CHAPTER 4

The Player's Interpretative Agency and the Developer's Disruptive Powers: How Blizzard Enforces Authorial Intention in *Overwatch*

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Introduction

With the overhaul of Mercy, one of *Overwatch*'s healer characters, in August 2017, Blizzard Entertainment changed the healer's ultimate ability to resurrect all allies at once to one where her abilities were only amplified in order to prevent Mercy players to hide until her ability was ready to be used. This change to the hero caused the player to not only adjust to how they engage with Mercy inside the *Overwatch* game, but also influenced how they perceive her as a fictional being—as a character, that is. According to Ebony Elizabeth Thomas (2019), in our participatory culture of the digital age, the meaning of media works is constantly negotiated as more people participate in writing, reading, playing, and watching different media for work and leisure. The players of games, like anyone

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who engages with media content, do not simply consume, but take an active part in the construction of the game to create their own unique version of the work (Mortensen 2003). However, more than ever before, games require constant internet connection to be played, which grants developers, such as Blizzard Entertainment, the possibility to alter their content rapidly and frequently based on fluctuating financial and other strategic needs. *Overwatch* (Blizzard Entertainment 2016b) represents one such product: being systematically altered by Blizzard Entertainment so that the players' interpretative agency over their meaning-making—how they make sense of the game and play it—is heavily subjected to the developer's evolving authorial intentions.

Within our current transmedial practices, fictional characters are a vital component of users' engagement with media such as novels, films, comics, and games, among others, and play a major role in the strategies that companies employ to attach users to their products (see Brooker 2012; Harvey 2015; Pearson 2019; Blom 2021; Nakamura and Tosca 2021). *Overwatch* too uses characters to create a narrative landscape in its peripheral media on which the competitive matches of the game take place, frequently updating the game with new heroes, which not only broadens the narrative landscape, but also lets players explore new gameplay possibilities in each individual match. Yet Blizzard Entertainment frequently adjusts the game's heroes to the extent that complete mechanics of the heroes are changed around, as in the case of Mercy's overhaul. This means that in this game and its peripheral media, players are in a continuous process of having to piece together, re-adjust, and change their understanding of the constantly fluctuating characters in the game product they have already bought and played. Blizzard Entertainment's frequent interference with the characters, their abilities, and their background stories demands a closer look to the relationships between players and developers: how are the players' interpretations of *Overwatch* content guided and limited by Blizzard Entertainment's decisions to modify that content? Thought of as long gone (see Barthes 1967), perhaps the "author"—with authority over their product—has returned?

Methodologically, this chapter applies a reader-response aware close-reading and close-playing of a selected *Overwatch* character, Mercy. The approach emphasizes the role of the reader—or in this case, player—to construct meaning from a "text"—here understood as any kind of interpreted cultural product, ranging from a written codex to a visual art piece or a comic, or as in this case, a game. This chapter will argue that in games such as *Overwatch*, the developer's power to alter the game's structure directly and frequently turns the game into what I call a "fluid text." As a

result, the developer interferes with the players' interpretative agency and enforces players to follow changing authorial intentions that serve the company's renewed strategic needs. Ultimately, I argue that the players' interpretations of characters as game pieces and fictional beings—among other game content—are systematically outplayed by Blizzard Entertainment's executive agency, which modern online technology has equipped with power that enables it to change the *meaning* of game content whenever the need be.

