

# Structures of Feeling (part 1)

The RMD's *What's in a Name?* positions the depot in contrast with two figures: the lab and the archive. What distinguishes the RMD from the lab is that, despite using scientific tools, the depot is oriented towards understanding the practices around these tools and the communities that determined their use. Nor is the RMD an archive: it's designed to be functional, working collection. One advantage of this approach to storing and sharing a collection is that it addresses the difficulty the academy has had in producing knowledge about videogame media – it creates a space to explore them.

Jussi Parikka charts his approach to media archaeology in relation to the dead media manifesto where Bruce Sterling applies Motoori Norinaga's concept of *mono no aware* (translated as "a sensitivity to ephemera") to media. This sensitivity to ephemera fits neatly within the RMD's project. The ephemera around videogame consoles and peripherals are rich sources with which to play and tinker. Exploring, executing, and even bending these ephemera embody Parikka's notion of zombie media, media that is not only out of use, but resurrected to new uses, contexts and adaptations.

In Raymond Williams' essay *Dominant, Residual, Emergent*, he describes a triad of media. The dominant is that which has seized control of the social, it includes the human practices and intentions it can incorporate, and excludes those it cannot. The actively residual resists incorporation into the dominant, as Parikka says "old media never left us" (3). The emergent is that which is substantially different from, or oppositional to the dominant. Although, Williams warns, it is difficult to distinguish between some new phase of the dominant culture (the simply novel) and those which are substantially alternative or oppositional to it (the

emergent). (123) In relation to all three, Williams writes of the need to analyze the structures of feeling that are revealed in aesthetic experiences: "We need, on the one hand, to acknowledge (and welcome) the specificity of these elements -specific feelings, specific rhythms- and yet to find ways of recognizing their specific kinds of sociality, thus preventing that extraction from social experience." (133) The residual forms of media are still economic and cultural platforms, so preventing that extraction and incorporation of the specific elements that media archaeology exposes is pressing.

In these two blog posts, I'd like to explore two structures of feeling:

In Jussi Parikka's essay on Zombie Media He frames the political economy of consumer capitalism as a media archaeological problem. The black box models of technological artifacts fit neatly into the analysis of games as technical, commercial objects. In class, we discussion how the video game industry's production model replicated the structure of 20th century film production. This production model produces videogames as black boxes, resistant to inquiry and creative appropriation. Videogames stage how labour is crystallized as they are bound up in the vicissitudes of the hardware, putrefied in software rot, or entangled in intellectual property. Because of this encoded quality of videogames, to creatively remix or sample these works requires specialized knowledge. Often, that means breaking into, breaking open, or simply breaking these games.

Parikka traces fascination with structural breakdown from Heidegger to Deleuze to Latour: "Once things fail, then you start to see their complexity". For Parikka, the failing of computer hardware and software reveals things. Specifically, the ROM extraction and modding workshop in this course revealed this depunctualized Super Mario for me. The sprites, sounds, and physics of the game were rendered palpable. The workshop revealed the circuits of logic and performance that

animate the game, and gave me the space to dismantle, recode, and reassemble the constituent elements of the game. It completely reframed my thinking about metagaming, from a model of the metagame as something to be beaten, to be coaxed and exploited as in “breaking the metagame”, the workshop forced me to consider breaking as a metagame.

The structure of feeling that enacts this breaking is the glitch.

In class, our discussion of Darius Kazemi’s glitch art, the phrase “my noise is your glitch art” came up. This had me thinking, how does a medium enact the division of noise from art? My assumption is that the process of incorporating emergent or residual forms into the dominant involves stripping away noise. But how do the elements get stripped away, and by turning to residual forms, can we evoke them again?

Parikka argues that “we need an appreciation, and careful classification and understanding, of the variety of noises – a whole science of noises”. (94) Why not deploy a similar project for the microtemporal processes involved in signal processing? The variety of feedback loops and visual distortions involved with videogames is a huge possibility space.

As Parikka says, “through noise, through anomalies, we are able to decipher a range of crucial issues concerning politics, aesthetics and cultural processes of media” (110)

The RMD could be a space for to explore aesthetics of the glitch.

## Works Cited

Parikka, Jussi. *What Is Media Archaeology?* Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2012. Print.

Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford UP,

1977. Web.