of sight. In addition, Goldstein provided psychedelic visualizations for these acid trip moments that were screened on top of the 35mm print, utilizing an additional projector. Lastly, theater plants were employed during the "scream for your lives" sequence. These plants acted as theater ushers shining bright lights looking for where the tingler was in our theater. The ushers then spotlighted the

tingler, wrapped around the neck of Dr. Tanine Allison, the curator of the film series. Dr. Allison then "fought" the tingler out of the theater space and into an adjacent hallway.

In my advertising for the production, Castle's reputation preceded the film. I told people that I was in helping in putting on the production and the question I got in response nearly every time was "will the seats buzz?" It is a testament to Castle's gimmick as being at once necessary to the text but at the same time that Castle's film makes allowances for new architecture to be grafted onto the film, given how audiences interact with it. Naturally then, patrons are predisposed to Castle's elaborative gestures, especially when they have been primed by history of the film as event, and yet when we put on the production, the house was packed: Castle's architecture and the dare to withstand the experience of the film extend beyond Castle's elaborative gestures and indeed imbue others with the power to graft onto Castle's own architectures to produce mutable ephemera.

This mutable ephemera produces such a multiplicity of possible meanings, experiences, and thoughts that the film can be understood by its possibility rather than its summary. By providing instructions to this new architecture, Castle gives credence to what is possible, rather than what *is*. Rather than shock at an onscreen murder, we are struck by the shock of Castle's schlock—that Castle actually set out and did this. Patrons go on Castle's ride for just this reason: to engage with Castle and react with what new parameters he has come up with.

This possibility gives rise to the many different *acceptable* reactions to the Castle mode. It is certainly possible to be scared by *The Tingler*, be it by the LSD-induced hallucination scenes, the buzz under a given seat, or the reaction to a fellow patron-

performer's scream. It is also acceptable to laugh within this environment. Castle allows for this by implicitly or explicitly asking audiences to participate in the action of the film rather than seeking an intended reaction.

Step Right Up!

In conclusion, rather than simply achieving some sort of spectacle from his gimmick cinema as is often cited, Castle produces and then directs an environment full of possible outcomes. His augmentations of space have an expansive, inclusive effect on those in the theater as well what is on the screen. His expansions and displacements extend beyond the screen, beyond the theater, and even out of the complex. From this environment of shock-possibility, Castle achieves a hybridization of media forms (film, advertisement, performance, etc.) that calls into question the nature of calling something projected on a wall a film in totality, how that projection can be viewed, and whether or not the experience with that projection is repeatable or if each interaction represents a discrete media experience. Also imperative to the construction of this space is the idea that Castle builds upon existing architectures to produce his new environment: He utilizes the physical theater by adding additional pieces of equipment to that theater space. He works in relationship to conventions of genre and cinema by knowingly presenting thematic tropes centered on those conventions and then thwarting them in his environment. Finally, he specifically builds upon the audience as idea by entering into a contract with audiences, daring them to come inside of his newly repurposed space. Primary then to this repurposing of architectures is Castle's understanding and knowledge

of those architectures to produce his space. Castle has a cognizance of what he is doing rather than simply focusing on spectacle within the theater.

Because of Castle's reliance upon convention in various ways, we can differentiate it from Gunning's cinema of attractions. Heffernan aligns *The Tingler* with the cinema of attractions when he writes, "Increasingly, horror films… began to stretch the permissible limits of violence and gore. This ascendancy of the cinema of attractions at the expense of the cinema of narrative integration was also to affect traditional norms of narrative plausibility, character consistency, and verisimilitude in acting as well…"[37] However, Gunning's claim is that theorists retroactively apply conceptualizations of narrative onto early films. These films largely stand without convention in terms of exhibition and distribution practices, which is precisely how showmen shocked people with these pictures. At the advent of cinema, cinema was the gimmick. In comparison, Castle works in relationship to convention by augmenting it, whereas these early films are largely without convention. In doing so, Castle revives the cinema of attractions and the attention to what a film shows but at the same cultivates his new cinema of attractions in relationship to how film-going has progressed and become conventionalized since the inception of film.

From Castle's construction of a newly realized space, Castle's authorial signature is tied directly to audience performance and participation in that film. By allowing and daring his audience to come inside a *space* of the film rather than *watch* the film, Castle's implication of those involved in a screening of *The Tingler* necessarily makes those people performers in Castle's film. This generative and generous space also then allows for the effacement of Castle and instead places the possibility of the now user-performer

[37] Heffernan, 68.

authoring their own experience. The acceptability of possible experiences at *The Tingler* is hugely generous then, in that the film experience and audience generate one another in this environment. Seemingly, love for the film has a place in this environment as well as hate or intolerance. Castle repurposes space, which in turn repurposes the patron, which in turn repurposes the media in which he works.

Lastly, perhaps the critical and scholarly inability to say anything about Castle and his revitalized environment beyond literal taxonomy of Castle's implemented devices comes from the critic's relationship with Castle's architecture. If one crosses their arms to experience, it simply becomes the logical end to historically list those things that Castle put into theaters, rather than engage with the complexity of what Castle is creating. And on the other hand, if one decides to accept the invitation and become enlivened and enraptured in the possibility of Castle, it is easy to relay those things that generated *the environment* but difficult to relay the *experience* of that environment to others. Because the audience is bound up in the authorial generation of the film, one then wants to stake a claim on Castle's film and the gimmicks he invented for it. The critic or scholar extends the invitation to come visit Castle's environment.

It is as if by explicating these gimmicks, rather than analyzing their effect, critics at once have a stake in the telling and performing of the film but, most importantly perform the task Castle is after most: they effectively tell people the best word-of-mouth advertising a producer could achieve: “Just wait until you see *this*!”

Chapter Two:
Do Look Under Your Bed: Collection and Movement in *Monster Rancher*

As I've shown, William Castle provides his moviegoers with something of a game space—his gimmicks necessitate play with his films. What then, might a gimmick provide to some media form that is decidedly *already* a game? In this chapter, I will elaborate on the concepts that Castle's film brings to light by discussing the video game *Monster Rancher*. *Monster Rancher*'s gimmick is that it necessitates other disc-based media in addition to the *Monster Rancher* disc in order to continue on in the game and experience the full breadth of collection that the game renders as a possibility for its players.

Monster Rancher and its numerous sequels (produced by Tecmo) are part of a wave of video games that were at their height from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s that followed this similar structure of finding or breeding different monsters for the purpose of pitting them against other monsters. Some of the flagship titles of this genre or type of video game include *Pokémon Blue* (1996), *Pokémon Red* (1996), the *Digimon* series (1998-present), *Dragon Quest* (originally released in 1986), and the *Devil Children* series (2000-2004).

Though I will, through context, explain how this gameplay mechanic relates to the text, I will first explain specifically what it is and how it works. Suffice to say that this gameplay requires the creation of certain monsters in order to play the game. In the game, at a shrine, you meet a man who says "In this shrine, you'll be able to generate a monster from any CD that you may have" and asks if you'd like to try. In order to play and satisfy this parameter of the video game, you then physically hit the "open" button of the Playstation console, remove the *Monster Rancher* video game disc and put in another

Playstation game, audio CD, CD-ROM, or some other sort of compact-disc with data coded on it. On the game's heads-up display, text reads "Reading data……." and asks you to insert the *Monster Rancher* disc back into the console. The Shrine Master then says "Here is the big moment!" and you await the arrival of a new monster.[38] As a result, *Monster Rancher* marries digital space with some referent in real-world space. *Monster Rancher* reads some data from each disc that you insert to generate these monsters.

From modifications to the existing architectures of the game disc, the video game console itself, and the space in which the game is played, *Monster Rancher* effectively comes to engender play and participation in various spaces beyond the traditional "sitting in front of the TV" space. It displaces those things that are within the diegesis of the video game and gives us multiple points of entry into playing the game, be it virtually through the console itself or in the collection of objects outside of the game for the game. The active pursuit for pieces *to* the game becomes part of experiencing the play of *Monster Rancher*. Owing to its peculiar inputs and outputs, this conceptualization of collection *in* the game necessitates collection *for* the game, mobilizing the space of play and locating it in the various places that one might find or generate new media for collection and consumption. This challenges conventional notions about how we play video games and the separation of certain spaces from the playing of the game as well as other more broad categories of media composition and how games are understood.

The collection of media correlates to the collection and discovery of new species and sub-species of monster within the game. *Monster Rancher* encourages and ultimately requires the collection of other media in order to play the game. By playing *Monster Rancher,* the player not only actively *needs* other media, but also *needs* to expand their

[38] Shrine Master is my term, not the game's.

possible area of play to include this media, the physical location of it (both on compact disc and in physical space), and actions by which a player must seek out these additional pieces to the narrative, gameplay, and code by putting down a controller, searching for new media (or in some cases generating this media themselves, as we shall discover) and putting these things to new use.

This is of course a very cursory glance at precisely how this mechanic works, but it brings to light this notion of marrying the digital space of those monsters on the screen and the physical reality of having to find a new CD to input into the game, let alone many CDs to generate many monsters. This gets at the heart of precisely how the game's designers are able to modify something about their game that differentiates it in terms of experience from not only its contemporaries but also video games in general. This atypical action of actually opening the game console and *removing* the game disc affectively engenders a similar generative environment in *Monster Rancher* that Castle does with *The Tingler*. Players are encouraged to add to the game experience with their own collections as well generating new media by burning new discs for use specifically in the game. Much like *The Tingler*, it might be easy to equate the game simply with having that gimmick where you put a CD in and get a monster in the game. But as we shall see, also like Castle, this presents a new and necessary generative environment for the player of the game.

Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

Just like Castle's many gimmicks, *Monster Rancher* requires various contexts that it builds upon and augments. Unlike Castle's film, *Monster Rancher* has had a place in

my life since I was nine years old. Its constructed mythology is something that I have experienced and help build upon in various ways. It has become one of a handful of games that have informed my opinions and tastes as far back as I can remember. A good deal of my childhood was spent playing video games with my brothers. My family typically upgraded to the newest generation video game console every Christmas. Upon getting a Super Nintendo as a child, my brothers and I would often race unicycles on fixed tracks in *Uniracers* (1994) and attempt to master the art of "goojitsu" in *Clay Fighter* (1993). An oft-cited photo amongst my family depicts me seated on the floor, controller in hand, and my brother standing, six inches from the television, his right foot raised to rest upon the tiny entertainment center, in a sort of engaged Captain Morgan pose. This photograph isn't so much a still moment in time but something that must have sublimated from my brother and I maintaining this pose for several years of our lives. I am fairly certain that from the age of seven until the age of twelve, my mother only saw my back. If any photo has a punctum, this is surely the photo that wounds me.

From my brothers I learned fireball motion in *Street Fighter II* (1991) as well as the Contra code, how to get to the star worlds of *Super Mario World* (1990), and how to perform Fo's devastating burp/fart combo in the fighter *Battle Arena Toshinden* (1994). However, I was always the young kid trying to butt my head into their competitions. Eventually, I found my own way. I would make the rounds in terms of what I played, genres and game types, throughout the years. Some time later, my friend Cameron and I meditated upon *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3* (2001) to the point that in a 24-hour period, we could beat the game perfectly, not missing a goal or point with all characters. Perhaps my most slovenly of video gaming habits was playing *World of Warcraft* (2004) in my

mother's basement with friends to such an extent that there are no photos of even my back during that period of my life.

However, the game that I always relay to those who ask about favorites is *Monster Rancher.* Picture a twelve-year kid running around the house stealing his older brothers' copies of Myst and the *Dangerous Minds* (1995) soundtrack. Imagine also that he had no want or need to sit through Myst's boring island or hear Coolio sing anthems against the man. I was after something my brothers had no idea existed on their compact discs. By stealing what was theirs, not only was I risking imminent brain death, I was playing my favorite video game.

Play in the Age of Intelligent Machines

Monster Rancher is interested in a peculiar form of play, as evidenced above, dwelling in some liminal state between analog collection of objects and the digital reorganization of those objects. Before discussing the game's historical contexts then, another context that deeply affects and is affected by *Monster Rancher* are our notions of play itself, especially in its relationship to video games. Play is an age-old idea. The concept of different types of play spaces and descriptions of the synthesis and separation of those different spaces have been discussed in various ways that relate to playing video games. Huizinga's concept of the Magic Circle places play within a set of boundaries and parameters that separate it from the real world: "…play is a voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a

feeling of tension, joy and the consciousness, that it is 'different' from 'ordinary life'."[39] Jesper Juul formalizes the different spaces in video games by assessing their qualities of truth and fiction:

> …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.[40]

Juul here is describing the video game as something that stands apart from reality, but rather than looking at it as an object that arises from calculation, Juul looks at the human interaction that arises out of both real and fictional rules of the game space. It is here that Juul recognizes the interaction between both of these spaces but also necessitates that they are separate from one another.