The Player's Interpretative Agency Over a Game

With the rise of the reader-response discourse during the late 1960s and 1970s, in literary theory, the reader became the most prominent figure to create meaning from a text. Prior to this discourse, the meaning from a text was distilled from the author, who was seen as the voice of their work, endowing the work with a single truth that the reader had to decipher (Barthes 1967). Michel Foucault (1969) describes the author as a function that serves to bring together a group of works under a single discourse that imply "homogeneity, filiation, reciprocal explanation, authentication, or of common utilization" (19). Within this discourse, the author has an almost holy status as the figure who determines the actual meaning of their work. However, reader-response theory came as a critique against the author, and instead scholars such as Roland Barthes (1967) argued that the place where meaning distilled from the text is made is the reader. As the emphasis shifted from the author to the reader, the text became less important on the account of the reader who holds different paths of which the text can be constructed (1967, 6). Following up on his critique against the author, Barthes (1974) made a distinction between "writerly" and "readerly" texts. The former refers to texts written in such a way that they are open for interpretation, that they can be reinterpreted by the reader however they want. The latter refers to texts that are easy to consume but difficult to interpret from different perspectives (1974, 4) so that the meaning of these texts is easy to decipher and clear-cut, but the readers themselves have less interpretative agency over the text.

In the reader-response discourse, the relationship between text and reader plays an important role to the reader's interpretative agency over a text. Initially an empirical reader in the early stages of the discourse, Louise Rosenblatt (1938) asked an active awareness from readers to critically assess how they came to a certain interpretation. But, in the late 1960s,

the reader became a model defined in accordance to the text, when Wayne Booth's "implied" reader (1961), as the image of the reader the author had in mind when writing, was used by Wolfgang Iser to consider it a structure of the text (Iser 1978; Schmid 2013). The implied reader became a model that had all the requirements for the text to exercise its effects as demanded from the text itself (Iser 1978, 34). In response, Umberto Eco constructed a "model" reader, resembling the implied reader, but one that also acknowledges an actual reader's intertextual knowledge of other texts (Eco 1979, 7–8). Their knowledge of other texts gives empirical readers an intertextual frame to overcode the text's meaning as originally intended by the author. In that sense, the relationship between the model reader and the text can be understood as one where empirical readers are constantly in dialogue with the text, comparing it with other texts and their own experiences in life to derive meaning from it.

The dialogue between author, text, and empirical reader is still prevalent in our current age where many have a constant connection to the internet. Thomas (2019) explains that more than before people negotiate and rewrite the meaning of texts in "hybrid multimodal and multilingual constellations" across "asymmetrical trajectories" (154). Thomas' work can be placed among a line of studies on participatory culture consisting of scholars who describe the negotiation between fans and the texts of their fancy (such as Jenkins 1992; Evans 2008; Lamerichs 2018), with her focus being on black readers' re-imagination of popular cultural works specifically written for and by white persons. One of her examples is writer J.K. Rowling's tendencies to announce aspects about the identity of her characters from the *Harry Potter* universe in peripheral situations, outside of the main story line and mostly through social media, such as Dumbledore's queer sexuality, Hermione's racial and ethnic identity as possibly being black, and Rowling's doubt about the characters' romantic relationships. The response to Rowling's control over the text and the empirical readers' interpretative agency comes in the form of a readerly versus writerly dialogue, namely that while Rowling offers a readerly text, whereas readers negotiate this aspect, transforming it into a writerly text for them to rewrite as they want.

Nevertheless, texts such as the *Harry Potter* books and film series are *nonergodic* texts, that is, readers of these books and films only have to make trivial extranoematic effort to traverse them and derive meaning from them (see Aarseth 1997, 1). However, nowadays, there is an abundance of work where the structure of that work is such that users have to

