

# Why the Hell Am I Playing This?

A defense of

Wrath Unleashed

by Anonymous

# What is Wrath: Unleashed?

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[http://www.gamershell.com/static/screenshots/4481/77134\\_full.jpg](http://www.gamershell.com/static/screenshots/4481/77134_full.jpg)

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# Why DID I Want to Play It?

- Because it's unique
- Because I love board games
- Because I love fighters
  
- Because I wanted to know why nobody else plays / makes / enjoys this kind of game

# Overview

- Wrath Unleashed has a huge problem
- So why did I finish it (and enjoy it)?
- The answer requires an addendum to our theories of “why we play” to understand

# The Big Problem

- Wrath Unleashed has the **worst** **narrative** I have ever encountered
- It is Meager
- It is Predictable
- It is Deceptive

# It is Meager

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[http://mojoart.mixnmojo.com/original-art/wrath-unleashed/wallpapers/wrath-unleashed\\_blue\\_1024x768.jpg](http://mojoart.mixnmojo.com/original-art/wrath-unleashed/wallpapers/wrath-unleashed_blue_1024x768.jpg)

[http://mojoart.mixnmojo.com/original-art/wrath-unleashed/wallpapers/wrath-unleashed\\_green\\_1024x768.jpg](http://mojoart.mixnmojo.com/original-art/wrath-unleashed/wallpapers/wrath-unleashed_green_1024x768.jpg)

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- There are four characters, but only two cut-scenes!

# It is Predictable

- Every character has a very similar final battle (against the other three)
- Every character has the same ending



# It is Deceptive

- The formal constraints do not match the material constraints
- Formal constraint – your goal is to fend off an ambush from the Earth Demigod
- Material constraint – you must kill the Earth Demigod or capture 7 of 9 temples

# DRAW

**YOU LOSE!**

# GAME OVER

# The Narrative Fails

- Because it's it does not provide any immersion
- Because there's no motivation to find out what happens next
- Because beginners will be confused as to what their goals are

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- Wrath Unleashed has a huge problem
- So why did I finish it (and enjoy it)? **Because it's challenging**
- It requires an addendum to our theories of “why we play” to understand

# Strategic Elements

- Pieces have different strengths
- Hexes give elemental advantages
- Spells can be cast on the world map
- Maps have special hexes (temples, mana wats, amplifiers, nexus points, teleporters, etc.)

# Adding to the Challenge

- Different goals on each map
- Limited number of turns
- Recognizable AI tendencies

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# A New Category of Play (not covered by Callois)

- Not a meeting of equals on a field of battle
- Not a game of chance
- Not mimicry because there's NO immersion
- Not much of an adrenaline rush (usually)

# Player vs. Designer

- Player motivation comes from the challenge provided by the designer
- The two sides have different goals
- Popularized by video games

# Examples

- Ancient arcade games
- Puzzle games
- Arcade shooters
- Platformers...?

Images from video games removed due to copyright restrictions.

Please see, for example, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pac-Man>  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Duck\\_hunt\\_screenshot.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Duck_hunt_screenshot.png)