Alexander Galloway places all activity pertaining specifically to video games within four different spheres of gamic action on two intersecting axes: Diegetic/Non-Diegetic on one axis and Operator/Machine on the other. His conceptualizations of diegesis are borrowed from film theory and work similarly, with added emphasis on the fact that in-game menus and selection screens function as non-diegetic moments of playing video games. Operator and Machine are fairly distinguishable as broad categories. Because these axes intersect, there are moments that work within spheres between two categories. For instance, Galloway defines a non-diegetic operator act as one of configuration: "They are always executed by the operator and received by the machine. They happen on the exterior of the *world* of the game but are still part of the

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[39] Huizinga, 28.
[40] Juul, Jesper. *Half-Real: Video Games Between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011. Print. 1.

game software and completely integral to the play of the game… Pausing a game is an action by the operator that sets the entire game into a state of suspended animation."[41]

I argue that not only is *Monster Rancher's* scavenger hunt for new media *integral* to the game, as Galloway writes, but that turning off the console or opening it up does not violate the game world at all. In fact, this action is *necessary* to *Monster Rancher*'s world. All of these theorists point to formalization and differentiation of game space between human input and the given, though arbitrary, rules of the fictional game space. This is to say that although there is interaction between spaces, there are large, broad definitions that separate them. Juul lays out effectively separate spheres of game play space as does Galloway.[42] What *Monster Rancher* is attempting is to utilize the somehow additional, separate action of opening the console and making it a gameplay mechanic not only on the part of the video game/console relationship in how the console reads code off of the disc but more importantly this mechanic becomes something that the *player* must participate in as well.

What first marks *Monster Rancher* is how all of these separate spaces in a video game melt into each other. This is similar to how Castle's gimmick proves that mise-en-scène is at best only indicative of part of a film and at worst wholly insufficient to describe it. When a player inserts a new CD into the Playstation, *Monster Rancher*'s code searches for some bit of code on the new disc to complete a pre-determined algorithm for *Monster Rancher*. Not only does the coded element of the new compact disc generate a monster type in *Monster Rancher*, it also generates a sub-type, along with different

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[41] Galloway, 12

[42] Admittedly, most theorists do this in an attempt to have some level of definition between salient features of games, though they do not typically seek out as rigid, overriding constructs as theorists in other disciplines. The borders between these spheres are already malleable.

statistics about that monster that will determine how it fights later on in the game (statistics like vitality, strength, defense, etc.). A video game's code makes its parameters manifest most saliently in how it is programmed to interact with inputs such as human input from controllers, as well as how the game dictates rules for objects within the context of the game. This code dictates how graphical elements interact with environments as well as functions as the method by which players must navigate the video game. The code of *Monster Rancher*, in conjunction with physical media determines a new way of looking at how video game space can be defined, producing its new possibility architecture in the face of how traditional game code interacts with various inputs.

How a Monster Stands Apart

Beyond my own history with video games as well as the historical precedent of how humans play in general, *Monster Rancher* has its own history in terms of genre and perceptions of games like it. The original *Monster Rancher* is a video game based on the concept of the breeding and collection of monsters for the purpose of pitting them against other in arena-style combat. This combat is done in the service of ascending the ranks as a breeder to become a master. Combat takes the form of simultaneous fighting (as opposed to turn-based fighting, for instance in the monster collector/fighter series *Pokémon*) between two monsters, with the player choosing the attacks that a monster uses.[43]

[43] In most cases, this functions diegetically by way of telling your monster to do something that it can either obey or disobey, with various modifiers affecting whether or not it will be able to complete the move.

Within this niche-cycle of video games, there is little differentiation between games, other than different types of monster, setting, and other semantic differences. The core idea of collection or acquisition of monsters remains largely the same throughout this cycle. Different monsters also have different attributes that make them more or less effective in various ways during combat as well as their lifecycle.

As stated above, the thing that differentiates *Monster Rancher* as a text is a generative capacity of the game in conjunction with other media. *Monster Rancher* is specifically generative because its possibility architecture requires the generation of monsters from other pieces of media, repurposing what they are used for. Within the digital world of the game, you function as a breeder of monsters, which is a very highly esteemed profession. Ultimately, you ascend the ranks of breeder-dom by fighting monsters in tournaments and climbing the ladder to compete in the most prestigious tournaments.[44] The experience contract that is drawn up in the creation of this novel mechanic (and reinforced by its own advertising, like Castle's film) is contingent upon your cultivation of monsters being somehow *different* than normal. Because of the way the video game unfolds in a non-linear fashion, with choices to be made by the player, this decision of how and what to cultivate also serves somewhat as the plot summary context of the game, be it in collecting diegetic monsters or non-diegetic discs.

Within the narrative of the game, monsters come from ancient artifacts known as "disc stones" which are known to be incredibly rare within this diegesis. The game's opening cinematic finds a miner with a pickaxe drilling into dirt whereupon he finds one of these mythic disc stones. This is cause for great celebration as he rushes off to a shrine

[44] Not only are you given the opportunity to name your monster, but also your breeder. Because the naming process and lack of character model efface your avatar, many players feel as though they are creating their own character as a breeder and trainer. See Appendix B.

to get a monster. It is at first this collection of the disc stone that allows one to become a breeder. Wherever you are playing the game though, there is a real-life equivalent to this disc-stone, which is the compact disc medium. We see this not only in the box art, but also the opening cinematic as a spinning CD metamorphoses into a disc-shape with what looks like fossil remains imbedded in it.

This cinematic diegetically gives way to what *Monster Rancher* promises as a part of its experience contract—players perform not only the traditional in-game scavenger hunt for useful objects but also necessarily go on scavenger hunts within actualized spaces, from the house and existing collections of media to other people's houses, used CD stores, etc. Media is desirable in this new architecture not for what music, video, or other typically useful material it has been used for. Instead, *Monster Rancher* generates this real-life scavenger hunt specifically to utilize media for its new purpose. Players sign the experience contract to go on these scavenger hunts to find new monsters from existing data. Beyond these actualized spaces, the scavenger hunt extends to these new uses of data.

To attain monsters in *Monster Rancher*, one can go to the town that the game takes places in and go to the Market to buy them for in-game currency, though there are only three basic types of monster to buy at this market location.[45] Most players will never use this feature of the game or quickly abandon it, however, as the Shrine of the town is where most breeders will get their monsters. The shrine is where the generation of monsters happens.[46] This marks the end of the scavenger hunt to find *actualized* items in the form of CDs and begins the quest for collection of all of the forms of monsters in the

[45] These monsters are the Dino, Suezo, and Tiger.
[46] Monsters are said to have been locked away in disc stones as a historical precedent in the game.

game. Beyond a sort of narrativized tome of monsters, however, what does one gain by finding/generating more and more of them?[47] Pitting monsters against one another in combat is only a small part of the game, with a largely repetitive back and forth of attacks. Combat typically lasts about a minute with outcomes largely determined by statistics more than anything else. In the face of this act, cited as the "purpose" of many of these types of games, the in-game collection of monsters gives players a sense of purpose or quest beyond fighting them. What the fighting system provides is an effective competition for those players looking for that in a video game. In *The Tingler*, Castle provides a competent portrayal of an onscreen monster, in comparison to his contemporaries' somehow more "masterful" portrayals. Castle's mastery comes from going beyond this competency by adding his "something extra" gimmicks. *Monster Rancher* acts similarly in that it competently portrays this battle portion, but unlike its contemporaries, *Monster Rancher* places its focus on its masterful way of generating monsters.

"My, Earth really is full of things."

Collection is a feature of most video games, be it in collecting items, collecting points, collecting time, etc. Monster generation looks to a joy in discovery as part of collecting. By actively repurposing the media we use daily, we are able to discover new possibilities of this media, when brought to new use by *Monster Rancher*. Or, in contrast, we are able to get new use out of media that is no longer useful for its original purpose.

[47] There is an in-game tone that lists information about each monster that a breeder has generated, as well how many they have not yet found.

This pursuit of collection is common in all video games, however, *Monster Rancher* looks to collection differently.

For instance, Steven E. Jones discusses the nature of collection as a primary necessity of video games: "…gaming is always on some level about collecting. And collecting is a form of meaning-making."[48] He goes on describe collection in his essay on the Playstation 2 title *Katamari Damacy* (2004). Katamari Damacy is a video game where the player uses very simple controls to essentially roll a sticky ball over everything in sight, collecting items and getting larger and larger until the ball rolls up the planet Earth.[49] "What Takahashi [the game's designer] has created is a game against interpretation (as such), a collecting game whose meaning is the need to make one's own meanings from what you collect, to make collecting meaningful, to make your own fun."[50] Jones asserts that although item collection in games *can* be useful in progressing to the end of some sort of storyline or understood marker of experience, the idea of completion is not necessarily the end-goal of some video games and rather that there is a process-oriented joy in collection. "And just is the case with gamers, real collectors scoff at the vulgar idea that mere acquisition, much less completion, is the true object of the game, the thing that gives it meaning." [51] In the case of a game like *Katamari Damacy*, though the functionality of the game is contingent on the very real collection of objects, deriving pleasure does not necessarily come from "completing" the game but rather it comes from progression being associated with the experiential rather than the quantitative.

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[48] Jones, 17.
[49] This summary of the game of course lacks nuance but gets to the heart of the game's focus on collection.
[50] Jones, 51.
[51] Jones, 48.

Monster Rancher takes up similar aims in regards to its generation of monsters. Like all of the other games of this cycle, one way in which you gain esteem as a breeder or collector is to have a record of your exploits as a collector and finder of things. This is obviously most apparent in the *Pokémon* series slogan "Gotta Catch 'Em All", which is prominently featured as an advertising tool for the game as well the TV series that it spawned. In contrast to *Pokémon*'s dare to the audience to catch all of the existing Pokémon available to the player, *Monster Rancher* makes this task nearly impossible or at the very least, it requires so many additional CDs that it becomes most reliant on other media. It is feasible to catch all of the Pokémon in *Pokémon* largely because they all exist in a way where they are all eventually capture-able through means available within the space of a single Game Boy cartridge. Conversely, with *Monster Rancher*'s additional CDs, it becomes strikingly difficult to "catch them all" in this game. Only certain known discs net certain rare monsters. Therefore, one has the dual responsibility of finding the counterpart disc to the monster they want to generate, enforcing a sort of dual discovery.

Furthermore, *Monster Rancher* comes with no list of what CD generates what monster. Though there are various monsters in the game, some are more rare than others; some have specific attributes players are after. And seemingly, in order to know what disc nets what monster, you have to seek out lists of CDs that others have generated in order to know what you will get with a specific CD before actually putting the disc in. One comes to value not only the generation of monsters from theses discs but also the discs themselves for what they are capable of producing. For the most part, putting in a

disc will net the same monster each time and those that net multiple monsters are typically indicated in lists available online.[52]

Sanctioned Emergence

As discussed earlier with Galloway's non-diegetic operator actions, *Monster Rancher* augments how video game console hardware is traditionally formulated. This type of interaction between other media and the video game console is largely very limited. Perhaps one of the few ways in which video games ever reference themselves or other media and self-consciously state how player's engage with interface controls are in those menu screens that give information about the video game as well as give players a means to augment their style of play. In effect, these are typically viewed as somehow "other" than the game proper, though necessary to set up the experience of play for a player. This game marries this *othered* menu form with game experience. This referential system is a part of the play of the game. This referential system is largely what metamorphoses the compact disc/disc stone into its understood and perceptible value on the part of the game, which is largely why it is included as instruction.

Video games that have huge amounts of data imbedded on their own discs are traditionally spread over several discs in order to fit the entirety of a game's data. There is a fundamental imperative that the CD-based medium is restricted to the amount of data that can be stored on a given disc. For instance, *Final Fantasy VII* (1997) comes with three compact discs that the entirety of the game spans across. When a player reaches the "end" of the code on one disc they are prompted to open the console and trade out for the

[52] These CDs that net multiple monsters are referred to as "Pandora" discs by various communities online. These communities are where lists of CDs and their referent monsters exist.

next disc in line. The code located on each disc refers to the other discs in the sequence largely because the Playstation console has a limited amount of RAM that necessitates this disc swapping, rather than a call to perform the task as *part* of the game.

