

Narrative



And Games

Games & Story: An Introduction

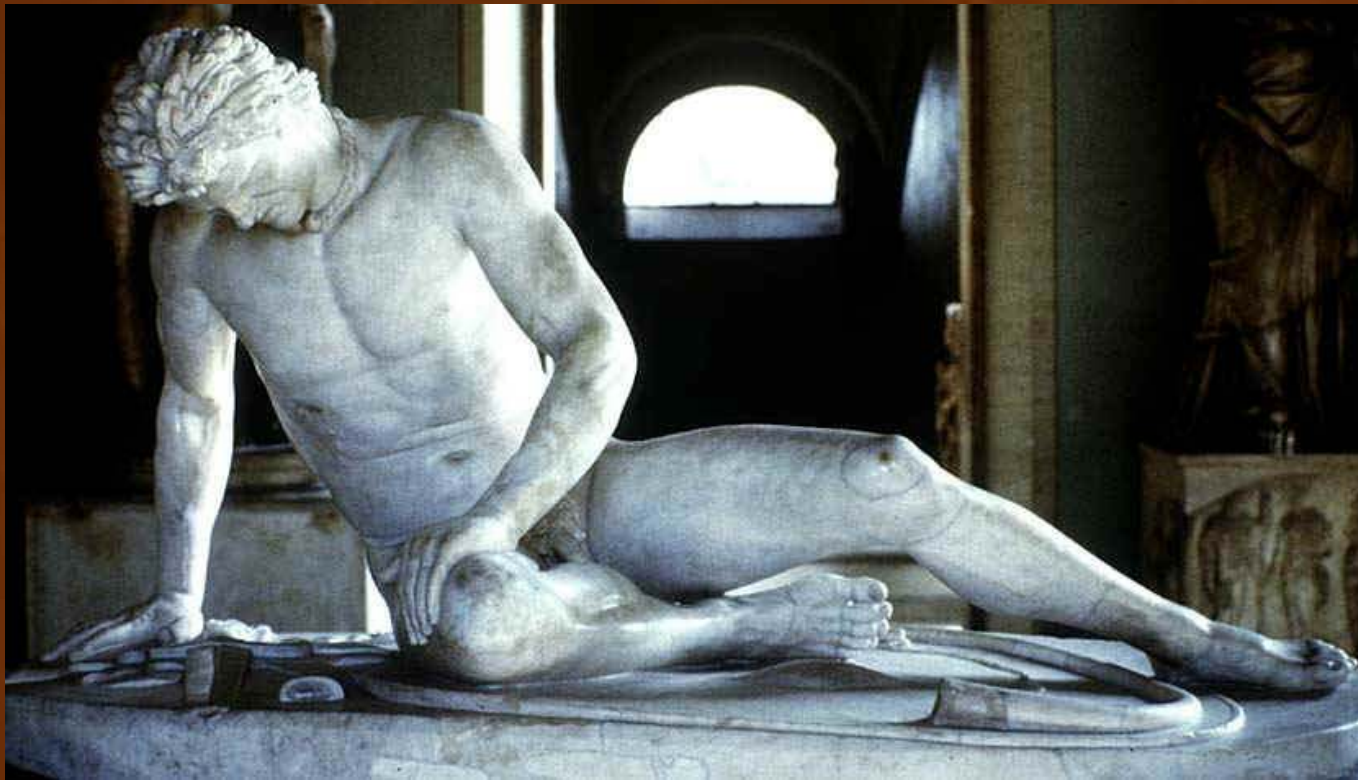
Video Games and Storytelling



- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1jdG2LHair0>

Why Stories?

Stories have the power to give or create meaning, they also give the reader the space to explore established meanings.



Plato & Stories

"You know also that the beginning is the most important part of any work, especially in the case of a young and tender thing; for that is the time at which the character is being formed and the desired impression is more readily taken.

Quite true.

