The Child in Games: Representations of Children in Video Games (2000 - 2010)

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Children, Childhood, Games, representations, content analysis, research, age

Introduction

The 1990 video game Williams / Defender and Konami / Jeff Minter's psychedelic Tempest 2000 (Atari, 1990) begins with the text: "The Primal Scream. representations of ignorance, and war and to make the world safe for democracy." Tempest 2000 is a game in which the player controls a spaceship which moves around the edge of a tube, firing at and avoiding various enemies and trying to collect power-ups. The game is set in a future where the human race has left Earth and the Terrans are treated as second class citizens by the Zoids, who have created a "Zoid Utopia" in which the Terrans are required to be "entertainers and slaves". The game's narrative is thus a parable of the dangers of ignorance and war, and of the exploitation of the weaker by the stronger. The game's ending is a celebration of the human spirit, and of the power of the child, in which the Terrans rise up and overthrow the Zoids.

Williams is an old game that has not maintained its place in the market, but it is a game which has a cult status among game players, and it has had its share of critical acclaim. Set in a futuristic dystopia, it has a complex narrative, and it is a game which, in its own way, represents the child in a complex way. It is a game which, in the 21st century, would be classified as a game for children, but it is a game which, in the 1980s, would be seen as a game for "kids" – "children" in a 21st century – sense, but not as a game for the population at large. It is a game which, in its own way, represents the child in a complex way, and it is a game which, in its own way, represents the child in a complex way

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