put in non-trivial effort to traverse and interpret them, and end up in different paths depending on how they traverse the product, such as videogames (ibid.). Within participatory culture, players engage with the interpretation, reconfiguration, and construction of games as any other popular media text (Raessens 2005). Responding to the importance of the relationship between the reader and the text, Aarseth had already written back in 1997 that in games the user becomes a more integrated figure than the reader in reader-response theory. For the latter, the meaning-making process takes place in the head of the reader, but in the former, players will see and experience something else than other players depending on how they engage with the game (1997, 62).[1] In contrast to nonergodic texts, in games, the user does not only have an interpretative function, but also has a configurative function because of all the decisions they make within the text (65), thereby the text embodies Barthes' concept of the writerly text. The position of the player in relation to the text is, as Mortensen (2003) states, one of influence: "computer games do not presuppose a consuming user, and not even an actively understanding reader, but a manipulating reader who is part of the player" (92). Just like nonergodic texts have an implied reader, games have an implied player as a structure of the text itself to exercise its full effect (Aarseth 2007). That is to say that the implied player is the optimal player to fully exercise the effect of the game, giving the impression that the author is fully in control as they are the ones who decide the implied player of their game. However, empirical players have different play skills and different intertextual knowledge of other texts. Although players are subject to the type of players the developer has in mind for their game(s), players will display various degrees of going along and counteracting against the developer's ideas of what players should and should not do in their game (see, e.g., Mortensen and Jørgensen 2020). As such, even for the implied player we should take into consideration that the model can have different skills and knowledge as well, adding to the model's configurative function, which determines what they will see and how they interact with it, thereby affecting their own meaning-making process both on the level of the game and on the level of their own imagination. In other words, two players of one game may end up interacting with diverse content due to their different choices, skills, and knowledge.

Yet, although the structures of games (see Aarseth and Calleja 2015) are discussed as dynamic, where the content players engage with depends on their choices, the debates I have sketched above seem to assume that

the text is finished by the author—that the author cannot touch the work anymore. However, most videogames that we currently play have an online nature, enabling developers to regularly adjust the game when necessary, or add content to the game's narrative world. A game such as *Overwatch* is constantly updated and changed by the product's developer. Blizzard Entertainment introduces new characters and new stories and adjusts play modes and character moves on a regular basis. This allows Blizzard Entertainment to expand *Overwatch*'s narrative landscape as a whole so that players gradually learn about the new and existing characters' motivations, fears, hopes, and lives surrounding Overwatch as a fictional task force. At the same time, the constant connection to the internet, required to play *Overwatch*, also gives Blizzard Entertainment the possibilities to update existing characters. In the case of the hero Mercy, they even went as far as adjusting her mechanics because Blizzard Entertainment did not like the kind of behavior Mercy players maintained during competitive matches. As a result, we should not think of Overwatch as an ergodic or nonergodic text, rather, I propose to call it a "fluid text," which I consider a text whose structure the author can directly change. In the case of *Overwatch*, Blizzard Entertainment has an almost god-like power over the game, directly affecting how the implied player relates to the game, how they traverse the game, and thereby influence the player's understanding of *Overwatch*'s construction of its characters, narrative landscape, and gameplay. In the next pages, I will provide several illustrative examples to show how the fluidity of *Overwatch* affects the player's agency over the interpretation of and engagement with the game and its characters.

Puzzling Characters Together

During its initial release in May 2016, *Overwatch* contained 21 different heroes, each of them assigned to one particular role: supports, tanks, offense, or defense. This was later changed to tanks, supports, or damage dealers. These heroes exist simultaneously as game pieces, representations of the players, and as fictional persons with background stories. In their article on the method of analysis for video game characters, Schröter and Thon (2014) present three ways in which (model) players perceive video game characters and their representations: a narrative experience, a ludic experience, and a social experience. In *Overwatch*, the ludic experience and the social experience are the primary means through which players

experience the heroes during gameplay, which means as game pieces and as representations of other players to play matches with and against.[2] On the other hand, the players' narrative experience of the heroes as fictional beings with an inner life occurs primarily through the game's peripheral means for which Blizzard Entertainment maintains a transmedial strategy. On the importance of stories in fighting games, Hutchinson (2019, 71) explains that the psychological development and depth of characters are among the main appeals for games of the fighting game genre, but these games do not deepen a character's background story by linear progression. Instead, she argues that a fighting game's story and its characters are hinted through peripheral aspects of the game, such as the fighters' movesets, abilities, or cinematic cut-scenes, among others, to give a fuller understanding of the game's overall narrative (73). These pieces of story and characterization of the fighters function like a puzzle, "which players must piece together in their minds as they play through the game" (Hutchinson 2019, 73), showing that the player's agency over the text is both configurative and interpretative as they construct the game's characters.