In effect, for all video games other than *Monster Rancher*, this process is similar to that main menu or save menu of a game, which is not considered diegetic or part of the *play* of the game, but rather a *setup* action in order to play it. They dwell in some sort of transitional state and function like clarifying the rules of buying houses and hotels in the board game Monopoly. As a corollary, the bulk of Playstation games cease to function (most freeze up or work in odd ways for a few seconds before freezing up) in terms of the supposed *play* of the game when the console is opened. This is a result of convention dictating as well as hardware that this is not only unnecessary to gameplay but not useful to experience. There is surely data there but it cannot be read, deciphered, and applied in this way. The need to put in a new CD to continue is a *sanctioned* act on the part of the programmers of the video game that allows the console to be opened and the game still function.

What *Monster Rancher* does is utilize this sanctioned act for new means that enforce a new use for this necessity—its new possibility architecture is at once limiting in that one *has* to use other discs (the possibility architecture's newly minted parameter) but at the same time it is expansive in that players move the sphere of gameplay as they move from place to place, seeking collections of other media.

Even at the time of *Monster Rancher*'s release, there were certain mechanics and means of new and interesting interface supplied by peripherals to the Playstation hardware. For instance, certain racing games utilize additional technology to replace the

typical controller of the Playstation with that of a steering wheel and brake/gas pedals. This seemingly further approximates the experience of driving the vehicle. A multi-tap upgrades the Playstation's maximum number of players from two to four.[53] One might see these additional pieces of equipment in similar ways to Castle's Percepto technology, which works within the confines of the theater environment, but relied upon the additional equipment Castle brought into that space.[54]

However, *Monster Rancher* does not employ any new hardware to its ends. It does not come with any optional or necessary piece of hardware. Rather it repurposes technology for its own uses. It does this in terms of the console, as stated, but also in terms of the media by which it generates monsters. Rather than utilizing a peripheral that has been established for the console or generating its own, *Monster Rancher* instead repurposes something that already exists, both in the media that it employs as well as the Playstation hardware's capacity to utilize this media.[55]

Warning: Discs Necessary

Monster Rancher's possibility architecture comes about when players agree to act by repurposing this existing media. *Monster Rancher*'s experience contract about this new architecture comes, much like *The Tingler*, first from its advertising. The front cover of the North American version of the game features the text "Virtual Monster Breeder" very prominently in a red box in the upper left corner. We also see something very

[53] This is merely a smattering of the peripherals available for this console. Peripherals beyond the basic controller and console have been available for most console systems since their inception.
[54] Some video games make use of existing peripherals in interesting ways. For instance, the original *Metal Gear Solid* (1998) scans your memory card when Psycho Mantis, one of the game's chief villains, confronts you about save data for other games. In order to prove that he can read your mind, Psycho Mantis relays this save data to you: "I see you've been playing a lot of *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* (1997)," he says. And I have been.
[55] This can be likened to the way in which Castle repurposes the architectures that he works within.

unusual for any video game cover: a compact disc itself is on the cover of the game. Superimposed in front of this disc are three monsters from the video game. Simply from these few images juxtaposed with one another, we can see that CDs are going to feature incredibly prominently within the game. This is where the contract between the player and the game, media and the player, media and the game, begins.

In looking at the back cover of the game, we can see Tecmo to narrativize this gameplay mechanic of generating monsters from your CD collection by featuring the text "Warning: Whatever you do, don't sit too close to your CD rack". The text goes on to clarify, stating:

> Remember when you thought monsters were lurking in every dark corner of your house? Well, you were right: **Every CD you own contains a monster**. Every PC CD and every game CD each has a monster living inside. Use Monster Rancher to safely release these monsters into a virtual environment where **you're the master.**[56]

Here we see Tecmo aligning its game first with the idea of being scared of monsters as a child. This common fear is also typically spread from child to child. Furthermore, the monsters in this game are given a physical space within the space that the player or spectator is inhabiting: the home. *Monster Rancher*'s ad copy makes a bold claim that can be likened to Castle's dare in that it asks players not only to engage with monsters, but to also have an active role in releasing those monsters and generating them.[57] This engenders a sense of intrigue and surprise, first owing to the fact that it is not where

[56] Bold text theirs.
[57] This is similar to Castle in that he makes requests of his audience to actively contribute in looking, feeling, and understanding his relationship of screen to everything else.

people typically (if ever) associate monsters residing. It is also a challenge about *what CDs are* and *how they work*.[58]

It is also a gambit in two ways: to get players interested by being dared to as well as a gamble about whether or not people will enjoy it beyond simply seeing how the mechanic works. Also, the fact that as a player you can use CDs in a way that they were not intended to be used gives life to those CDs that you have not used in a long time or never used.[59] *Monster Rancher* also tempers its connection between ad copy stating the dare to release these monsters by also stating that *Monster Rancher* is going to release these monsters *safely*. Though it dwells in similar rhetoric to horror movies attempting to scare you with what's around the corner, *Monster Rancher* also gives assurance that it *knows what it's doing*. This is perhaps the first way in which *Monster Rancher* attempts to marry its digital space with some referent in "real-life" terms, something that it goes on to do as its primary feature.

The game's advertisements further the video game's acknowledgement of the compact disc itself as a necessary component of gameplay. Within the game, these magic circles are known as both 'disc stones' as well as 'CDs'. The terms are largely interchangeable. The Shrine Master and subsequent dialogue refers to them as 'CDs', making the game cognizant of the physical world beyond this digital one. *Monster Rancher* also marries these spaces in a similar way to Castle's use of the blank screen and Vincent Price's direct address. In the game's opening cinematic, after the miner has successfully generated his Dino monster, the disc stone floats and spins through space. It

[58] Similarly to *The Tingler*, *Monster Rancher* also takes this contract further by mimicking regulation from the Entertainment Software Ratings Board by providing their own ESRB look-alike box which states "Warning: Breed monsters at your own risk".
[59] Largely, this relates to the game's assertion that there actually is literal life on each CD that you own.

then meets and metamorphoses with a spinning compact disc. Beyond the basic observation of calling attention to the medium by putting a disc narratively in the game, *Monster Rancher* attempts to graphically marry the disc stone and the compact disc. Through the same sort of transference that Castle employs in his blank screen and address, *Monster Rancher* invites you to investigate this happening.

We are at the same time aware of what the compact disc means to us as users as well as what *Monster Rancher* is attempting to infer with its transformation. Though the game gives a backstory as to perhaps how these disc stones existed in ancient times in the game's opening cinematic, the primary emphasis, bookending this cinematic, is the metamorphosis of the rendered copy of a spinning CD into the rock disc stone. Here, the game refers to the CD as necessary to continuing play, as it is a primary function of the game. This active conflation produces inquiry as it modifies existing architectures and conventions and produces a new hybrid form of game.

As a ramification of this new architecture, much like with Castle's theater there is a large limitation placed upon the game. This process of generation in all iterations of the game that use this mechanic is limited by the hardware of the video game console as well as by the necessity of this added media. For instance, The Sony Playstation can *only* read certain kinds of compact disc formats. As the DVD was not the format of the original Playstation console, *Monster Rancher* cannot release monsters from these discs. [60] As such, *Monster Rancher* can only generate content from those formats that it understands.

[60] With subsequent iterations of the game on newer consoles, both the console's architecture as well as the in-game shrine accepted more formats. For instance, because the Playstation 2 features compatibility with DVD technology, you can release monsters from DVDs from the Playstation 2 title *Monster Rancher 2* (1999).

This limitation is peculiar as it produces a somewhat focused search for specific disc-based media rather than media in other forms (tape, print, etc.).

Also, because the game's experience contract makes it imperative to utilize other pieces of media to effectively play the game, *Monster Rancher* stands as a peculiar text because it cannot function *without* other media. It cannot be the only video game sitting on your shelf or the only CD that you seek when playing. What produces novelty here is the fact that you are actually required to provide additional input to the game that it does not provide. Your existing collection of this media as well as the collections of others then *becomes* necessary to the game under *Monster Rancher's* new possibility architecture. This added parameter of additional media produces the game's possibility.

Ranching Research

The public does not know the algorithm for how and what monsters are produced. This, along with wanting to know what CDs produce which monster, are the questions that players attempt to research within the new generative environment that *Monster Rancher* generates. The game's experience contract breeds researchers (perhaps like you breed monsters) by providing the new possibility architecture of the repurposing media. The resultant generative environment gives space for these researchers to attempt to answer the questions that have come up throughout the course of playing the game.

This type of gameplay is one that not only bridges the worlds of the real and the fictional as outlined by Jesper Juul but perhaps goes further and looks toward a notion of play that is perpetual and based on this type of collection. Precisely how the player goes about selecting media to generate these monsters as well as reviewing one's own (and

other peoples') collections of media as minable sources of data for the game forces us to view these pieces of media not strictly in terms of their designated applications, but also in terms of their employability in other avenues that repurpose them. *Monster Rancher* acts similarly to Castle here in terms of its parameter deriving possibility in the game. Where they differ, however, is that Castle provides a new construction of what and where the theater can be, forcing the audience to be reconceptualized as well. Though Castle engenders participation, he does so by providing the necessary objects (the buzzers, the skeleton, the viewing glasses) to change experience. In contrast, *Monster Rancher* relies upon the generative environment of the console to provide this experience. The player provides the added devices for *Monster Rancher Monster Rancher* comes as its own text, at once dependent on additional media, but at the same time without any governance to what this media has to be.

Taking this observation further, opening up the console is seen as something one does to *begin* playing or perhaps to play a different game. However, here we see that the opening up of the console is necessary to *continuing* the game.[61] Opening up the console is thus an action that merges the differentiated spaces of the video game, as defined by Juul and Galloway. This merger is largely not optional, but inherent to playing the game. One does not experience the game without utilizing this generative capacity of it.

Being a game whose code looks to the data of other pieces of media, *Monster Rancher* invites a need for research and experimentation into precisely how the game works. This is perhaps the most salient way in which the game's possibility architecture gives way to its generative environment. Tecmo has never released data on precisely how its mechanic works. Much like Castle's gimmicks, for Tecmo, the algorithm marks the

novelty of the game and as such, reveals how everything works. To reveal their tricks specifically removes some of their novel appeal and ability to engender this generative environment. Also like Castle, revealing the algorithm allows competitors to hone in on this novel idea and use it for their own purposes. However, much like Castle's cinema engenders viewers to become part of the film by participating and generating things for themselves and others to look at, *Monster Rancher*'s invitation to people is predicated upon the want to figure out and understand how something works.

And just as the game invites this experimentation in its experience contract, the game *produces* researchers. Those intrigued by the contract look to the game's possibility architecture in order to find out how media correlates to monsters. Players have built communities for research into the possibilities of the game. In online forums, interested breeders/researchers present data they have found by conducting experiments within the game. This is perhaps in contrast to the traditional renderings of these environments based on games where players can come to ask other players for tips and tricks.[62]

Much of what people are researching centers around finding the algorithm that Tecmo does not release. People want to know precisely *how* the translation of data and code between disc, console, and other discs works. It is the nature of the code (and, subsequently its required input) that opens the game up to be researched by generating data from the game's algorithm in order to better to understand that algorithm *itself*. Data generation leads back to the algorithm's process, in contrast to typical renderings of code where an algorithm is stated and data is generated from that algorithm. Because the game has a code that enforces rules and new parameters that are predicated very pointedly on

[62] Environments like these function as places to receive feedback about how to play a game—They spring up as responsive strategy guides, in the wake of print strategy guides as well magazines like *Nintendo Power* or *Official Playstation Magazine* that may respond to reader submissions.

how the game and console read data, the game presents itself as a space to do research on that very topic.

In contrast, Castle's modifications to physical architecture are things that audiences can openly see and feel. The construction of whatever buzzing apparatus Castle used can be deduced by looking at its constituent parts by yanking from under the seat. The skeleton being pulled through the screen in *House on Haunted Hill* screenings can even be approximated at-a-glance by looking at its construction. *Monster Rancher* does not afford this quality of *at-a-glance* because its construction comes from its code, which is not readily apparent to the player. To reconstruct a Castle film screening, someone definitely does some level of reverse engineering in terms of how to generate these effects for an audience, much like the researchers of *Monster Rancher* are doing in terms of generating data to get back to the game's algorithm. However, the reverse engineering process of *Monster Rancher* is quantitatively determined by its code in comparison to the more *physical* nature of reverse engineering Castle's gimmicks and possibility architecture.