And shall we just carelessly allow children to hear any casual tales which may be devised by casual persons, and to receive into their minds ideas for the most part the very opposite of those which we should wish them to have when they are grown up?

We cannot.

Then the first thing will be to establish a censorship of the writers of fiction, and let the censors receive any tale of fiction which is good, and reject the bad; and we will desire mothers and nurses to tell their children the authorised ones only. Let them fashion the mind with such tales, even more fondly than they mould the body with their hands; but most of those which are now in use must be discarded."

Plato, *The Republic*, Book II, Dialogue between Socrates & Adeimantus



Our Lives are Stories

“...we all relate to stories because our lives are stories. Every individual life contains characters, plots, scripts and a host of other ingredients found in a good story. When we forget this truth, we lose an important interpretive tool for discerning direction and creating meaning ... As psychologist Hillman (1996) points out, "We dull our lives by the way we conceive them. We have stopped imagining them with any sort of romance, any fictional flair."”

<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/Insight/ViewContentServlet?contentType=NonArticle&Filename=Published/NonArticle/Articles/26129dab.002.html>

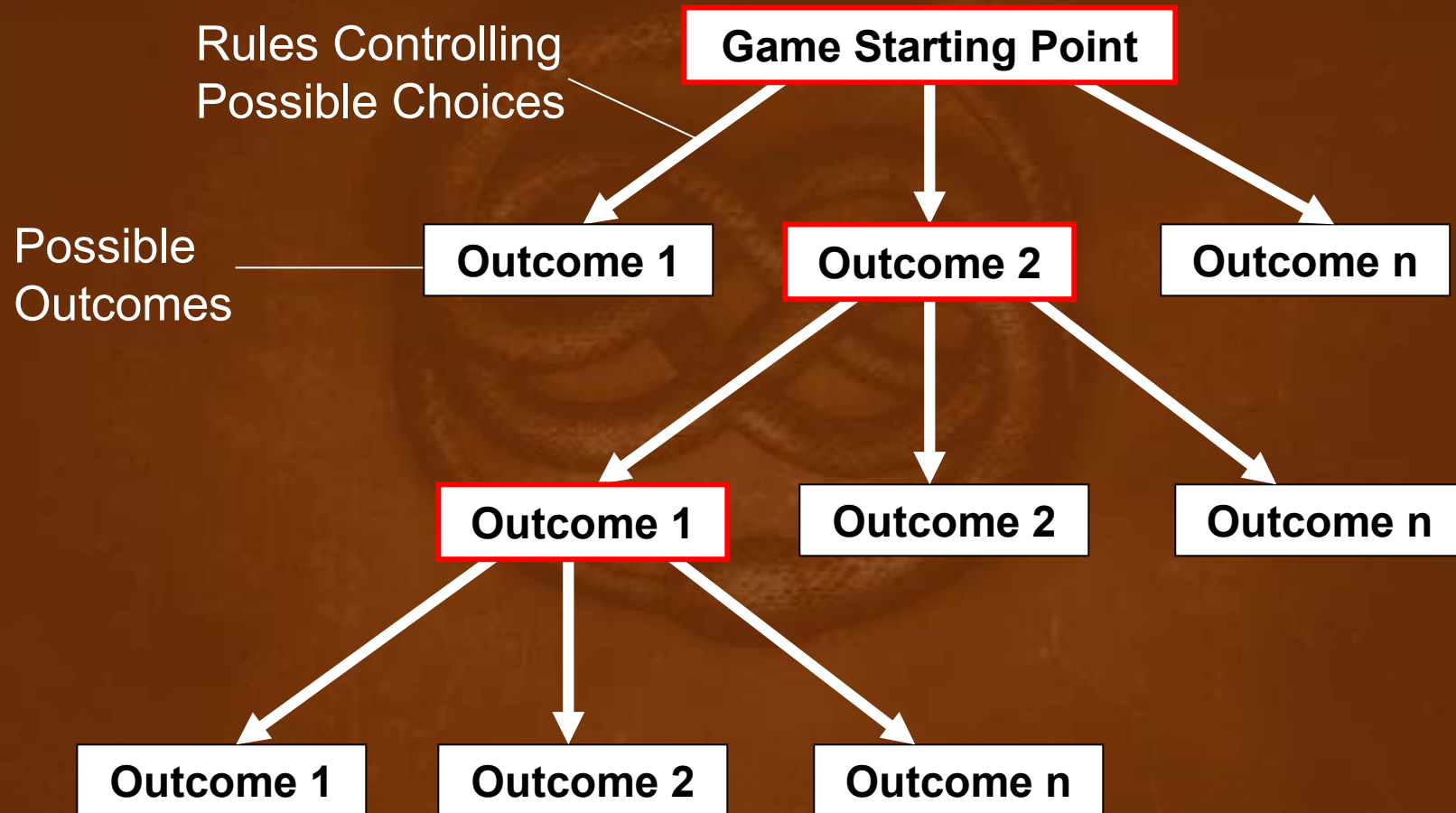


The slides from my lecture “The power of Stories” can be accessed at <http://www.mythicalcreature.net/>, in the Downloads Section