Overwatch provides players the same form of agency, with its different play modes, matches, and goals within these matches. The game's story progression and the characters as fictional beings are told through peripheral channels: by in-game details such as dialogues between the different characters, yearly Archive missions,[3] and within the paratexts (extra material other than the main story) on Blizzard Entertainment's official website, such as *Overwatch*'s animated shorts, hero profiles, and origin stories. The player then gathers and engages with different pieces of information about the figures in order to construct them into a whole. As the player pieces the characters together, they obtain a double perspective between perceiving the heroes as fictional beings and as game pieces. This perspective differs slightly from how characters are usually seen in literary studies where they have historically been discussed as either a construct within the text or a fictional being, or, since recently, both (Heidbrink 2010). The heroes have the position of a construct (game piece) in the game, they simultaneously function as persons in a story (fictional beings), and they are the players' avatars (representation of other players). In this chapter, I emphasize their double function as game pieces and as fictional beings. As a game piece, the heroes are effectively defined through their role in the gameplay and the abilities that they have. Mercy, the hero who I prefer to play, is a support character. In the paratexts, her real name is revealed as

Angela Ziegler, her age to be 37, and they show that she worked for the Overwatch task force as its head of medical research, for which she donned a Valkyrie suit to heal her team members on the frontlines of the war against the robots. Surprisingly, in the game, Mercy's healing kit is rather limited; she is not a powerful team healer like support heroes such as Ana or Baptiste (who are both introduced after the initial main cast of which Mercy has been a part since the release of the game), and instead focuses her healing primarily on a single target. Her value as a game piece mostly derives from damage boosts she can give to allies and her ability to resurrect allies when necessary, which is something exclusively Mercy can do out of the complete hero cast. She is also not much of a fighter; unless players are particularly skilled, Mercy, if left alone among enemies, will stand little chance to fight them off.

While not being the game's strongest healer, as a fictional being, Mercy is still nonetheless depicted as the main doctor in the *Overwatch* story. Within the game product, players receive hints about the characters' backgrounds and relationships with each other through the game's voice lines, the different environments, visual appearance and skins, and abilities. For example, Mercy's original outfit is a machinal white suit, and wings that give her the ability to fly at times. Together with her white skin, blue eyes, and blonde hair, she makes up quite the stereotypical angelic image. Voice lines are uttered when heroes use their abilities, when they are waiting with their allies for the match to start, or to warn their allies. Some of these voice lines are in the language of the character's country of origin, while other voice lines are in English with a matching accent so that the characters are also bestowed with a specific nationality. Additionally, the character's function as a fictional being is strengthened by the paratexts on the Blizzard Entertainment website. There are hero profiles and videos such as the origin stories, and animated shorts, that focus on the characters as persons and tell players their background stories. For example, in the comic "Uprising" (Chu 2017), Mercy is depicted as the doctor in charge of the training and evaluation facility of the Overwatch headquarters in Switzerland, urging her commander to go to the frontlines in London to save lives. If her status as a medical doctor was not clear enough yet, players can deduct from this short story that she is not afraid to go into battle to save people either.

