

Abstract

THESIS: The Game's Afoot: Ludonarrativity and Player Agency in Science Fiction Crime Games

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When it comes to interactivity, detective plots in video games encounter an interesting barrier: the game must guide the player to a predetermined solution, since the narrative can't continue without some sort of conclusion, but limit the player's access to information to keep them in suspense. This study analyzes the intersection of story, setting, and gameplay: how do games use the reconstruction of a crime as a functioning, player-controlled narrative? How does the science fiction setting allow designers to use more interactive gameplay techniques? This study focuses on the analysis of narrative and gameplay techniques in *Trauma Team* (2010) and *Detroit: Become Human* (2018), specifically how the crossover of genres impacts a player's ability to control the narrative rather than follow the typical linear problem-solving process of crime games. Using literary theory, flowcharts, and coding techniques as a basis for analysis, this paper examines a way to map narrative theory to gameplay techniques in crime games. Overall, analyzing these narrative nudging techniques will help designers better understand how to combine narratology and interactive story-building to design games that make players feel more in control of reconstructing narratives.

Keywords: crime fiction, detective games, narratology, problem solving, puzzle, science fiction, storytelling, video games