And now... on to Games

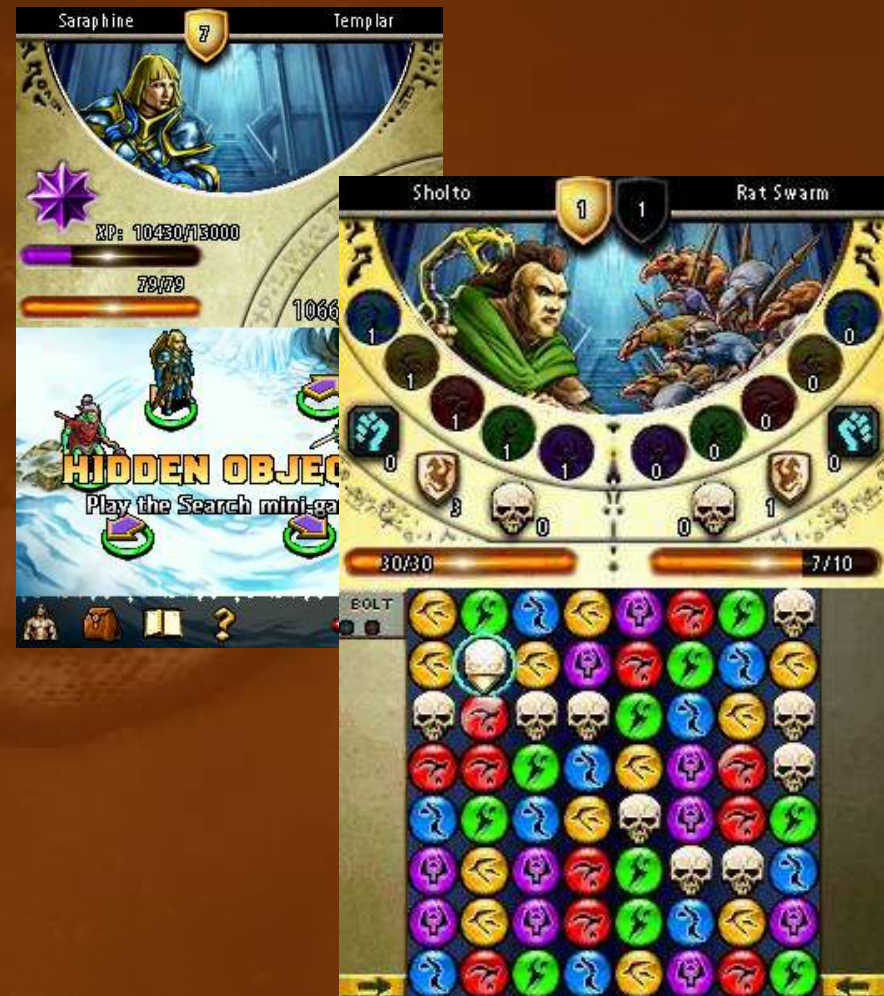


101: Games Structure



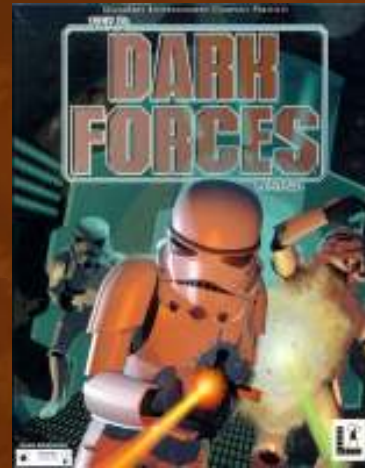
101: Games Structure

- Computers provide the rule structure that control the number of options, allowing for more complex rules.
- For more complex games and rule sets the number of options can increase exponentially.
- There are limits (finance, time, number of staff etc) on a designers ability to cater for all the possible eventualities, this means that, in computer games, the rules are often designed to limit the number of options a player can have.