Through this double perspective, the player is in constant active dialogue with the game, constructing the character through interpretative and configurative practices. Players might for example have a ludic

experience in which Mercy functions more akin to a game piece, important to how they navigate the game during a match, while at other times, they have a narrative experience as she conveys her life as a medical doctor, when they are in the game's waiting room for a match to start or browsing through Blizzard Entertainment's website. Players might understand certain heroes better than others, especially if they play certain heroes more than others and are more skilled at playing them. For instance, I have little affinity with damage heroes such as Genji. In fact, I have a particular dislike for Genji whose speed can quickly take Mercy out of battle. I never use him during a match. My ludic experience of him remains on the level of having to adjust my gameplay when he appears in a match, but from a narrative experience, I understand him as a lonely ninja whose brother Hanzo, also a hero in the game, feels guilty over Genji's supposed death by having watched the animated short "Dragons" (Blizzard Entertainment 2016a). Yet, at the same time we have to acknowledge that although players might wish to deny certain interpretations of the character, as Olli Leino (2007, 116) explains, they can only deny so many meanings before they decrease their possibilities to act in the game. Since interpretation in video games happens on multiple interpretive levels, as is the case with the double perspectives on *Overwatch's* characters, players have to consent with the author's intention to a certain degree no matter how skilled they are. In that sense, the metaphor of readerly and writerly texts does not fully apply, since authorial intention plays a decisive role in how players navigate through the game and make sense of it. So, while I might not like Mercy's overhaul personally and want to throw my controller at the screen with every Genji I meet in a match, I cannot deny their existence as intended by the author if I still wish to play the game.

The Return of Authorial Intention

Putting together a character would serve as a fine dialogue between text and player if *Overwatch* were a dynamic, writerly text. However, in the rest of this chapter I will argue that the developer's intrusive power over the text turns the game into a fluid text, transforming the dialogue into a monologue from author to player through the game. Part of Blizzard Entertainment's transmedial strategy is that it updates its website with new videos and comics when it announces temporary in-game events or new characters. An example of such an expansion is the limited-time campaign "Mercy's Recall Challenge" that ran from November 12 until

December 2, 2019. The event itself offered players extra in-game bonus content.[4] Coinciding with the event, Blizzard Entertainment released the short story "Valkyrie" (Chu 2019) on its website. Here players learnt about Mercy's loss of her parents, her reason to join the task force Overwatch, her irritation over how her inventions during her time in the task force have been misused, and how she, as she had left Overwatch, still felt the need to escape her Overwatch past. The story has two functions: as an advertisement of the game and as the background on which the "Mercy's Recall Challenge" event takes place so that players receive a narrative reason beyond just collecting the awards from matches they won. This strategy functions as narrative expansion. As players are stimulated to play particularly during temporary in-game events, Blizzard Entertainment expands *Overwatch*'s narrative landscape on which the game operates to promote the game. In this sense, the puzzle players have to piece together expands as every addition adds to the construction of the character as a narrative experience.

Blizzard Entertainment's strategy does not make the *Overwatch* franchise stand apart from other transmedia franchises. It is quite common for franchises to expand in such a way that it creates multiple worlds and universes to create coherence between stories (Thon 2015). Characters too are swept up in this strive for continuity (see Blom 2020) so that readers or recipients rather look for narrative explanations on the paradoxical appearances of characters than accept the paradox that the same character in one text is not the same person in another (see Thon 2019). Blizzard Entertainment too follows this strive of continuity, as the double perspective between a game piece and a fictional being is the result of Blizzard Entertainment attempting to create a single coherent world, although I have argued elsewhere that it instead created a shared universe between players consisting of multiple worlds (see Blom 2018). In my own work (Blom 2020) I argued that even in games where players have the agency to construct the identity of characters according to how they play, transmedial strategies imposed on the characters retroactively negate the player's agency over their construction of the figure. Yet, there too I did not discuss the developer's intrusive power directly within the text itself. However, since *Overwatch* is an *online* game media franchise, it stands apart from most other transmedia franchises: their intrusive power to adjust the text itself—instead of retroactively through other texts—directly affects players in how they engage with and interpret the heroes as game pieces and as fictional beings together.