The prominent place of research that this video game generates is online. The construction of these online fan communities is a testament to the generative environment that *Monster Rancher* creates. One of the most interesting things about these online communities is the dedication that many have to this generative act. Though the original game has been around for nearly twenty years at this point, not only are people still playing it (especially in the face of it having a similar cult status to Castle's films) but research is *still* being done. Given the usual time period for communities of this sort to

not only exist but also function with some regularity, this seems to be an outlier.[63] This attests to the dedication that people have not only to *playing* the game but continuing on with it and proposing research with it. Though many of these dedicated research sites have folded, there are those that exist as repositories for this vast amount of knowledge about the algorithm as well as other salient features of the game. Perhaps the best and most traveled to is that of *Monster Rancher* Metropolis (www.monster-rancher.com).

From this community and its research, we can see actual, tangible results from the generative process of *Monster Rancher*'s possibility architecture. This is the most tangible place of generation in the real world from *Monster Rancher* in that communities are being constructed to discuss the game in a way that no other game has. Some of the initial research found in the communities and message boards includes cataloging what monsters (and subsequently starting statistics for fighting) are created by what CDs—creating a taxonomy of disc stones equivalent to the tome of generated monsters, though multiple CDs can produce the same monster. This taxonomy is useful to those people looking to "catch 'em all" but more importantly, it provides data about various collections that may or may not also reflect your own collection

From the taxonomy that these communities create, researchers have found other useful features of the game and its read process. For instance, the bulk of monsters in *Monster Rancher* can be spawned by any number of CDs with corresponding data. However, many of the more rare monsters are hardcoded to correspond with certain discs. As an example, certain CDs produce monsters that appear representative of the *content* of the CD rather than simply the *data* present therein. Similarly, in playing the

[63] As a corollary, think of current renderings of Tumblr pages that proliferate online but have such a minute shelf life that perhaps their creation is the only necessary point to place on a timeline.

same game, if you were to unlock the monster potential of one of Tecmo's other games, you would be met with some of the more rare monsters in the game. Using the game *Dead or Alive* (1996) as a generative disc nets a creature named Kasumi, the name of a character in that Tecmo game. *Tecmo's Deception* (1996) nets one of the most rare monsters in the original *Monster Rancher*—Ardebaran. Perhaps taking Castle's rhetoric of advertising even further, Tecmo monetizes its gimmick and subsequent possibility architecture by providing inputs from other Tecmo products as necessary to generate certain functions in the game.

Beyond hardcoding certain CDs with specific associations like those listed above, *Monster Rancher* allows and calls for the generation of CD media *specifically for* the game. Several of the experiments conducted in attempts to find how the game's algorithm and CD read process works are conducted using CDs created for just that: burnt CDs made for the sole purpose of seeing what they generate. Pages of data on these forums include lists of CDs created with unique variables used when they were creating them (audio CDs with specific lengths tested and compared to determine if this variable affected the generation of different monsters as well as several other variables). This is obviously a product generated by the game and its players and is one of the more peculiar and specific instances of such an object being generated by this experience.

Though to a large extent, the *research* conducted by these individuals relies on quantitative data, discussion amongst researchers can then turn to qualitative claims that also further mimic Castle's rhetoric and the fan rhetoric surrounding his gimmicks. Given the possibility architecture of *Monster Rancher*'s algorithm, just like Castle's cinema, some of the rhetoric between researchers amounts to creating mythologies about things

that supposedly happen in the game or from the CD read process of the game. Myths like these are similar to anecdotes that Castle and others perpetuate about things that happened in certain screenings, whether or not they actually did, like the faintings he relied on to perpetuate his film.

Through this rhetoric and researching, the ultimate discovery for us is that the algorithm requires a new kind of input in order to be complete. All of the people invested in figuring out how the game mechanic works are necessarily only unveiling tiny parts or possibilities presented by the algorithm they are seeking to understand. This is however, one of the reasons that the game and its gamers are so generative in their pursuits: they seek to discover about what is missing, be that through the collection of items or monsters displayed onscreen, the collection of media available around the house, pieces of code on that media, etc.

An Algorithm Deferred

In this way, the code of the game *Monster Rancher* requires not only input but also the generation of that input, be it through burning your own media or acquiring media that you currently do not have. It requires the input of code from other media in order to be played properly. This is interesting because outside of the input from controllers and other peripherals, the world of video games is largely thought to exist on the discs they came pre-packaged with. As *Monster Rancher*'s code is displaced, this relates the nature of the algorithm with player activity in the collection of those codes, via other discs. This is the very thing that merges the algorithm with player activity in a meaningful way. The interface of *Monster Rancher* involves far more than mere

manipulation of things associated with the screen, console, and in-game buttons. More aptly put, in *Monster Rancher* the interface of the game extends beyond the console, beyond the couch, and even beyond the house. The interface of a video game like *Monster Rancher* exists wherever there is code to be cultivated.

The quality of repurposing media for the purpose of collection is one of the hallmarks of the game and is also how the game comes to redefine the space within which players play. *Monster Rancher* thwarts the notion that there is a distinct separation between the many inputs and outputs of the game. Instead, this use of the possibility architecture allows all spaces of gameplay to become displaced necessities in terms of the game. Similarly to Castle's thwarting of a concept like mise-en-scène, *Monster Rancher* requires not only digital collection of items but also the amassing of an equivalent analog collection of discs.

Interestingly, possible parts of this game exist where people are even unaware of the game's existence.[64] The latent data found on disc stones serves as an artifact that the game needs. This realization also partially calls into question Juul's notion that there are distinctly fictional and real rules apart from one another within all video games. Sure, as in Juul's example, when you slay the dragon "in-game", there is no "real-life" equivalent. However, when you utilize the code from your mom's James Taylor's Greatest Hits album that disc stone exists in the game as well as in real-life. It is only through its repurposing within *Monster Rancher* that we are able experience this.

Disc stones as well as CDs can be viewed as anthropological artifacts left behind (as well as continuing to be produced) that as a video game player, one must attempt to

[64] Again, in comparison to Castle, think of those patrons outside of a screening in the lobby, watching a nurse at one of Castle's many filmic outposts fix up someone's wound.

try to translate into the virtual world that *Monster Rancher*'s cover claims. In this way as well, *Monster Rancher* shows us that media itself can possibly be utilized and repurposed for other uses beyond original intention. However, it is only through its repurposing without necessary reference to original content that it does this.

Scavenger Hunt as Worship

To conclude, we arrive at the fact that *Monster Rancher* views all spaces of play in the game as spaces of possibility. Its experience contract lends itself to the player by daring them not only to release monsters from CDs, but also to use and collect CDs for new purposes. The game's parameters necessitate this use of additional media, given how the experience contract and various contexts produce the game's possibility architecture. Perhaps even more than Castle's films, *Monster Rancher*'s possibility architecture focuses upon sending players not only out into the lobby (the collections of others that live with or near you) but also that it affects players in a durational way— though various experiences at multiple Castle screening are each their own discrete experience, *Monster Rancher*'s game play does not necessarily ever cease. This is in contrast to the necessity of run time for Castle's film. Provided the intention of one's engagement with a piece of media is informed by its possible result in *Monster Rancher*, one is playing the game. Furthermore, because this game is based on quantitative hard code, a stack of CDs in 1998 will, with little variability, produce a stack of the same monsters today.

Monster Rancher sees things in terms of parallels. The disc stone is equivalent to the CD. Also, the shrine is equivalent to the console. Though it requires our input, the console (like the theater) is the first place we come to experience this new possibility

architecture. Though we are drawn in by its dares, *Monster Rancher* relies upon new uses for old media. Castle first repurposes space, which in turn changes all other functions of the text. *Monster Rancher* instead first repurposes media, which in turn repurposes the player, which in turn repurposes space. Through the shrine, *Monster Rancher* sees media as holy texts: the cultivation of their code translated at the shrine of the video game console. *Monster Rancher* is a game that utilizes the shrine in a way to move us not only closer to the console and a game's code, but also further away into our own existing collections and other people's. The idea of using media thus necessitates a new formulation that includes the idea that code is something achievable and malleable for uses beyond its original intention. The game's generative environment encourages players to attempt to answer questions that it poses by giving players some of the tools necessary to look back at its process. We come to the shrine/console/theater to worship. By having some sort of experience there we are implicated in that space by what we then generate within the church, the console, the screen, our homes, and beyond.

Conclusion:
"Ah!—Tourism!"

As I have shown, both of these texts employ very peculiar gimmicks and in both cases, these gimmicks do not merely subside as means to advertise or promote the text as a separate entity. Instead, these texts require their gimmicks and vice versa, in order to stand as complete texts. Though both *The Tingler* and *Monster Rancher* feature these gimmicks, each respective text employs them in different ways. Castle's film first requires the augmentation of movie theater seats (among other things) as well the repurposing of motor and buzzer technology in order to first repurpose space of the theater. For Castle, the space of the movie theater required augmentation for his "something extra". His reverence for the theater manifests itself in specifically how he repurposes that space. The modifications of space subsequently modify media in that the onscreen portion of Castle's film necessarily refers to these changes in space to derive meaning and possibility from the film. Finally, patrons are modified in that their expectations of what is possible within this environment change because the interrelation of space and media forces them to perform action.

Comparatively, *Monster Rancher* first modifies media by utilizing compact discs for unintended and, prior to, unutilized purposes of data generation. This modification of media subsequently modifies the player as players must perform tasks of compact disc collection and non-standard techniques of gameplay such as opening the console in order to continue playing. Finally, this modifies the space in which the game is played, as every instance of collecting *for* the game necessarily constitutes *playing* the game. *Monster Rancher* thus locates playing the game in various spaces that not only blend the

traditional spheres of video game play together, but also exist apart from the video game console.

Though I use these texts as key examples, they are by far not the only texts with these same gestures. For instance, several other movies throughout the history of cinema have employed gimmicks like those in *The Tingler*, and for that matter *Monster Rancher,* which are necessary to understanding those texts as totalities. Famously, Kroger Babb's sex-documentary *Mom and Dad* (1945) not only featured the first instance of full-frontal female nudity in a film but Babb also enforced segregated screenings for men and women, increasing intrigue into whether one group was seeing something different. Beyond that even, once Babb had patrons in the theater, he really know how to keep them in: he barred doors so patrons could not leave the screenings and turned air conditioning off to force some patrons to faint from heat exhaustion. And if that wasn't enough, some reports claim that Babb even pumped in noxious fumes to make patrons faint from the film.

Perhaps not as over-stated, John Waters himself pumped some noxious fumes into his screenings of *Polyester* (1982) by providing scratch-n-sniff cards for patrons, as an ode to the ill-fated technology originally employed in *Scent of Mystery* (1960). On the screen, numbers would flash up, giving the audience cues as to which number to scratch off their card. Patrons would smell pizza, gasoline, grass, and feces. Waters also used the card to play a joke on the audience where the movie prompted the smell of flowers, but instead Waters' card smelled like old shoes.

Further, other video games exhibit similar tendencies as *Monster Rancher* in how they must be played. *Barcode Battler* (1991) was a stand-alone handheld video game

console that determined not only monsters but also equipment as well as powerups by scanning barcodes that generate these things in the game. Jason Rohrer made a game that likely has never been played by more than one or two people in *Chain World* (2011). Rohrer released the game on a flash drive, which he claims is the only one in the world, for the 2011 Game Design Challenge.[65] The challenge sought a game that could become a religion. Rohrer gave the game to a patron of the Game Developer's Conference with rules about how the game should progress and pass from player to player. Within Rohrer's architecture, however, he builds in possibility for the breaking of his rules or the modification of his own architecture. The first person to receive the game broke with Rohrer rules or commandments (as it could be described as a religion) and instead sold the game on eBay for charity. It is currently unknown where the game is.[66] Perhaps more based on modifying the player than modifying media, so-called ARG or alternate reality games also blur this line, with the game effectively assuming more human interaction in the form of calling players of the game with pertinent information for the game or sending an instant message that players might confuse as from a person not related to the game, thus blurring space between where the game ends and so-called 'real-life begins.