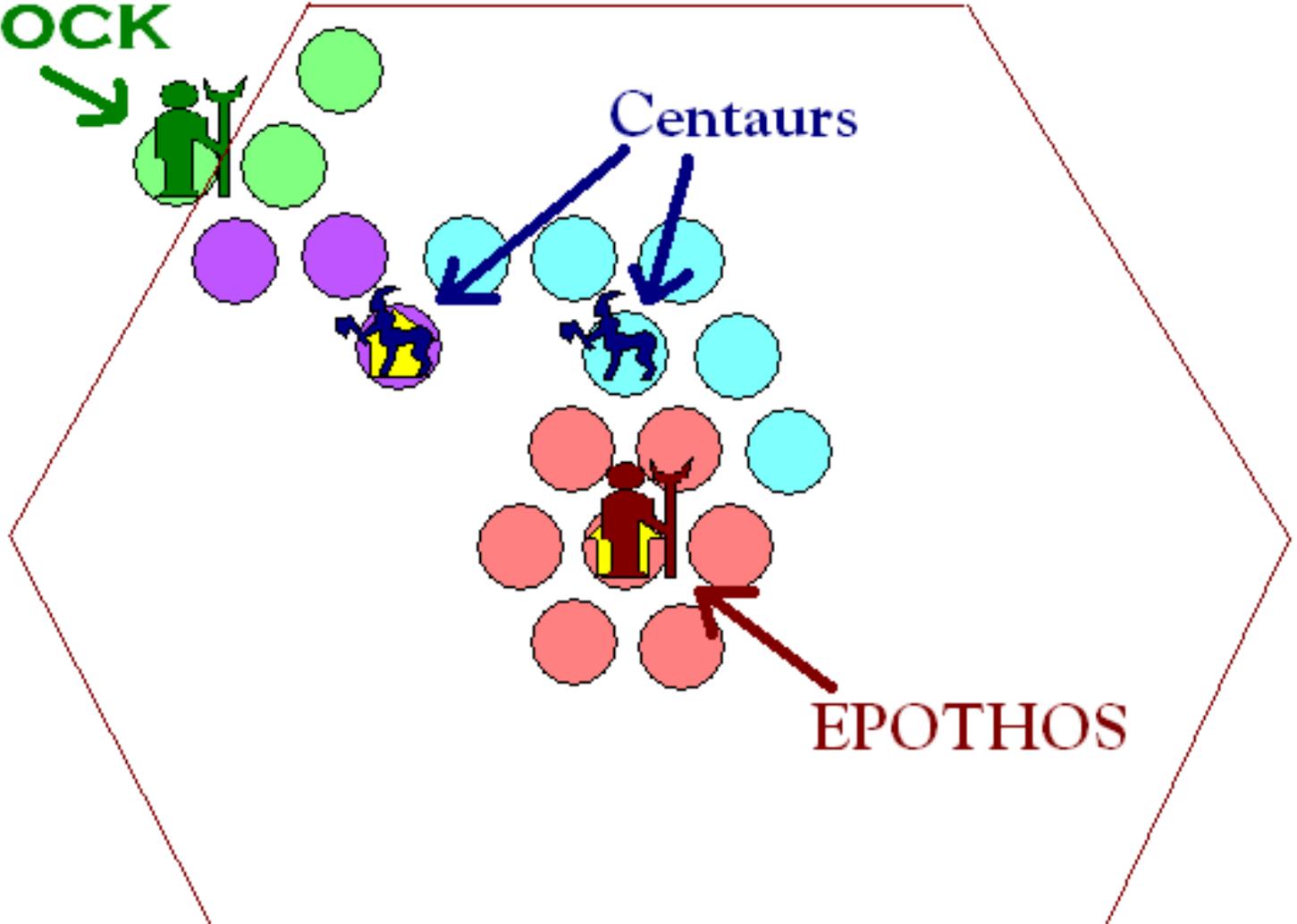
But can you really play a game with  
no narrative?...