About every four months, Blizzard Entertainment introduces a new character, the first being the support hero Ana, introduced in July 2016, and the last—before the release of *Overwatch 2* (Blizzard Entertainment TBA)—being the damage hero, Echo, introduced in April 2020. Blizzard Entertainment's transmedial strategy works so that in the hero introduction videos on its website, the new heroes are introduced as game pieces, showing off their abilities in the game's matches. The origin story videos on its website, on the other hand, introduce the new heroes as fictional beings, showing how they fit the narrative landscape and their role in it. New relationships between pre-existing and new characters are then constructed in the comics, short stories, and animated shorts for players to understand how these new characters relate to the previous heroes. With the introduction of a new hero, the gameplay also slightly changes as Blizzard Entertainment adjusts and updates the matches to fit the abilities of the new character. With the introduction of Sombra, for example, players can prevent opponents from taking any medical kits to heal their avatar, and they can also block opponents from using their heroes' ultimate abilities for some time.

This kind of strategy is mostly one of expansion; both the game and the narrative landscape become larger. However, occasionally, Blizzard Entertainment decides to do what is considered a massive overhaul; changing the move-set of a character to such an extent that it changes how players play in a match. In August 2017, Blizzard Entertainment's game director Jeff Kaplan announced in a 10-minute-long YouTube video an update to Mercy because Blizzard Entertainment had noticed a particular in-game behavior from Mercy players they considered wrong for a main healing character: Mercy players tended to hide when the hero's ultimate ability was ready to be used in order to resurrect the entire team (Kaplan 2017; McWhertor 2017). To counter this behavior, Blizzard Entertainment changed her ultimate ability "Resurrect," which allowed players to bring all team members back at once in a match, to "Valkyrie," that amplified her healing abilities and lets her fly around. Her resurrect ability became a standard ability—unlike an ultimate ability that has to be built up throughout a match—but with the limit that players could only resurrect team members once at a time with a long cooldown time so that Mercy players have to strategically decide which player on their team they could resurrect (Kaplan 2017).

It is at this point that we have to drop the metaphor of readerly and writerly texts. As Hutchinson (2019, 70) explains, the move-set of a

character is one of the peripheral means through which players come to know the character. This grants the player the double perspective to perceive them as both game pieces and fictional beings, but it also means that altering the hero as a game piece alters the fictional being in the narrative landscape. When the move-set changes, so does the player's interpretation of Mercy. Mercy's overhaul from being able to save up to five team members at the same time to one where she can only save one at a time does not only change how players strategically play the game, but also negates her position as the task force's main doctor. It is striking that "Mercy's Recall Challenge" appears two years after the overhaul to explain her problems with the Overwatch force team. After her overhaul in August 2017, Blizzard Entertainment announced in November 2017 a new healer, Moira, who can heal multiple allies simultaneously at a higher rate than Mercy can, who cannot heal multiple allies at the same time. As a fictional being, Moira's origin story portrays her as a risk-taking scientist who was held back by Overwatch's rules. The game's lead writer, Michael Chu, even hinted during BlizzCon 2017, a couple of days after the announcement of Moira, that Moira and Mercy have a backstory where they used each other's technology during their shared time in the task force (Mediavaldragon 2017), although this backstory does not explicitly appear in the official paratexts. In that light, the recall challenge reads like an official rectification to alter Mercy's position in the narrative landscape to match her re-design as a game piece. Players cannot do anything about these changes; although they are able to reject Mercy's overhaul on the level of interpretation, the configurative function has been interrupted by the developer. That is, players cannot reject her overhaul inside the text itself without major consequences, because Blizzard Entertainment has directly changed the game's structure. The player's agency over the text only extends so far that they can choose to either accept Mercy's new design or, as a counteract, face the consequences of not being able to play with Mercy anymore or the game at all. No matter what choice, players have to act upon Blizzard Entertainment's authorial intention, regardless of their play skills, and whether they like it or not.