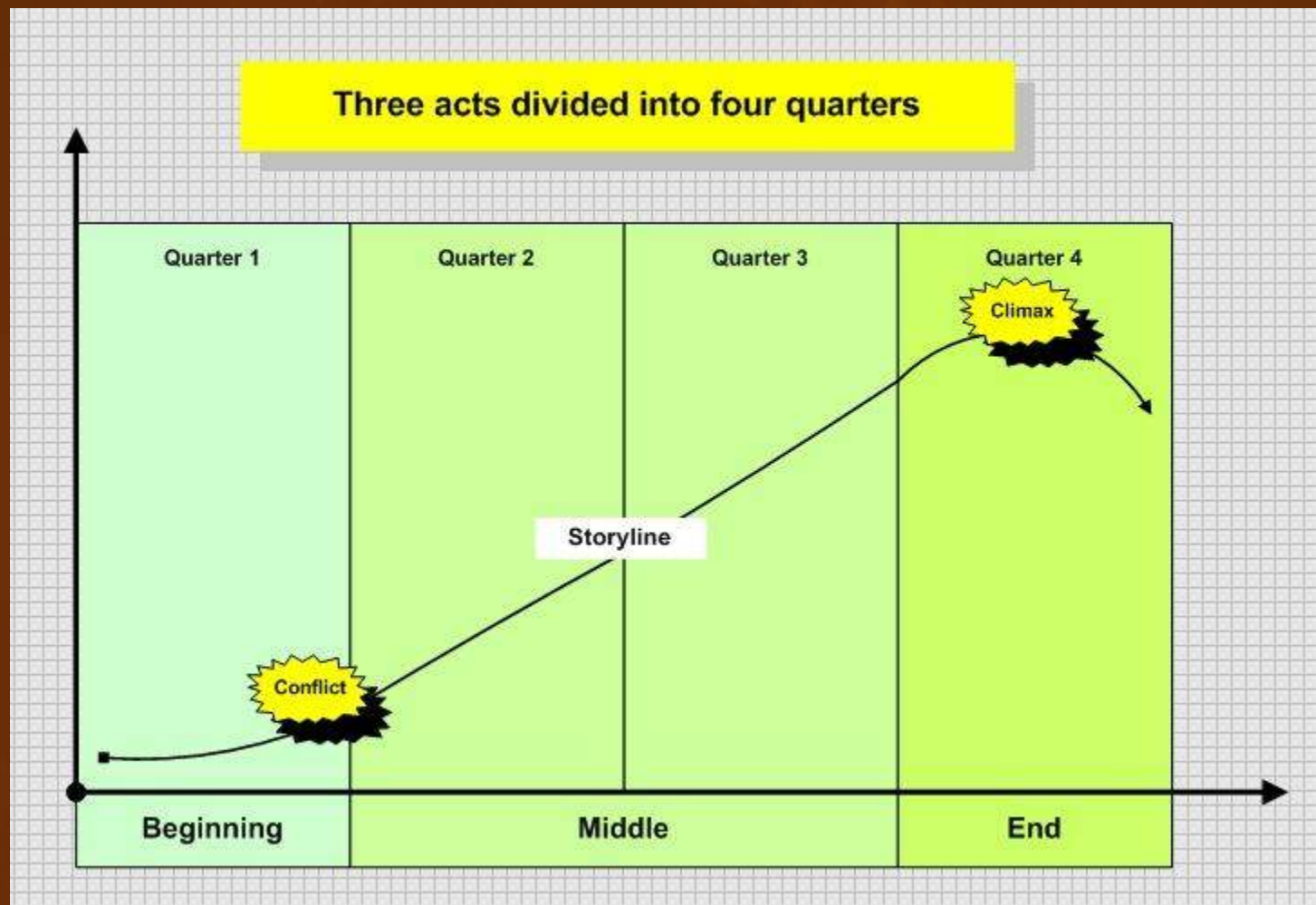


Story in Games: Traditional

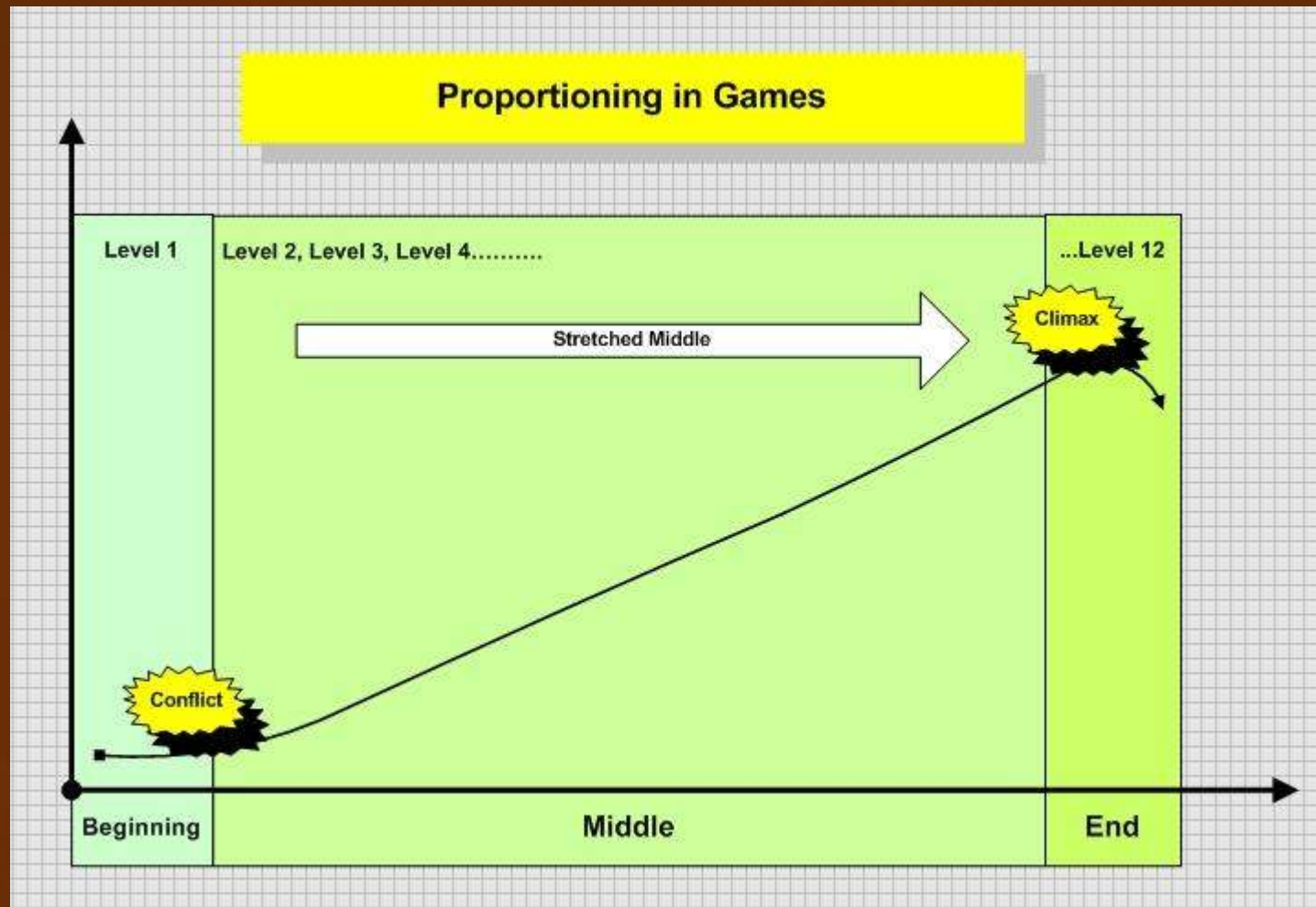
- The push to develop story in games has a long history from the early text based games to the plethora of modern games and game types.
- A game's main story line serves as the lynch-pin for the game, controlling the number of possible outcomes by restraining the player to a linear story line
- Most common story based games are RPGs (Role Playing Game), though many FPSs (First Person Shooter) and RTSs (Real Time Strategy) use a linear story technique, particularly in single player modes.