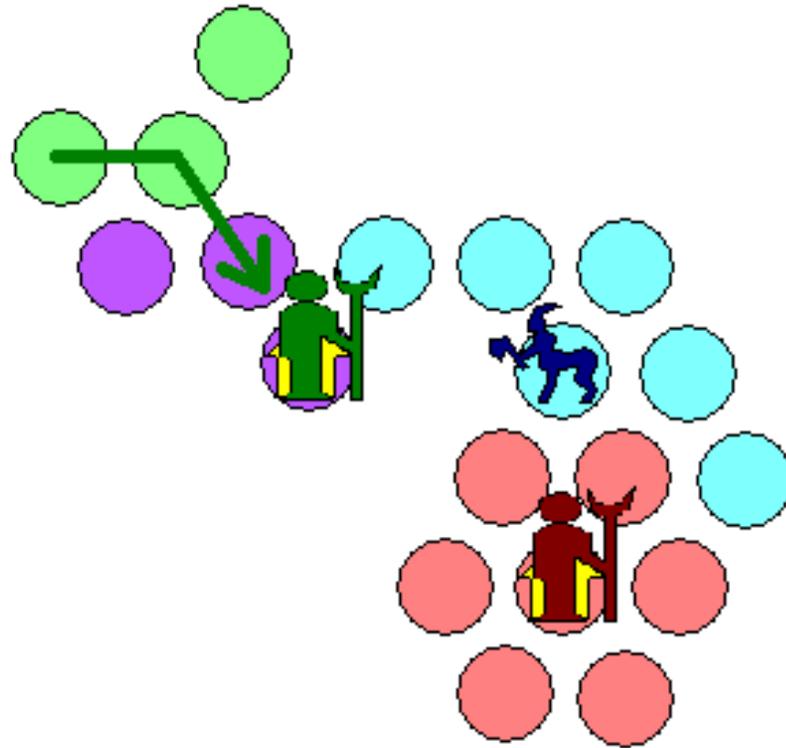
# Jenkins' Emergent Narratives

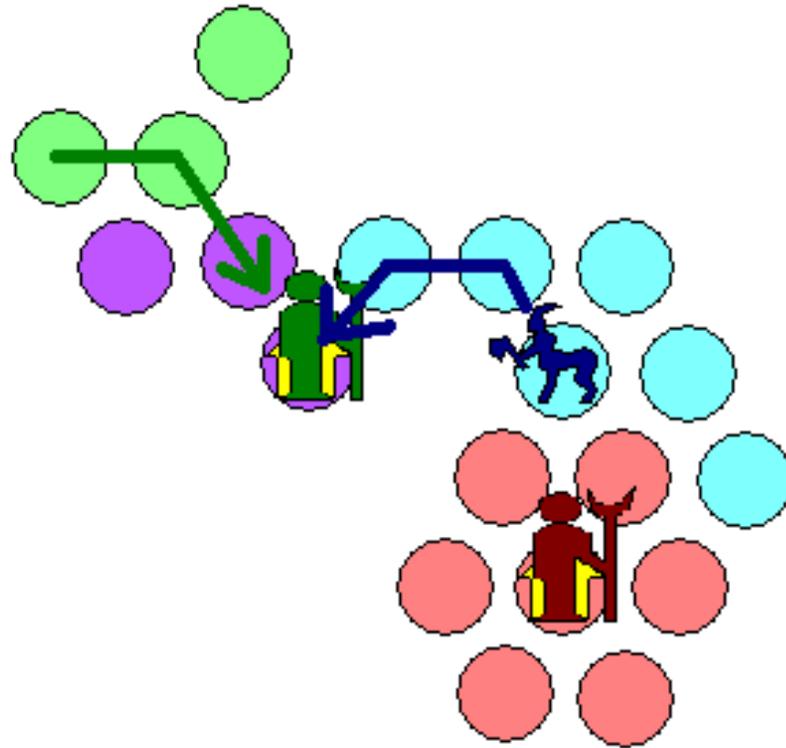
- These games provide a space to explore
- The player will make up narrative about themselves.

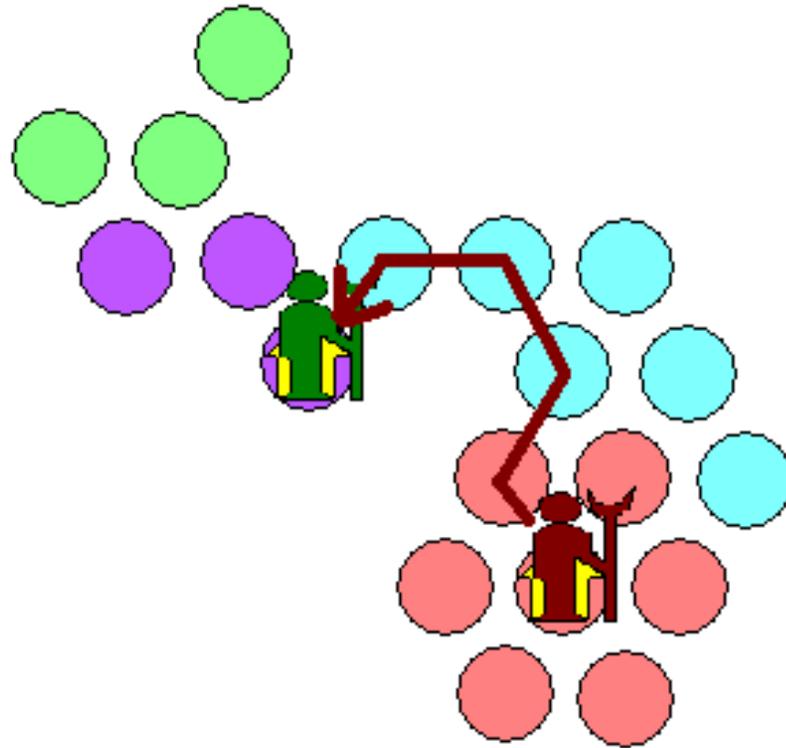
Even if the only characters are the player and the AI.

**DURLOCK  
(ME)**









# Juul on Players vs. Viewers

- “The reader/viewer need an emotional motivation for investing energy in the movie or book; we need a human actant to identify with. This is probably also true for the computer game, only this actant is always present - it is the player. The player is motivated to invest energy in the game because the game evaluates the player's performance.”

# In Summary

- Games can be enjoyable without any formal narrative or constraints
- Video games have popularized a new type of play – Player vs. Designer
- The player remains engaged in these games because they construct narratives around themselves