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*What Did Pavić Play? Ludo-narrative aspects of the adventure game genre, as seen in Milorad Pavić's essay "Novels Without Words".*

*Summary*

In this paper we will attempt a thorough interpretation of Milorad Pavić's essay "Novels Without Words", which is one of the first attempts at a ludo-narrative interpretation of video games in Serbian literary theory. In this essay, Pavić provided a unique testimony on the contemporary hypermedia and hypertextual literature, the central point of this work being his description of four adventure games: Myst, Myst 2: Riven, Zork: Nemesis and Timelapse. By analyzing the historical development of the adventure game genre, their hypertextual architecture, technological characteristics, and certain elements that link them to the general poetics of postmodern fiction, we will attempt to explain the mechanisms of Pavić's ludo-narrative commentary, i.e. the reasons behind his choice of these particular titles for the purpose of demonstrating the literary and artistic value of video games in general.

With this in mind, the first part of our paper presents a brief summary of the development of the adventure game genre, with special accent on the phenomena of so-called "textual adventures". Here we argue that adventure games, due to the cognitive nature of their interactions and challenges, are inherently suitable to having a developed narrative dimension, which makes the genre open to different kinds of literary influences. This provides an explanation as to why Pavić chose this particular genre as the focal point of his article.

The second part of our examination argues that examples of Pavić's interactive fiction have a structure diametrically different from the hypertextual architecture of video games. While video games usually utilize a hypertextual structure to present, first and foremost, different representations of virtual space, Pavić's interactive fiction has a role of representing temporal and focal nonlinearity.

The third part of our research takes into account different stylistic practices of the aforementioned video games, arguing that Pavić probably chose these particular four titles because of their similarity to his own literary practice. The most important example here is Myst and the different postmodern elements in its ludo-narrative structure, such as motifs of textual meta-reality and the demiurgical nature of the author.

The final part of this research presents arguments which substantiate a theory that Pavić actually did play the games he mentioned, and wasn't just indirectly informed about them. The main argument is the fact that Pavić knew about the existence of the so-called "walkthroughs", the supplementary, secondary texts used by players to easily navigate through the game and beat it. While acknowledging that the biographical fact concerning whether Pavić played the games or not is of no particular importance to this research, his direct involvement with this medium will show how much Milorad Pavić, in fact, followed contemporary trends in the hypertextual and hypermedia art.

*Keywords*: Milorad Pavić, interactive fiction, video games, lexia, hypertext