The Three Act Story



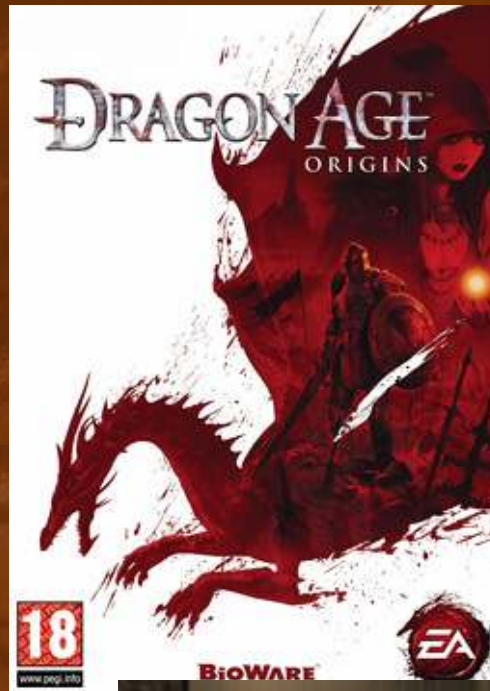
The Three Act Story



Story in Games: Different Styles of Story



- Sand-box/Exploratory worlds
- MMO Games (Massively Multiplayer Online)
- Parallel storylines (RPGs)
- World Building



Narrative



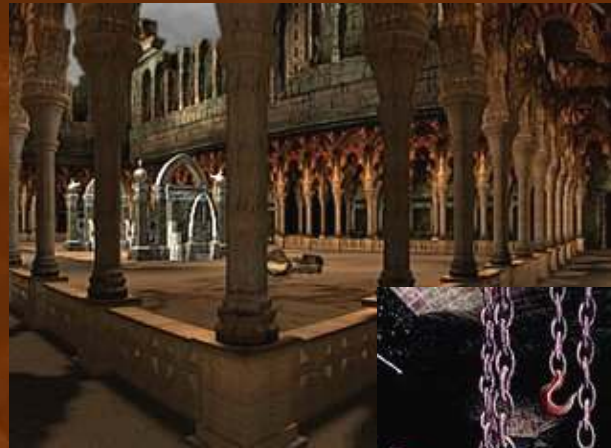
What is Narrative?

