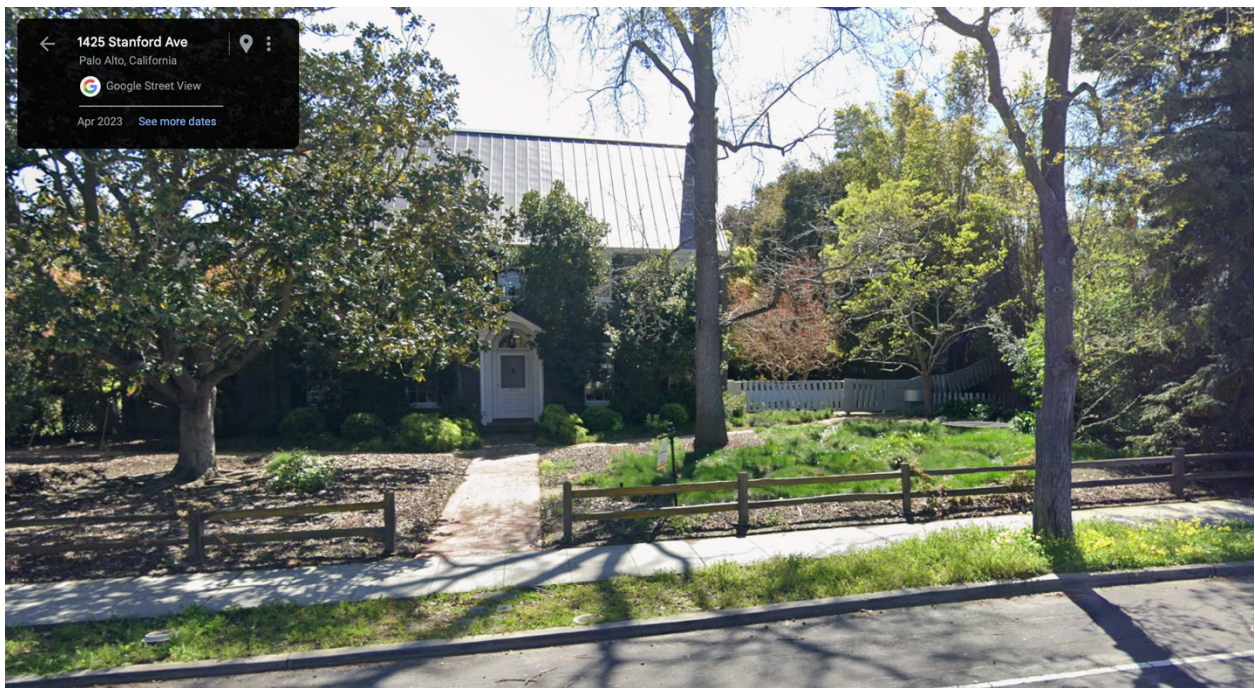Calvin McCormack
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Music 256A
Stanford University

<u>Reading Response #6</u>

Starcraft was one of my favorite childhood games and I was jazzed to see it featured so prominently in this chapter.

Completely unrelated aside, but since this a class that often discusses artful design and zippers, there's this house on the edge of campus:

And I *think* that the pull part of the zipper functions as the gate.

A concept from this chapter that I found really interesting was Definition 6.10 the opposing notions of Ludus and Paidia (pg 330). I had always had a sort of implicit understanding of these within the scope of video games; the Bioshock or Metro series of games were, outside of some choices and exploring here or there, more like movies where you are the shooter, diametrically opposed to sandboxy games like Minecraft. Personally, I had always gravitated towards more Paidia games that still had some element of score/goal/objective/winning; I want my unique creation to win the game essentially.

But I thought it was really fascinating to transpose this classification spectrum to spheres beyond video games. I struggle actually to separate this polarity from another that was discussed earlier in the book: the means to an end and the end in itself. Is it possible to have something that is Paidia *and* a means to an end, or vice-versa? What would that look like?

If I were to play guitar in free improvisation, completely formless and void of constraints, time, nothing predetermined, *but* I only did so as part of a carefully crafted creative practice intentionally designed to confer tangible musical/spiritual/mindfulness benefits upon myself, how would I define that? Would that be a Paidia employed in the service of a means to an end, or an end in itself nested inside a Ludus? Is there an actual difference between these two? Ge introduces these concepts as "(more game-like) and… (more toy-like)", which draws attention the thing-ness of these. They are really the same question, but maybe Ludus and Paidia asks "how" something is done, whereas the means/end asks "why" something is done?

As I continue with my own work (accessible instrument design, Indian classical computer music, biosensors instruments), I feel perhaps I should be keeping this polarity in mind. In these areas, as with my gaming preferences, I have generally sought to keep things rather open and exploratory, and build tools that allow the end user to decide their own creative constraints. But as many very successful games can attest to, perhaps it is better and the end user will be happier if more constraints, goals, rewards, and challenges are built in from the get-go. This is why I have a Moog and not a Buchla (besides the fact that I can't afford one).

It is something to consider thoughtfully.