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Jenkins' Gameplay Spaces

- Enacted Narrative
- Embedded Narrative
- Both taken to the extreme

Story vs. Narrative

Story – A series of events as seen from the author's perspective

Narrative – personal experiences surrounding such occurrences (whether author's, character's, player's, or someone else's)

Train going through a tunnel as opposed to Train in the open

Theater Feature in Halo 3 – demonstrates
inherent difference between the two



Co-Authorship in Games

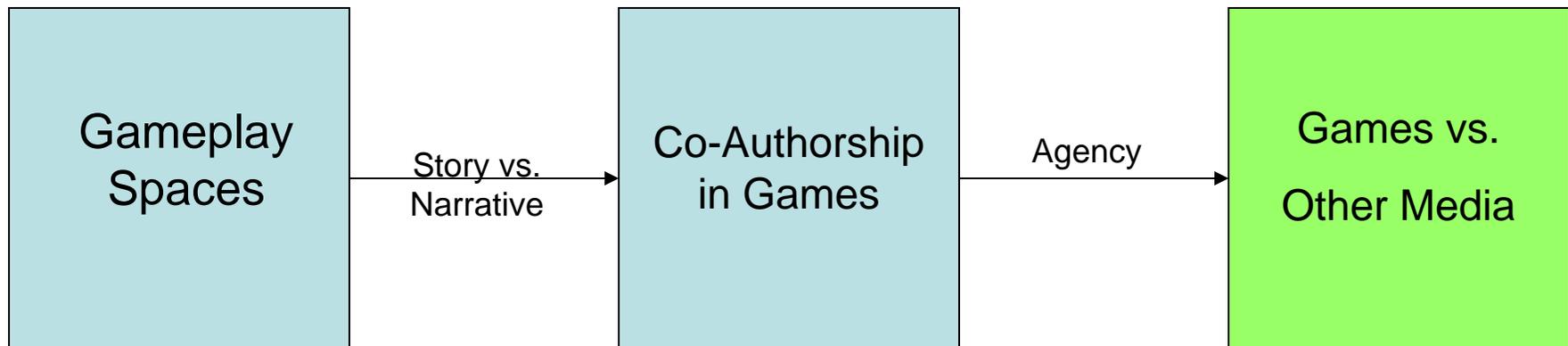
- Game Designers create gameplay spaces – as described earlier
- Player has flexibility to finish story by choosing single path within many available
- Gravity Gun

Agency in Linear FPS

- Agency – Power to accomplish expected result with given action
 - Not necessarily ability to alter grand scheme/direction of game
- Linear plot progression
 - Player somewhat limited by designer's plot (more formal constraints)
 - Alignment of player desire and narrative limits required
- In a game with a linear plot, player agency becomes a short term version with an emphasis on material constraints.
 - Short term – actions have immediate effects
 - Material Constraints – determine what actions are possible

Replayability of Games

- Mateas and Stern – agency cannot be achieved when watching/playing a game for the second time (unrealistic formal constraints)
- In terms of player's narrative, it is nearly impossible to play the same game twice. Games with branching plots present so many different possibilities that they constitute separate games. I will try to apply Mateas and Stern to a linear FPS.
- Agency – more fully achieved on the second playthrough
 - Better understanding of material constraints (abilities and puzzles)
 - Formal Constraints – not a major factor for agency in this case



Games vs. Other Media

Importance of the player is paramount. This motivation distinguishes games. At every step of the game, the player is involved, whether consciously or not.

- Design – Player agency as driving factor
- Story – Player dictates as much as writer
- Success – Players choose to buy or not (Steam)
- Game itself – by definition, player’s motivations for playing determine if the game is actually a game

Conclusion

- Games in the *Half-Life* Series provide model examples of Jenkins' embedded and enacted narratives.
- The difference between story in other media and narrative in games gives players the flexibility to co-author the game along with the designers.
- As a result, agency in *Half-Life* and other linear games is achieved in the short term with an emphasis on material constraints.
- The importance of co-authorship and agency in game design underscores the fundamental importance of the player to games themselves.