Art & Mediatechnology

*Interactive Digital Storytelling*

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A new medium for storytelling

Janet Murray (1997)
**Hamlet on the Holodeck:**
The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace

“Pleasures” of the new medium:
- Immersion
- Agency
- Transformation
Immersion

In games

• Social Worlds (There, Second Life, …)
• “Graphic MUDs” (World of Warcraft, Everquest, …)
• Text-based adventures, MUDs

Virtual Reality helmet

Second Life
Dangers of immersion?

South Park meets World of Warcraft
Agency

• “The satisfying power to take meaningful action”
• More agency means more immersion
• Not all interactivity is agency! What about:
  – Branching narrative
  – Navigating, exploring (journey story)
  – Games as “contest stories”?
More agency = less story??

A problem for interactive stories: how to have both player agency and maintain *narrative coherence*.

- Solution offered by interactive drama *Façade*: pre-authored “story beats” with preconditions

- To achieve immersion:
  - no explicit decision points
  - natural language dialogue

Download Façade at [http://www.interactivestory.net/](http://www.interactivestory.net/)
Example Façade dialogue

TRIP: Uh, well, um, we need drinks!
ADAM: No drinks
TRIP: So... drinks...
ADAM: Just got out of rehab
TRIP: W -- well, uh, I'm going to open an exquisite Bordeaux!
ADAM: No, no, no
TRIP: Excellent! You've got good taste.
TRIP: Best of the best, you can't buy this in stores... Very, very special --
ADAM: No
GRACE: God Trip, you're just like my dad with the whole wine snob thing.
ADAM: No
TRIP: I'll take that as a compliment. -- (interrupted)
ADAM: Shut up
TRIP: Okay, Adam, I think this evening is over, you've got to leave.
TRIP: There's only so much you can expect to put up with, you know?
ADAM: What
(Trip opens the front door.)
Transformation

- Transforming ourselves (avatars, role-playing)
- Transforming the story world:
  - choosing different characters, setting, music…
  - choosing different story directions (*non-linear story*)
  - choosing different *perspectives*
  - etc.
- Related to agency / interactivity

Different music gives different “stories”
Perspectives (1)

Create story versions by playing with perspectives.

- Movies showing a story from different perspectives: Rashomon (Kurosawa, 1950) or more recently, Hoodwinked
- Examples of parallel storylines in film: Shortcuts (Altman 1993) and on TV: “24”

But: no interactivity in these media.

- “Three little piglets”: varying perspectives and level of detail

(Markus de Jong, Gregor Ybema, Sander Timmerman, Piet Schrijver)
http://vaporiser.student.utwente.nl/~timmie/projects/Magresapi/Final/Slagroom.html
Perspectives (2)

- Perspectives as pieces of a puzzle, with the user as a detective
- Anne Stadtbäumer, Inga Keilmann & Karen Upmann: “IPD”
Non-linear story (1)

- Wouter Huisman: “What kind of story do you choose?”
- Made using the Korsakow system, a computer program for the creation of “database narrative films” (free download at http://www.korsakow.com/ksy/)
- Using “Grand Theft Auto” computer game as a basis

*Get stoned? Hang around? Or…?*
Non-linear story (2)

- Jurjen Karelse & Leticia Bialoskorski: “Doomed Date”
Non-linear story (3)

- Stef Nitert & Leontien Kalverda: “Digital Photo-Story”
- Web of photo’s linked through hotspots
- Make your own story by following different paths through the web
The Virtual Storyteller (UT)

- Automatic story generation using techniques from Artificial Intelligence
- Characters are *agents*: “intelligent actors that observe and act on an environment”
Assignment (1)

1. Create a digital story, with at least two of the following properties:
   - Variability / transformation
     • Selection / combination of story elements
     • Different perspectives, parallel events
     • Varying the way the story is presented
   - Interactivity
     • Influencing the story at different levels (see above)
   - Automation
     • Fully or in part
Assignment (2)

1. A presentation of your digital story in the form of an article (3000-4000 words) in which you provide
   • a review of literature on digital storytelling, and
   • an analysis of your work, putting it in a wider context by relating it to the literature and to similar digital stories / storytelling systems

2. A critical review of your work, as if written for a magazine / newspaper

3. An oral presentation / demo of your work
“Digital Storytelling” on the Internet

According to the Digital Storytelling Association, “Digital Storytelling uses digital media to create media-rich stories to tell, to share, and to preserve.”

• Personal stories that have been digitized / created using computer programs (multimedia)
• Dutch example: www.droombeek.nl

This is nice, but not what we mean here!