Reader-response theory was all about how the author was losing their control over the meaning of a text; however, I believe that over the last decades or so, the author—whose work is now online and ready to be changed any day when the business strategy so needs—has gained more authoritative power over their text. As Mercy's massive overhaul demonstrates, Blizzard Entertainment has much better knowledge of how players

directly engage with their text than traditional authors have of their readers' choices in meaning-making from their text. Blizzard Entertainment also has the intrusive power to directly change the structure of the same text based on their knowledge of their players' engagement with it. Blizzard Entertainment might not be able to directly interfere with the players' imagination, but they can surely alter the text. This power enables them to enforce authorial intention upon their players, demanding from their players specific behaviors to traverse the game—regardless of the player's individual skills. Reader-response critics, such as Rosenblatt, Barthes, or Eco did not and could not take the form of authoritative power into consideration that developer-authors have over their text in the current digital age. And, unfortunately, Thomas' description of the author-reader struggle remains on the level of the nonergodic text, not taking phenomena like games into consideration. Therefore, the player's interpretative agency over a text is no more a matter of ignoring the author's influence, but rather a matter that should be addressed in the process of meaning-making of fluid texts in particular.

Conclusions

In online media, such as *Overwatch*, the author has become an entity that can directly meddle with the work itself, changing the work's shape, erasing the shape it once had, and affecting the players' engagement directly with it. *Overwatch* is not unique in that companies modify their intellectual property (IP), but it is part of a more general trend where companies carefully control and adjust their IP. For example, the developer, Riot Games, completely rewrote the backstory of *League of Legends* (Riot Games 2009–present) in 2014 (Plunkett 2014). Or, more recently, for the free-to-play game *Genshin Impact* (miHoYo 2020), the developer adds and modifies content such as new characters, mechanics, and events every couple of weeks to keep players playing and spending money on additional in-game content. Online technology, with more games being connected to the internet, enables developers to erase and modify their product directly at a frequent pace. It is important to keep in mind that *Overwatch* is also an esports game, so Blizzard Entertainment has certain priorities higher in their hierarchy than others, such as making sure the heroes are interesting as fictional beings from a narrative point of view, but also that they are well-balanced as game pieces for esport players. This may result in paradoxical outcomes such as Mercy's overhaul to change players' in-game

behavior, which conflicts with her original narrative backstory. There is much power in the capability of directly changing the structure of a work as it is being engaged with by others, interrupting their agency to traverse the text how they want. There is even more power in being able to modify a text at rapid frequencies, forcing players to have to accept the characters exactly as the developer intended in order to play the game. It is thus perhaps time to acknowledge that the author is back, knocking on your door to come out and play—exactly in the way they want you to.

Notes

1. Aarseth distinguishes between *scriptons* and *textons*. The former refers to "strings [of signs in a text] as they appear to reader" and the latter to "strings as they exist in the text" (1997, 62). His argument goes to explain that in a cybertext, such as games, depending on how users engage with the cybertext, scriptons as they appear to the player might not always be the same as the textons in the structure of the cybertext. Two players might play the same game product, that is, playing the same game, but do not have to see or experience the same thing, because they each see different scriptons depending on how they traverse that game.
2. During the different competitive matches players go through, they will be matched up with other players making up a team, and battling against a team of other players, each hero representing one of the players. The heroes players choose during a match decide how the player plays. Each hero has a different role in the team—either support, tank, or damage—with different abilities to match that role. While each hero can do some damage, their roles as game pieces determine on what players will focus during gameplay, while support hero Mercy's abilities emphasizes healing her team members, tank hero D.Va's abilities draws attention to herself to provide protection to the players' team mates.
3. Archive missions are a yearly returning 'Person versus Environment' (PvE) mode that explore key moments in the *Overwatch* story. Occasionally, special comics on Blizzard Entertainment's website are released to promote the event and to progress the *Overwatch* story overall, such as the comic *Uprising* (Chu 2017).
4. Winning three games awarded players with a Mercy player icon, winning six games awarded them with a Mercy spray, and with winning nine games in total, players were rewarded with a legendary Mercy *skin*. These items could only be obtained during this event and, until now, no other time.

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