As such, these media forms clearly have the capacity to modified and repurposed to form entirely new experiential forms. So, too, can other forms. For instance, the pop-up book combines the formal characteristic of text-as-narrative but further extends this by applying modifications to the pages of the a book itself in order to derive a new experience. Somewhat similarly, Mark Z. Danielewski's book *House of Leaves* (2000)

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[65] Rohrer also stated that *Chain World* is a modified version of the game *Minecraft* (2009) with specific scripts written for the game.

[66] Fagone, Jason. "*Chain* World Video Game Was Supposed to be a Religion—Not a Holy War." *Wired Online*. *Wired* Magazine. 15 July 2011. Web. 16 February, 2013.

modifies the structure of its text to mimic the labyrinth that its characters are in. Beyond small semantic changes like multiple footnotes from multiple narrators as well as specific crossed-through words or words in color, Danielewski also creates a literally dizzying effect by printing words upside down, sideways, spiraling, etc. There are whole pages of the book with single words on them, mimicking the pace of what it depicts. Some of the text is completely indiscernible, attesting to the events in the book and their illegibility.

Further in terms of graphic representations, the cover of The Rolling Stones' album *Sticky Fingers* (1971) depicts a man's crotch covered in blue jeans. The original release of the album featured a mock belt-buckle and working zipper and that the listener could unzip to give way to the album's inner cover, which featured the man's crotch covered by underwear.

More specifically about musical forms, one can look to the master of modern experimental music, John Cage. John Cage's famous song, "4'33" features nothing but "silence". Performers play no notes on their instruments while a conductor counts off the beginning of each of three movements of the piece. Like *The Tingler*, the piece of music is both lauded and laughed at for its extreme violation of norms and conventions of musical form. Instead of silence, Cage's song engages the idiosyncrasies of the various audio-spaces it is performed and/or recorded. Patrons and performers blend, similarly to Castle, as a cough or the movement in a chair is part of the production of the piece. This is not without instruction on the part of those playing the piece: the orchestration for the song actively calls on those performing not to use their instruments for the piece.

As a final example, we can look to painting and drawing as a form with possible modifications to its architecture. Multi-media artist Cameron Jamie created the

installation *Map and Composite Actions* (2003) as a means to change the experience of viewing painting and drawing. The subject of the installation is a collection of several paintings and drawing of demons, goblins, and other creatures. However, the only way to view these paintings is to walk into a giant cave-like structure (which would itself be inside of an art museum) with a single, red lantern lighting the way. To view these paintings, one must necessarily be engaged with how you walk about the paintings and that they are only accessible to see through a red light. Jamie enforces his own space within that of the art museum for viewing these paintings, which necessarily augments the way that people can interact with them.

Each of these additional texts also serve as outliers within their conventionally given media form. However, these texts also serve as illustrations of the concept that a gimmick necessarily repurposes something in order to fulfill its function to a text. All of these texts necessitate a history in that they modify existing architectures to produce their own new possibility architectures. The gimmick requires history in this way but it also requires it another way in that the gimmick forms a sort of mythology of the text it is applied to. Largely because the gimmick escapes formal definition beyond something that we know when we see, gimmick texts cannot be reduced merely to object, they are contingent upon people's experience of that text. This produces a mythology in that exhibitions of these texts are necessarily always *one-off*s: they can never be faithfully reproduced every single time they are exhibited. In comparison to the traditional film, *The Tingler* is not merely an object in a film reel, nor is it singularly a buzzer under a seat. Rather, it is the discrete experience that Castle, patrons, performers, projectionists, etc. have when they are in the space of that text.

This experiential mythology presents gaps for a text in that time, space, and many other factors shape it, rather than it existing as a singular object. Largely, this mythology necessitates rhetoric for the gimmick as well as its text to be understood through time. Because each of these texts does not present an identical, repeatable experience each time it is exhibited, rhetoric and discussion about the text form an even larger sphere of generation from these texts. Gimmicks then necessitate history and mythology in order to be understood as part of a text. Discussion of these texts does not serve the paratextual mode, as it does with texts that are strictly determined as objects, because of how these gimmicked pieces of media enforce *action* on the part of the person engaging with the text.

Lastly, because these texts produce this generative environment built from their new constructions, these experiences rather than objects exist as the text itself. Castle is not strictly the author of *The Tingler*, nor is Tecmo Entertainment of *Monster Rancher*. In the same way, neither is the player or patron. Rather than treating texts as objects that have authors, these experiences are generated by all those that contribute. These texts eschew "auteurism" and instead opt for "Ah!—Tourism!" in that they require travel through various architectures, with each individual authoring a portion of the experience and receiving authored portions of that experience from others, in a feedback loop. While traversing these architectures, one is often provided with a tour guide in the form of Castle, Tecmo, Jamie, etc. who serves information about the experience but does not author the experience. They merely present it. As with any travel, especially in view of standard architectures, an experience can be mundane. It can also be exhilarating. All are possibilities of this new architecture, so long as feedback is generated.

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Appendix A
Terry Castle Interview

Author conducted a personal phone interview with Terry Castle, daughter of William Castle. Castle herself is an author (*FearMaker: Family Matters*), screenwriter (*The Toothless Dead*, with Dan Dillard, forthcoming), film developer (*The Mind Thing*, forthcoming), heir to her father's throne, and countless other superlatives. She was also generous enough to deal with the author stumbling through questions in a state of awe. She provides invaluable insight not only into Castle's way of making movies, but also his warmth as a father and person. She herself is a warm, generous person, to boot.

The text of this interview has been transcribed to utmost accuracy, with the exclusion of certain digressions and a few pauses and stammers on the part of the author, who was so struck with the luck of his opportunity that, at times, he could not make cogent sentences. The author has also excised certain impertinent information from this interview for brevity's sake.

Alex Lukens (AL): What do you think your dad's interest in the cinema was when he was beginning? What do you think like his interest in it was given that he came from that sort of background of theater and working on productions and moved to film?

Terry Castle (TC): I think that the idea of being lost in a film was what attracted dad to movies. That you could walk into another world. I remember growing up and him saying to me "The first time you see a movie you should sit back and enjoy to the movie and the second time you should analyze it. The first time you should have the experience of seeing the film." And I think for him, knowing my dad and knowing his background, I think it was a place he got lost. And I think that's what influenced him as a movie maker because I think he sort of felt disenfranchised as a kid or maybe sort of different than other kids in a way and I think it was a place for him to go and find acceptance.

(AL): Definitely. I'm really interested in the films he produced before his, I guess what could be called his, gimmick cycle. He had seemingly a fifteen, twenty year career before *Macabre* came out, and in terms of producing and directing things like that— I was wondering maybe if you had any thoughts on why movies like *Mark of the Whistler* or *The Law VS Billy the Kid*— why they're not as highly cited by people like Joe Dante or John Waters who are kind of some of the prolific champions of him.

TC: Well, I guess, dad directed those films; he didn't produce those films… And he was a studio director, which means they put him on whatever films they needed at the time. So he was sort of paid a salary and he was— you know it was the studio system and he directed these films in the 40s and early 50s. When it became his own films, when he decided to buy the rights to a book called *A Marble Forest*, which sort of became *Macabre*, which was his first film he went out and produced with his own money, that's when it all changed for him. That's when he started to say, "Okay,

well, I have to sell my film" so my father was as much a filmmaker as he was a marketer. And then he said "Well how am I going to market my films?" and that's what started to make dad's legacy interesting, because all of the sudden he took on a persona and he became like a direct— he was one of the first director producers that kids ever got to meet on tour with *Macabre* and then *House on Haunted Hill* and *The Tingler*, etc. So, I think that the reason the Joe Dantes of the world and the John Waters of the world, why they love dad is because of the marketing of the films and not the films themselves. Because I don't think they look at *The Tingler* as a film that's brilliantly directed, I think they look at *The Tingler* as a film that was a fantastically spun experience and one that you don't forget. That you really care.

AL: I was going to get into this a little bit later but since you touched on it, on the introduction to the annotated screenplay of *House on Haunted Hill* you talk a lot about in your introduction of it, you say that him directing these really cool horror movies is really icing on the cake but that, basically he was a really great dad and instilled really good cool things in you. And since you touched on his persona and branding I got the sense that when I think about his movies I have a kind of kindred spirit or a kinship with him. With the sort of persona—him up on the screen and the silhouette of him up on the screen in the chair. I was wondering if you could talk a bit about maybe some of the difference between that persona on the screen and his branding and him as a real person if there were any glaring differences.

TC: Dad was an incredibly charismatic and also an incredibly warm man. It was interesting. I mean, he was embracing. He was completely present for me and my family, he was warm, he was loving, and I think he persona up on the screen— you would go to a party with my father and it wouldn't matter if it was all strangers. I mean it wouldn't matter if we were at a resort in Hawaii, by the end of the day, by the end of the party, everyone would be in by my father. He was like a madman, he had just some kind of like charisma that he just had… I think what you relate to, what kids today relate when they see dad on the screen and what kids related to back then was, here was a guy who with a little bit of a wink and a little but of a smile would dare you to watch his movie. There was something about him you kind of just like him, like your uncle. There was something about him that you just kind of liked, right? Like, he's a cool dude. In his dorky way. With that little smile, and that little twinkle in his eye. I think he was inviting especially for kids who also felt like they were misunderstood. What's interesting is that all my friends growing up, if they had problems they would go to my dad.

AL: Sure. Do you think that sort of charisma and warmth, and you also talk a bit about his humor in kind of being tongue and cheek— In the autobiography he writes a lot about even insofar as making a subtitle he says "I want to scare the pants off of America". And I was wondering where you thought humor intersected with horror elements so he's making these horror movies but as you say he's doing everything with a wink and a smile so where do you place that humor?

TC: It was an innocent time. I mean that's what happened to my dad. He got caught up in the changing times. You're talking about the late 50s early 60s. There was still a certain innocence and I think he was actually attracted to the adrenaline rush of a horror film of how it was the reason, it made you laugh, it made you scream, but then it gave you the good giggle after the scream. It made you hold hands with the person next you. He always used to tell me he gave a reason for a girl to grab a guy, y'know? Because he thought that was a scary thing for a guy to hold a girl's hand during a movie when you're like 15 years old. He was like "Oh a horror a film, that's good." So, I mean it was all very innocent and the horror was rather innocent in a sense, right? I mean there was a sort of adrenaline rush and I think they were fun movies to make. And fun movies for audiences to see.

AL: He talks a lot about being influenced and talked about one night going to see a Clouzot film. And he writes about Hitchcock a little bit and I think in one way, even you cited in the *Annotated Screamplay*— you say the video store clerk called him the "poor man's Hitchcock". And I've always though of it the opposite. Hitchcock and Clouzot are interesting to me personally but I don't have an experience watching *Vertigo.* I can watch the movie, I think I never got beyond that first watching. I think I maybe have Castle up on a pedestal a little bit. But I was wondering if there was something those other directors that he looked up to, like Hitchcock and Clouzot or at least talks about, do you think they're missing anything that was present at your dad's screenings?

TC :At my dad's screenings? Well I think that it's interesting that when *Psycho* came out, I mean Hitchcock took a page out of my father's book. He had an amazing gimmick. I mean nobody could know the ending. I mean when you walked in nobody could walk in before the movie started, I mean the middle of the film, you couldn't walk in during the film. So I think Hitchcock sort of took a page out of my dad's book with *Psycho.* He looked at dad's stuff and said, "Hey, this guy is doing something".
In terms of my dad directorially respecting these men, I mean he loved David Lean. *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) was his favorite film. He was a film lover. He loved all things movies. Movies were his life. He loved the movies. But in terms of the experience my dad's movies, or my father's gimmicks, were put in place because my father really wanted to create… I think originally he was terrified that nobody would come to see his movies so he would come up the idea for a gimmick to make it more exciting to go to the movies and then I think he realized he was on to something. And what I think he was onto was that collective experience. He loved going to see *Lawrence of Arabia,* it was his favorite film and he loved the movies, but to have a collective experience? I mean that's something a horror film already does because you all scream together you all laugh at the same moments. It's a collective experience. I mean watching a horror film on your TV alone no is not like seeing a horror film in the movies. There's something about screaming or being afraid to scream when you're next to someone. You're in a darkened theater with people and I think that the gimmick heightens that and made even it more of a fun experience. I think my dad's screenings were so much different because of that and also because of the promotion he did leading up to the screening. Meaning he would go to the

towns, he would open the films, there would be kids dressed up as ghosts on floats, there would be this whole sort of Barnum and Bailey circus coming to town when dad went and opened up a film. It's not like they open today, they open wide across the country. In those days they opened up in Ohio and then they opened up in New York. They opened up in different sections at different times so he would travel with the film.