- “A set of events, within a linguistic framework, that involves a character or set of characters and their relationships.”
- In games the term actor may be better than character as actors are the instigators of events.



Why Narrative not Story

- Games are meant to be played
- Stories are generally told
- Narratives lean towards being thought of as expressed, shown, told and explored.
- The way designers approach the various aspects of a game's development is vital to the game's eventual form



Narrative in Games: Creating Fictional Worlds



“Tolkien's references to places, people, events (often of long ago) that are not part of the immediate story: these give the reader a conviction of the reality of the immediate scene — because it is shown to be part of a much greater landscape, a long history, a whole world of which it is only a glimpse.”

Ursula K. LeGuin, *Plausibility in Fantasy*

Game Narrative: Show don't tell

- Game play
- Graphics: 2D or 3D e.g. textures, models, colours, bump maps, particle effects: the total visual style.
- Sound effects, music and voice
- Character dialogue, quest documentation, supporting documentation: in-game books, notes etc
- Character behavior: AI and game logic
- HUD (Heads up Display) & Menus
- And much much more.....

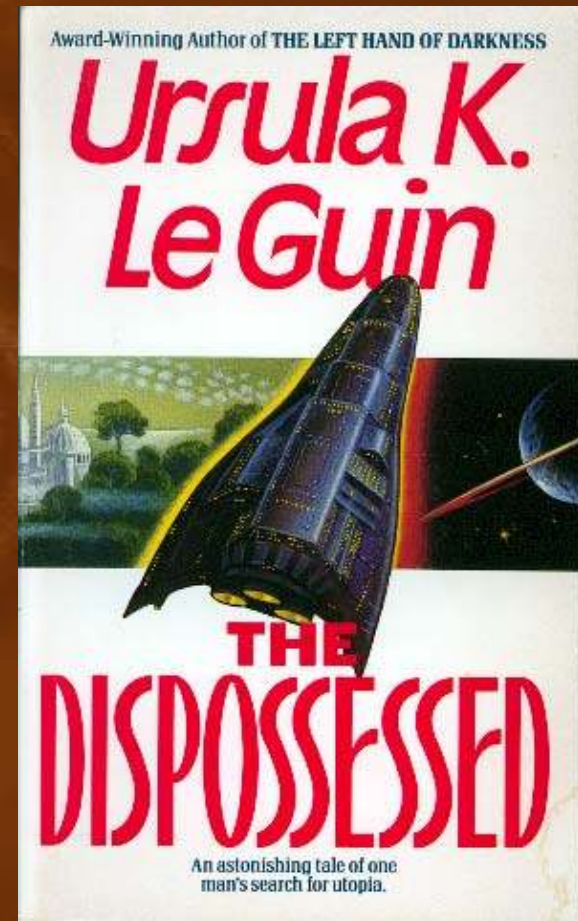


Expanding Narrative: Creating Fictional Worlds

- A world in which the player plays
- Allowing the player to create their own meta-narratives
- What does that mean for the traditional role of stories?
- Is there a way to combine the interactive narrative world with the purposeful exploration of meaning?