AL: One way I'm thinking about writing, kind of conceptually, one way I'm kind of thinking about this sort of premiere or sort of how the films essentially show up—One thing that I think is really interesting with a lot of your dad's movies is that with the gimmicks and them being promotional material or in kind of the exhibition itself. In kind of contrast to say, a lot of other horror movies, I think that one thing he does is sort of force viewers to look away from the screen. To get to Coward's Corner, you have to leave the theater essentially and go out to the lobby. I think there's the age-old hallmark of the horror movie where if it's too scary you look away and that's a sort of moment of—

TC: I mean, he did that with the ghost viewers, right? I mean there were certain ghosts— there [was] the ghost viewer and the ghost mover right? But who goes to a horror film not to look, right? You go to a horror film to be scared, right? I mean, he dared you watch, he dared you to like, do the dare, you know? Are you chicken? Can you watch this? If not you'll get your money back. If not look through the blue version you know? I mean you have to do it once… I mean he was there. I mean he was sitting in that theater during every show and saying, "I dare you to sit and watch my film". If the film was scary, he'd really do it with a wink.

AL: Surely. And what I think that might, to a theater space, take the idea— you talked about being scared to hold a girl's hand in the theater and how a horror movie allows or maybe even, not forces, but allows for those possible happenings. There's like a possibility of it. And I think maybe one thing that he's interested in with space is that experience is sort of once in a lifetime. Even if you were to go back the next day and see it again, it would be entirely different in that he's calling upon you to watch the movie but he's also saying, "watch each other, watch people's reactions in the lobby and things like that". Do you think that he's kind of further tapping into that kind of group dynamic where he wants that response not just singularly, but like you talked about, collectively?

TC: I think the experience part of the theater was so intense in my dad's films, and intense not in the frightening way but it was so profound for kids because that 30 years later I get people coming up to me and going "I remember going to see *House on Haunted Hill*. It opened in Youngstown, Ohio. I went to the 12 o'clock show, my sister drove me. I was wearing a blue pair of pants with a white shirt." This happens to me, they know what they were wearing. It was such a profound experience, it wasn't just going to the movies, it was an experience that 30 years later, or 40, well now, it's like 50 years later, people come up to me and they know what they were wearing. There was the experience of going into that movie theater and having a gimmick in the movie, the persona of the director and the film itself, saved in these

kids' consciousness. I mean they remember it with fondness, with fear, with love. It's just amazing. So, I do think it had to do with the space.

AL: From it being fifty years removed at this point, do you think that in recent past that there have been sort of similar attempts at similar things? Where John Waters did Smell-O-Vision and some other people have attempted similar things. Do you think it was the innocence of that time that allowed for those sorts of things? Because I can't personally think of the horror of today being a sort of well, A) If there was a gimmick I don't think it would be a sort of very warm one and B) I feel like sanctions are so supremely different. Do you think that someone who was interested in doing gimmicks today, would they be able to take a page out of your dad's book or would they be kind of trying to do something completely new?

TC: Well, I think it was an age of innocence. Our tastes have changed so much since then. I think there's a total opportunity to do gimmicks today, but I think that they would be horrific for kids. I mean, you know scary stuff. I mean you could talk about not doing a film that's campy— I mean when John Waters did a film, that was camp. But when dad *The Tingler*, it wasn't camp. It's camp now, right? You're saying ,"could there be a film today that used gimmicks and that the gimmick would be taken seriously like they did back then? Or are we too sophisticated of an audience to do that?" I have to say I do believe you could market a film and I do believe that there is a way to do it today. I really do. I definitely think that. And I think that's where the film industry has to look at the past to figure out how they're going to get people into the theaters today.
Because they're not going like they used to, so I think that there needs to be a William Castle today to figure this out. And I think that word spreads really quickly, I mean absolutely that there are opportunities that are fantastic. The other huge problem is because, like in the old days they would open one city at a time and exhibitors are not going to want to spend the money to make the gimmick and studios aren't going to want to spend the money so it was really hard for my father to convince these theaters goers to put electric shocks in their seats because— to buzz butts? I mean, could you imagine doing that today? It wouldn't be, you wouldn't be able to do it. I mean it would be a huge undertaking. That was part of my father's talent was not only the marketing and coming up the ideas but selling the ideas to not only the public but also to the exhibitors. Today to do any kind of a gimmick it's hard to get the exhibitors on board. So my answer to that question is that I think absolutely you could do gimmicks, 100%. And I think they're needed. I think that if you want people to go into the movie theater and have an experience, I think you absolutely need it.

AL: I think about something like 3D today and how it's become almost totally standardized. I feel like when I go to the theater almost 50% of the movies I can possibly see have the option of seeing it in 3D. And that sort of once had a level of gimmick attached to it… Do you think that, essentially 3D doesn't seem that off-the-wall at this point?

TC: It was a way to get people into the theater, so yeah, it was a gimmick but then it was sort of like "Okay, well let's attach the same gimmick to every single film." I mean if you wanted to direct a film you had to offer it in 3D as well— And with some films you don't want 3D. I mean, it totally ruins the experience of them. For me, personally. For some films, it works beautifully, but for some, it does not work at all. But this is not a gimmick anymore, right? My dad didn't use any of the same gimmicks, you know? C'mon, he had life insurance policies, he had Coward's Corner, he had electric buzzers under the seats… I mean you know you've got to be creative. I mean that's where creativity comes in. "Come on, let's do some marketing, let's market it!" You know?

AL: And I think you're right in that doing something on every film sort of becomes… not even marketable, just really additional.

TC: And also becomes annoying too.

AL: I think your dad kind of gets at that when he writes about, the phrase I always remember IN *Step Right Up* is him saying ,"I want to give the audience something extra". He used the confusing phrase "something extra" and I think that something extra is something determined by your level of creativity. You can't just sort of "Okay, 3D,", slap the label on it and push it out, it won't work that way.

TC: There [are] wonderful worlds out there, I mean there's so many opportunities, it's just getting everybody on board. And the studio system is such that everything has become so much harder. I mean, even trying to make that experience, that space sort of sacred. And again, it's sort of making the theater— you know my dad grew up on Broadway. I mean that's where he had his, the beginning was on Broadway and I think that dad was a family man and he didn't have a family; he loved family. And I think that he saw showmanship from the very best and I think he brought that theater-going experience to the movie theater. And I think that's what we need again today. Because the space is sacred, the space that you share with other people in a movie theater is really sacred, isn't it? I mean like, how cool. You're in a crowded theater with other people watching something. I mean you have opportunities for such exciting things with that— the film itself telling a story and if you want to enhance it. Sometime you don't want to have gimmicks, sometimes you don't need a gimmick. But sometimes it's fun to have a gimmick, you know?

AL: Personally, I know that like you've had a big role in carrying on the legacy and talking to people like me. I was wondering with that, do you have a way that you think that he would want to be thought of now? You talk about the studio system now and kind of how movies are being turned out. Do you think he would have a way that he would want to be remembered?

TC: The fact that you remember my father, the fact that you're writing a thesis on him, you have no idea what that would mean to my father. I have no idea what that would mean to my father. That he was going to be a part of your thesis? That would

blow his mind. That you remembered at all? Are you kidding me? He had no idea; he thought he was unsuccessful. He died believing he was unsuccessful because he never made an A film. He produced an A film. He produced *Rosemary's Baby* but he didn't direct it. The studios wouldn't let him get near any films.
His whole life he made these horror films. All he wanted to do was prove that he could make an A film and he thought he wanted to be a mogul of the studios, of Hollywood, but he never got it. Little did he know that he did something much more important, that he got the approval of audiences to remember him and new audiences fifty years later that love him. And they love him because he's adorable. I mean he just had no sense of that. He was clueless. So, how did he want to be remembered? He just wanted to be remembered.

AL: I know a lot of what people have said about his gimmicks I know what he's written about his gimmicks but I'm really interested in, I haven't gotten too much, I guess, on how he interacted with the other humans in his life. You said he was warm and charismatic and things like that and that comes across on the screen but I didn't know if for you, with talking with him and essentially hanging out with him, if there was something, if there was something you remember that was really memorable.

TC: Well, I mean I was 100% loved unconditionally by him… So, my father took me to a premiere of *Funny Lady,* not *Funny Girl* but *Funny Lady*. It was the sequel to *Funny Girl* with Barbara Streisand and my father had just acted in *Shampoo*. Did you know my dad was in *Shampoo*, the movie?

AL: I did not actually.

TC: Have you ever seen it? Have you ever heard of that film? Do you know what that film is?

AL: I think I've heard of but never seen.

TC: Okay, you need to watch it because, okay— so it was with Warren Beatty and he plays a hairdresser, and it's with Goldie Hawn and with Juile Christie. So, Warren Beatty is like your womanizer and he's a hairdresser. And Warren Beatty asked my dad if he would be in the film to play a director. And my dad loved to do that. Of course my dad said yes. What the scene is in the film is that they're at this restaurant and my father is hitting on Julie Christie. He's got this big cigar and got his arm around her, and she's in love with Warren Beatty. And my father says to Julie Christie "Hey, you know what? I'm a producer, I can get you anything you want. Anything at all. What is it that you want?" And Julie Christie looks over at Warren Beatty and says, "Well I wanna suck his cock"

So, three things about that. So, first off Warren Beatty gave my dad the pages and then he goes to my mom and goes, "I don't know if I could do this, what about my daughter?" And I was like ten or twelve or thirteen at the time... I don't know how old. And my mom was like, "Oh that's really funny. Just do it." So he did

it, right? And everybody thought it was hilarious. Everybody loved it. So he took me to the opening of *Funny Lady*, the premiere of it, and I remember it was just me and him. I don't know why he took me and not my mom. He tried to take all of us to everything, he never wanted to go without his girls so I was dragged everywhere because he loved us. He wanted to be with us. To be honest he didn't want us to be separated.

So I remember dancing with him which was the best, he would dance me around the dance floor. And I remember that everybody would stop him and say, "Oh god, you were great in *Shampoo*, that was so funny" and he was so proud. He was so pleased with himself. But he was just so sweet. He was dancing his little daughter around with only grownups and here I am only fourteen. So I mean, you know it was something, you know? But I mean people would call on the telephone, Joan Crawford would call, they would have a party you know… and you name somebody and dad would say "Yes, I'd love to come but can I bring my girls?" He would always ask if he could bring my sister and I.

AL: That's great. That's amazing.

TC: Yeah, that was my father. The other big memory I have about my dad was that he knew all the theaters owners. He knew all the managers of the theaters. And he could go into any theater— and in those days they didn't give you passes and he would just go right in. He didn't have to stand in line, he would go right in. And I remember he would not like to do that. He would go, "We should wait in line with everybody else." He did not want to be an elitist. He didn't want that. He wanted to be like everybody else.

I mean that's who he was. That's who he was. And the more trouble the kid was the more my dad loved that kid or understood that kid. Or wanted to help that kid. You know?

AL: Not to be too confessional but I think I get that in some small way, to be honest with you I go to Emory with a bunch of elites and I feel like a kind of weird kid a lot of times, I think I definitely have a kinship.

TC: Well, the only thing I ever did that disappointed my father, the only thing I ever did that disappointed him was I joined a sorority in college. He was so upset. He was really upset about that.

AL: Really?

TC: How mean could you be to vote whether or not people get into this place? I mean some people are voted out. That to him was not morally right. I loved that about him. We'd never do a country club… that's not what you do. You know?

AL: Yeah, you have to be including people. You have to be inclusionary.

TC: Yeah, because he knew what it was like to be the poor schmuck that wasn't invited in. You know? And he didn't like that. That was not right in his world. So that was how I disappointed my dad, I joined Delta Gamma sorority.

AL: I guess, some things can be forgiven, I guess.

TC: I guess.

Appendix B
Lisa F. Shock Interview

Author conducted a personal interview via e-mail with Lisa F. Shock, mayor, manager, and moderator of the online community *Monster Rancher* Metropolis. She is also a former Tecmo employee, having worked on sequels to the original *Monster Rancher* as well other Tecmo releases. Shock has an extensive background as an online community manager as well as a researcher of the game *Monster Rancher*.

The text of this interview has been modified only slightly to accommodate multiple partial interviews as an entire whole, in a more straightforward Q&A. She is also incredibly patient and generous with her time. The author likes her very much.

Alex Lukens (AL): What is your background with video games in general? What got you interested in them to begin with?