Expanding Narrative: Creating Fictional Worlds

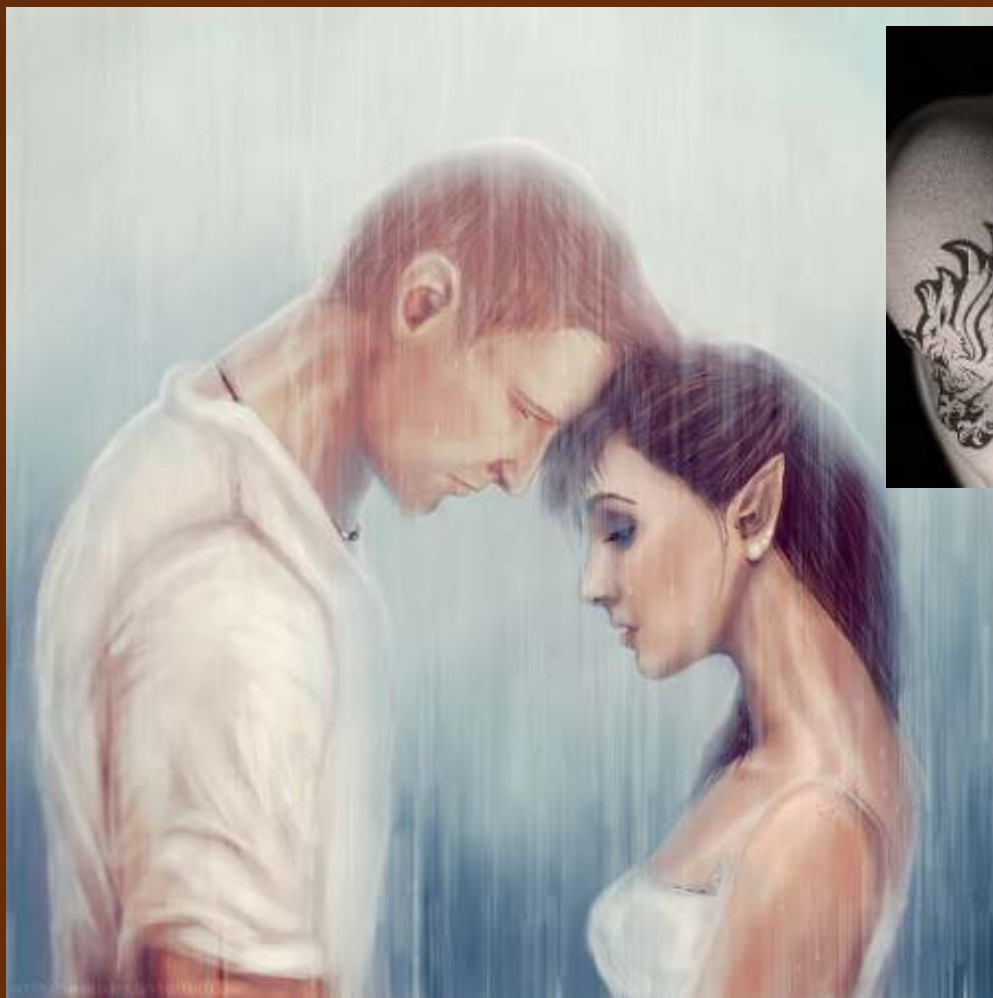
- Other cultures are challenging they show another way of viewing and engaging with the world.
- Archetypal worlds, worlds that explore the embodiment of concepts e.g. anarchism, religious extremism, Love, capitalism, socialism etc.
- Ursula LeGuin, *The Dispossessed*
- Jacqueline Carey, *Kushiel's Legacy Series*



AI and the Evolution of Narrative

- Currently much of the limitations on true interactive narratives are created by the current limits of AI.
- A true interactive narrative would evolve and grow changing with the players actions, and inactions.
- However how far should we go with this, do players play some types of games because they have a certain amount of linear story?
- With a true interactive narrative world the risk of addiction and damaging escapism is high, does the developer have any responsibilities in this?

Intense Emotional Engagement: Alistair an the romantic ideal



A Fictional World...

- Here is a bit of an exercise let's start planning a game. It will be an RPG style game for Play Station 3, the theme is "the end of the world as we know it". Remember to think about:
 - Game play, audience
 - Platform
 - Graphic style, textures and visual themes
 - HUD & Menus
 - Music, sound effects and voice etc...

The Guild - Do You Wanna Date My Avatar



Ynll

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urNyg1ftMIU>