Lisa F. Shock (LS):

I was born 1961, so the arcade boom of the 1970s and early 80s was happening when I was a teenager. There were arcade machines everywhere and they were much better than home systems of the time. I remember being 14 when I first heard of the home console for Pong, and it was pretty expensive. My family never owned a home console; my parents believed that kids should work hard at becoming educated. Entertainment wasn't a budget priority. I used to play arcade games when I went out, though.

I worked for a movie theatre when I was in my early 20s; there was a full-fledged arcade inside where employees were allowed to play for free. I just loved it and tried everything. I wasn't good at everything but, I liked trying. I remember when we got to install one of the very first Whack-A-Mole machines ever built. I picked up an Atari 2600 with a big pile of games at a yard sale in 1983 and had a lot of fun with it. One of my favorite games of all time is 3D Tic-Tac-Toe, written by Carol Shaw for Atari 2600. After that, I bought consoles and handhelds if I saw games that I liked for a particular system.

AL: What are some of your favorite video games and why?

LS:

Galaga - I played it when it was first released, and I am still not bored with it. But, it's not about nostalgia; it's about difficulty. It just gets harder and runs faster. I'm not great at it, but I love the challenges.

Qix -It fosters creativity. I enjoy how you are pressured to create solutions, there's no right or wrong way to play. Everyone solves the different levels in their own way.

3D Tic-Tac-Toe (Atari version) - I can't get beyond the medium difficulty level.

Hexcite - I enjoy its challenges and its unique viewpoint.

Katamari Damacy (and sequels) - It makes me smile! It offers a lot of environments to explore with [lots] of absurd things going on, and it celebrates the absurdity.

Majestic, PC 2001 - This game was the most profound experience of my life. You'd get phone calls in the middle of the night that were terrifying, weird faxes would show up at any time, you'd get friend requests on amazon.com, and bizarre emails. It really blurred the lines between fantasy and reality.

Seaman, DC - This game is totally unlike anything else. You play for 15 minutes a day for about a month. It's a virtual aquarium except that after a while the fish talk, and they are very inquisitive— and sometimes rude.

Monster Rancher - I enjoy being 'me' in games. I don't like games where I control a character, invariably the character seems lame to me. In the early days of RPGs and such, almost all game characters were teen boys and, as an adult woman, I just wasn't thrilled to play as those characters.

AL: What got you started posting/moderating on message boards and chat sites? Are you currently involved with other online forums besides Monster Rancher Metropolis?

LS: I was a Sysop (unpaid moderator) for CompuServe in the 1980s and 90s, overseeing the Cyberforum and the Action Figures Forum. They ran a pretty tight ship. Sysops were responsible for keeping order, keeping topicality, and sparking conversation. You could actually be fired for not being engaging enough. I used to be involved in Omni magazine's forums, and Sci-Fi Channel forums, back when the original people still ran the channel. I visited several online forums when I played the first *Monster Rancher*, to get tips on playing. They were all pretty chaotic, with people posting a lot of bad information and juvenile behavior. I gravitated towards one place because they would delete misinformation and ban repeat offenders. I went back to school in 2005-2007 to get a culinary school degree, and the school's IT department recruited me to build their boards and be their first online community manager because they had heard of me. I was recently offered a job by a startup which has a former Tecmo employee there and they want me

to run their community. I have had to decline; cannot relocate for the salary offered.

AL: Why do you think there has been an increase in message boards and other online communities dedicated to video gaming in recent years? Is it strictly related to tips and tricks or how do you think people are using these online communities?

LS: I think that people who enjoy a game enjoy socializing with others who enjoy it as well. Much like how football fans enjoy hanging out at a tailgate party. Especially smaller, niche games, where specific skills or particular tastes are involved. With Monster Rancher in particular, most of us are detail oriented and patient -able to spend a lot of time raising a monster. Whereas the typical fighting game player just wants to jump in and fight - and would probably find MR to be too cerebral and too much work.

Yes, many people first find a community because need help of some sort with a game, or just want to know what the tips and tricks are. Looking for tips online is a lot faster and cheaper than getting a magazine or a book about a game. But, they stay if the community is respectful, honest, and fun. Modern games are also becoming more complex. Or at least the hardware can handle a lot more than machines from 20 years ago. People also enjoy showing off their accomplishments. I think that seeing what someone else can do with certain games can encourage others to re-try a game they may have given up on.

One important development in the history of communities in relation to the Internet or older 'walled gardens' like CompuServe or AOL was the advent of the cable modem. In dialup days, people paid by the number of minutes they used per month, so, they tended to be very quick in performing whatever tasks they needed to accomplish and didn't socialize much - unless they were willing to pay extra to indulge themselves. I was lucky to have a job where, as an employee benefit, I got free unlimited Internet access at home from 1995 to 2000.

AL: How did you first hear about *Monster Rancher*?

LS: I was working as a store Manager for Babbage's, now GameStop, and got a free demo disc from Tecmo in the mail. I played, got hooked, and bought it on the day it was released.

AL: What has your experience been playing the first game and its sequels?

LS: You can see the changes in Tecmo's staff over the years in how they crafted each game. I can see each producer's personality. I enjoyed how MR2 built upon the original game; expanding and exploring every aspect in more detail.

I have played each game as it was released, so, I see the first game as 'normal' the second as 'a little cute' the third console game as 'too cutesy' and the other games falling somewhere along that continuum. I find that players who started with MR2 or MR3 tend to view the first game as 'ugly' when they first play it. To me the art/design is simply more realistic and MR2 and MR3 have more of a cartoony appearance.

AL: What made you want to start an online community for the game series?

I didn't actually start the community, a guy named Bennett Campbell started it. He liked to go by just 'B' and you can find references to him on MRM if you look carefully. I had visited one community a lot for the first game, and when I heard news of a sequel, I went back and discovered that one member, Bennett, had started a separate area to discuss the sequel. He bought the game when it was released in Japan and told us all about it. By the time the game was released in North America, there was a huge community following the site. B did really well when he played the Japanese game every day and posted messages every day. Once the North American game was released, there were a lot more messages to manage and the trolling aspect became difficult to deal with.

Soon thereafter, various wars broke out between the board and other sites as people copied posts from us and posted them on their own, monetized, sites. And there was the usual trolling, bickering, and gossiping. I was named a moderator fairly early on, following an incident where an earlier moderator tried to delete everything and get the members to move to his newly minted board. Then Bennett left for a while as he became obsessed with another game: Gran Turismo.

I appointed a couple of other moderators, and things went well for a couple of months. Then were hacked and once again started losing data, slowly. (He only had low-level moderator access, somehow and could only delete a sentence at a time.) I was already paying for secure web space for another project and just offered to move everything. So, I had a trusted group of people copy everything they could, and moved it in secret. Then we suddenly deleted everything and left. We posted one last message, our new URL. Luckily most people followed us. There were tensions for a while with the community the hacker was from. I think he was really upset to not get my userbase, he had just put a bunch of ads on his boards and back then, ads paid serious cash.

Bennett didn't find us for about 6 months, but, he was happy it all worked out. What made us different was that I never said that Monster Rancher Metropolis was mine. I set it up as a repository for anyone's work and emphasized that they individually held copyright on their own material. I also let people vote on how to set things up and took suggestions for almost anything, unless it would cost a lot of money. Every other MR site had an owner. On MRM, I'm just the Mayor, the site belongs to the people. I think

that's true of all good community managers, the site is about the topic and the community; the manager just facilitates smooth operations.

AL: Were you first interested in the monster generation mechanic or something else about the game?

I own a lot of CDs, so monster generation was definitely a very addicting part of the game. But, I think I really liked how monsters change as you raise them. Two people can start with the same baby but they will become very different adults.

AL: What do you think of the online community being a sort of hub for research into these games?

LS: The first 5 games didn't have strategy guides published in the US, and it was very difficult to find then translate the Japanese books (Amazon Japan did not exist at the time.) So there was definitely a need, especially because the games have so many different monster types, items, foods, locales, etc. Overall, the Monster Rancher games are more complex than the average game so a player is more likely to want a guide of some sort. This tends to be true of any game with lots of items; Animal Crossing is a game series whose strategy guides have been million-sellers. If guidebooks had been made available in North America for Monster Rancher and Monster Rancher 2, I believe they would have sold very well. I think it was natural for people to reach out for help and more information. Very few of us actually knew other players in real-life. Some people did meet others in person because of the site.

AL: In some of the threads, you've mentioned some hoaxes and things (I remember specifically reading about the monster 'frikkerfrak' that never surfaced) posted by some people on the board (possibly from competing boards)— do you think there's something about Monster Rancher and its mechanic that makes people more inclined to lie/make hoaxes to others? These things are obviously testable with CDs and things like that, but how do you think it relates to/complicates research?

LS: Trolling happens all over the web. I think that the complex nature of the games, along with a lack of official guides, left the average reader a bit vulnerable and gullible. The myths would sound fairly plausible and the person posting them would be a celebrity for a while for being the first person to discover it. I think some of the hoaxers were kids who didn't think they'd be exposed and shamed, they just wanted fame. The fame, acclaim of the community, for figuring something out was really powerful stuff. Guys like Nevistar were gods among men.

We did have people who genuinely accomplished real things who got a lot of doubt because what they had experienced was so unusual. In MR2, having an encounter with King Ape on errantry was considered suspect for a

long time because lots of people couldn't make it happen. Some people genuinely believed many things which turned out to be nonsense simply because they did not understand how probability works. If you flip a coin 100 times it doesn't always land heads, tails, heads, tails, heads. You can get heads 34 times in a row. So we saw ridiculous things being put out there (use the trainer name Snake to have higher scores in the game, answer the beginning questions a certain way to always win battles, etc.) and being tested once or twice and being declared fact. We had to lay down stricter rules about testing because of this. We also had to offer incentives to get people to test other people's work for accuracy.
The randomness is being generated in a lot of aspects of the game, so it can overlap and really create superstitions about things really quickly. We used to have a lot of myths about every aspect of the game until Dark Phoenix hacked a lot of the answers.

Here's an article on the lack of control creating superstitions. http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=lack-of-control-yields-to-superstition&s c=CAT_MB_20100127

While the MR games give a player a lot of control options, there are even more options being controlled by the game itself. So, superstitions naturally arise.

AL: Monster Rancher and its sequels largely seem to have cult status and didn't take off in nearly the same way that a game like *Pokémon* did. Is it the dedication of those people that gives such a rabid interest in finding things out about the game series? Is there simply less to find in *Pokémon*?

LS: *Pokémon* is less complex, it can be played by very young children. Our youngest researcher was ten years old, this was before the COPPA legislation tied us to the age of 13 and up. Generally, the MR games require a level of patience not found in North American children. Younger children in Japan play it, but, they are trained for more patience early on. (I saw a cake decorating kit for 4 year olds in Japan, one where they squirt icing out of a tube to make flowers just like bakery cake decorators something most American adults can't do).

Pokémon also benefitted by having huge advertising dollars behind it. As an official Nintendo first party game, it was featured in Nintendo Power, promoted in demo kiosks, and had a cartoon show on TV from the start. (Actually, the show started airing a month before the game release.) Monster Rancher's TV show was created by a separate company looking to cash in on a *Pokémon* knock-off series, and hit the air two years after the first MR game was released. *Pokémon* was originally a Gameboy game, and that system was clearly marketed at kids. Monster Rancher was a PSX game. In the early days of the PlayStation, Sony insisted on games for a demographic that was age 24 and up.

The system wasn't being marketed to kids and had very little to offer them. It was also delicate; it broke easily and the disc-based games needed to be handled with care that most children did not posses. So, in 1997, when the first Ranching game was released, very few people under the age of 14 owned a PlayStation. And, the system was not the market leader yet.

AL: What are some of the things that you and other members of the community have found out through your research? What are some things you'd like to learn?

LS: For me, cracking the secret to what the game reads off CDs and being able to burn custom CDs to make monsters we want was the biggest accomplishment. We did this through reverse engineering, not hacking the game. There are a few things in MR2 that would be nice to know, I think if I could understand one of my Japanese books a bit better, we'd have an answer. Most of the questions that I'd like answered are small, personal ones relating to small decisions individual people made. Like, what's up with the all 25's Monol? And, why is Plant's battle icon the only one done in the Art Nouveau style?

AL: Would finding the algorithm be the ultimate goal or is the pleasure in finding and eliminating variables/boiling it down?

LS: It used to be more fun testing limits and variables when more people used the chatroom and hung out while running tests. It really was like hanging out with friends in real life. Nowadays, for the older games, I'd just like to know the algorithm and get it over with.

AL: You had mentioned earlier about starting each game without a list of the monsters/CDs that make monsters in the game and sending friends CDs in order for them to generate certain monsters—Do you think there's some fun in the analog portion of the game? Seeking out and finding specific CDs that make certain monsters.

LS: Definitely! Like I said, I own a lot of CDs, so when a new Monster Rancher game came out, I'd sit for hours just checking my collection. It's totally addictive because you just don't know what the next disc will make. It could be something no one has ever seen before. I remember when Monster Rancher 2 was very new, I had spent several hours a day for several days checking my CDs and had my PSX near my CD shelving. My cat had been watching me and at one point, she walked over and pulled a CD off the shelves and tried to open it. She'd been effectively trained by watching me repeat the same set of motions over and over.

AL: Are there any other games that use similar techniques, like opening up the console itself or some other gimmick?

LS: In Japan there was a series of games called Barcode Battler (3 in all, IIRC [IF I remember correctly]) that used a barcode scanner attachment for the Super Famicom system. You scanned barcodes and got monsters from them to battle. There were several generations of dedicated handheld systems that had the same name in the 1980s and 90s.

AL: Given the game's cult status and cartoonish nature, do you ever feel ill-at-ease doing research on such a topic? I ask because when I tell people that I'm doing a master's thesis on the topic, I feel kind of silly and at the same time I know it's something really worth researching and is really cool. Something I personally think about.

LS: I feel fine in my own home. My parents and brother think it's nonsense, but, they live 2,000 miles away. I'm not afraid to mention playing the games because I like to help support the older gamer cause and let people know that we exist. Sometimes, it does label me as a nerd but, it always makes me look intelligent. And it keeps people from easily categorizing me.

I hang out with a lot of computer people anyway, so, saying I run a large site for a game and have worked part time for a Japanese game company comes across as pretty cool. And now, the number of years we've been around is pretty impressive. Some of the original people from the 1997 original location are still around. When it all started, the term 'Online Community Manager' didn't exist, and now, for some, it's a paying career. I'm one of the few people who can say that they've managed a single community for 14 years.

I've had to work for people who didn't get it. They were always older, non-computer users with average-ish IQs.

My real friends 'get it' and think it's just fine. Most have never played the actual game, but, to them it's just another category of fandom. They play some games that I don't play, too. But, none of them run a community. So, sometimes it's like being president of a small-town high school chess club. But, sometimes it's like being an elder statesman of the Illuminati.

AL: How did Monster Rancher Metropolis lead to working with Tecmo? What kind of work were you doing?

LS: I had just set up the site at its current location and realized that we should get permission to use the images. So I emailed them asking for an [okay] on the pictures, they said [okay]. I thanked them and sent them a card and a box of candy. They apparently looked at the site a bit and saw what we were doing. They had worked with other fans at other sites early on and had bad experiences. (They ran some contests and site owners kept the swag instead of sending it to the winners, also some people bragged about their contacts too much, IMO [in my opinion].) We were also the first to ask to use images. Other sites just stole the images. Anyway, I got an email asking if I could answer a question they had gotten and I did. So the US office started

sending me their support emails. The US office was just marketing people, they had no clue about the games. I was polite and kept answering. I had shared a house with Japanese women in college and had read books on Japanese etiquette. I applied my knowledge and just kept being polite. When Tecmo opened their first forums in 2001, they asked me and Fenrick [sic] to moderate the MR sections and we did.

When Tecmo asked for suggestions for new games, I would gather MRM's and re-write them for Japanese style politeness. Other sites would pass on things that were sometimes embarrassing. Then at one point I got a phone call because the US office was in a jam and I helped them organize a report for the Japanese. So then, the calls became more frequent, and I did more and more assorted little things. All the while I sent holiday cards and little gifts.

At one point, I beta tested a Game Boy game and they liked my report, so I got put on the payroll. I then tested MR3 and helped the strategy guide authors play the game and write the book. I also helped with two Gallop Racer games and two Fatal Frame games. My general title was 'Localization' which meant double-checking games to make sure there weren't any culturally offensive actions going on in games rated E for everyone. (I stopped a character from bouncing around and giving 'the finger' and had them change a monster name so it was no longer Urine.)

I got to go to E3 twice with them and Japan once. It was a blast. Each trip, I brought gifts for everyone and did business card exchanges properly. People remembered me. I think I am the only person to ever bring gifts into E3.

Unsolicited extras:
1) I don't believe in the 90-9-1 rule:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1%25_rule_%28Internet_culture%29

I think if you create expectations within the community that help is needed, people will stand up and help.

2) I am very aware that first impressions are lasting ones, at least online. We used to have an open site that didn't require registration. People abused their posting privileges, so now we require registration, and moderators can sleep at night. If people post garbage, it gets dealt with quickly and we move on. No whining, no arguing, most visitors never see it.

3) I thank everyone, and pass along gifts when I can. Some people have done a lot of work on the site and I buy them gifts and pass along free swag that comes my way. I also occasionally run contests and give things away. But, it's not about the material goods. It's about recognition. People really respond to a simple 'thanks!'— And their names are credited all over the site.

4) The moderation team has set fairly high standards for posting politeness while being flexible about banned word lists. We specifically create a distinction between calling someone names or cursing at them, and just using a curse word as a generalization. Yes, some words are flat out banned, but we look at intentions. What this has turned into is a polite community. Sites that just ban words wind up with junior lawyers; trolls carefully constructing sentences to convey cruel messages while staying within the safe word list.

LS: I went to the local indie record store for the first time in a long while, and I remembered a couple of things.

The MR games pretty much predate widespread use of MP3s and portable players, so, everyone went to record stores back then. I discovered early on that stores that sold used CDs were a goldmine for getting a collection of monsters fairly inexpensively. The down side was having to face the incredibly cool hipster behind the counter while buying CDs that I'd never actually listen to. Those are my most embarrassing moments.

AL: That's really great that a place outside the living room reminds you of that game, in specific. I think that's what interests me most-- that in some way playing the game requires and implores you to be in other spaces, interface with other people like that hipster behind the counter.

LS: And yes, to this day I own a shelf of CDs & DVDs that I keep segregated from my real collection, so that people don't make wrong assumptions about my taste. I used to keep all my discs making rares in one spot, by my game setup, but, I realized that it was too weird not having CDs I liked with the rest of my collection, near the stereo.

AL: I didn't even put two and two together about the MP3 player not even being a function (probably shows how ubiquitous they are at this point). And then basically buying CDs for their data and that data's *generative* capacity instead of what that data traditionally *means* to someone. Which is also why you have that terror in you mind of like, "No! No! No! Friends and hipster record guy, I don't *listen* to these things but I do *use* them." And what's more, having them kind of segregated and knowing where the rare monsters exist-- you probably *use* those CDs more than the average person *listens* to them.

LS: Yeah, when I worked at Babbage's in the 90's half of each store was software and computer stuff and half was videogames. For a while there we had high-end software like Quark on the shelf. I recall that we carried one of the very first MP3 players, the Diamond Rio when it was released in 1998 and it was tough explaining to people what it was.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portable_media_player

Yeah, to me, walking through a record store or DVD store means that I not only see the titles and content, and maybe get a memory flash of a song snippet or a scene from a film, I also get a flash of the monster type. The other day, I flipped through the $1 bargain bin and saw a CD that makes a rare in MR1 and wondered if my friend John still needed a copy. For some of us, it's cooler to have the real disc than a burned one. Plus, the real discs last, burned ones can fail over time.

There is one monster that no one has gotten from a disc. It's Pole Mock from the North American MR2 game. Apparently it was supposed to be made by the disc that came packed with Official Playstation Magazine in the month the game was released, and Sony messed up the disc and it didn't work. It was also supposed to be made with T-Rex, Electric Warrior, but, I have yet to find a pressing of that CD that works. Yes, it drives me nuts. Yes, I look for used copies of the CD all over, and buy a couple a year off amazon.com. This search is difficult because the CD was re-released after MR2 came out and a lot of online sellers do not tell you which pressing they are selling. I currently own 8 copies of that CD, most of which make Gaboos.

AL: When you talk about the Pole Mock, it has been found in the game, though, right? Like, people have used Gameshark or something else, just not the way that the game was designed to work with the CDs? I think that's incredible. That might be the intrigue of this sort of analog component of a video game. Where, in today's day and age, you just release a patch for something that is "wrong" or "bugged". But, when a specific CD like you talk about with the OPM disc being "faulty", it's an impossible thing to go back and correct with the hardware. And also, with the T-Rex, "Electric Warrior" album— is that what someone has said on a forum that works or is that a release from Tecmo? I find it really interesting the way that fact and mythology kind of work together in this way and how it only works on a game like Monster Rancher. If you were to find a pressing of that disc that actually worked and didn't produce a Gaboo, it would be such a Eureka! moment. And that's one reason to keep collecting these things that *may* work.

LS: Yes, Pole Mock is in the game, you can make it with Game Shark. We just haven't found it on CD yet. I did confirm this with Tecmo. They decide on the CD lists by having people, US employees for MR1 and MR2, for later games they took suggestions, and then going to a store and buying them and mailing the CDs to Japan to be read and the code entered into the game. Somewhere in Japan is a shelving unit with all of the CDs, DVDs and games on it. For the OPM, Sony was supposed to send a beta copy of the disc and they apparently changed the final production data. We had a Pole Mock -like problem with Moo being made from Beck, Mellow Gold. No one could find it for years, I own 6 non-working copies, myself including one I won from a radio station before it was officially released. One guy finally found a working copy, the only clue we have is that he bought his copy at an expensive record store in a high end mall in LA. Turns out, that was the same place Tecmo sent employees to buy CDs. So, I still have hope of finding

Pole Mock. It's just hard to order online because there was a 2003 release and a 2012 release, both with extra tracks and useless to me, and some online sellers don't pay attention and list their discs under the wrong heading on Amazon or eBay. Anyway, I still look for Electric Warrior, and really have no interest in it for the music. I occasionally buy used copies cheap online, with preference for sellers in California -with full knowledge that people travel with their stuff and the seller location might be meaningless.

AL: Those list of discs that produce the rare monsters— are there typically only a few listed because that's what people have found thus far? I like the idea that points of entry for certain monsters are still out there, they just haven't been reported. Or do you think these are done in a much more hardcoded way--like with the Tecmo's Deception producing a rare and Mariah Carey/Alvin and The Chipmunks producing Satan Claws? I think it's interesting either way-- one way is this perpetual possibility of collection and the other is some group of programmers/designers personal collection/taste informing the game itself. The truth is probably somewhere in the middle.

LS: On the topic of choosing monsters to match discs, with MR2 and thereafter, they specifically tried to have some rare type come from a music CD and a game, starting with MR3 they also added DVDs. So, yeah, some rares are coded in at least twice, the PSX games and music CDs have nothing in common in terms of making the rares. Same with MR1 & MR2 and the Christmas records, Mariah Carey and the Chipmunks discs have nothing to do with each other. (that was one of the first things I looked at when trying to crack the mystery of what the game reads off discs) Now, it's still possible that some random CD happens to also make the Christmas monsters, it would just have to have the same number of tracks with the same minutes & seconds on each track.

Random discs do show up that make rares. A guy posted on MRM this week about finding a Birdie (MR2, Suezo/???) on some random AOL disc. For some reason, this rare shows up a lot on PC discs. Problem is, no one ever gives us enough info to post in the CD list to duplicate it. I recall testing some PC discs for it back in the day and they didn't work.

For MR3, Tecmo ran a design a monster contest and made [three] custom rares based on fan suggestions. They chose two of mine as winners: Fay -based on Pris from Blade Runner, and Eega -based on the shrieking eels from The Princess Bride. John Hawley also won for Tigon, based on Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon.

Completely unrelated topic: Methods. This is the only game I know of, MR2 in particular, where some accomplishments are so difficult that people actually print out other people's raising methods or, well, ways to play the game. I don't see this as cheating, like I see most walkthroughs, because the

game is endless. It's not an adventure on a rail. Unlike a walkthrough, also, there are a variety of ways to have success with ranching. One guy's method was just battling for post-battle stat gains, other people use drugs, some never use drugs. Some people use bananas every week, some never use bananas. If you look at the Methods section, MR2, you'll see a lot of options, and many people use those instead of exploring on their own because the math involved can be complex. But, some people try different methods just to experience the game the way another community member does.