WOULD YOU KINDLY PRESENT THE GAME? ANALYZING NARRATORS AND MONSTRATORS IN VIDEO GAMES*

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Abstract

This article examines the use and classification of narrators and monstrators in video games. It explores the utilization of narrators and monstrators, their characteristics and classification, and their application in video games. The research framework, which draws upon narratology and cinema studies, served as a foundation for the subsequent analysis of *Baldur's Gate 3, Slay the Princess,* and *The Bard's Tale* games. This analysis employed a close reading technique, which entailed playing or watching gameplay videos. The study resulted in the categorisation of narrators and monstrators in video games and an in-depth examination of their use in video games. The article proposes a novel perspective on narrators and monstrators in game studies, while concurrently furnishing a framework for the classification of these elements.

Keywords: game studies, monstrator, narratology, narrator, video games.

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BANA OYUNU SUNAR MISIN?
VİDEO OYUNLARINDA ANLATICILARIN VE
MONSTRATORLARIN ANALİZİ*

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Öz

Bu makale video oyunlarında anlatıcı ve monstratorlerin kullanımını ve bu unsurların sınıflandırılmasını incelemektedir. Bu makalede anlatıcı ve monstratorlerden nasıl yararlanıldığı, bu unsurların özellikleri ve sınıflandırılması ve bu unsurların video oyunlarında nasıl kullanıldığı ele alınmaktadır. Araştırma kapsamında öncelikle anlatıbilim ve sinema çalışmaları temel alınarak bir çerçeve oluşturulmuştur. Çerçeve oluşturulduktan sonra *Baldur's Gate 3, Slay the Princess* ve *The Bard's Tale* oyunları oynanarak veya oynanış videoları izlenerek yakın okuma tekniğiyle incelenmiş ve analiz edilmiştir. Bu araştırmayla video oyunlarındaki anlatıcı ve monstratorler sınıflandırılmış ve bu unsurların video oyunlarındaki kullanımları incelenmiştir. Makale, oyun çalışmalarında anlatıcılar ve monstratorler hakkında yeni bir bakış açısı sunmakla kalmayıp aynı zamanda bu unsurların sınıflandırılmasında kullanılacak bir çerçeve de ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: anlatıcı, anlatıbilim, monstrator, oyun çalışmaları, video oyunları.

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Introduction

Since the dawn of humanity, narrating has persisted in its significance and manifested itself in a variety of mediums. One of the most recent of these mediums is video games. From *Donkey Kong* (Nintendo, 1981) – widely regarded to be the first video game to include a narrative on screen (Stone, 2019) – to *Red Dead Redemption II* (Rockstar Games, 2018), the video game medium has implemented diverse techniques in the creation and delivery of narratives. These techniques include the use of narrators and monstrators to create engaging and immersive narrative and gameplay experiences for players.

The question of "Who speaks in a film? Who tells the story? In the cinema, this problem, however little it has been closely examined, soon opened a whole new set of questions" (Gaudreault, 2009, p. 81) from François Jost, this can be raised this time for the video games. While the field of cinema studies has engaged with the interplay between narrative (the act of telling) and monstration (the act of showing), game studies have not shown a similar level of interest in this issue. This article aims to provide an answer to the following question: How do narrators (entities that 'tell') and monstrators (entities that 'show') function in video games, and what framework can classify their distinct types? Asking this question, the objective is to make a comprehensive examination of this issue in game studies.

Research on narrators in video games has predominantly centered on unreliable narrators and the utilisation of narrators. Notable works in this area include Curie Roe and Alex Mitchell's 2019 article, *Is this really happening? Game mechanics as unreliable narrators* and Ömer Can Saroğlu's master's thesis, *Unreliable Narrators in Video Games*. Andrew Kania's *Why Gamers Are Not Narrators* is an examination of narrators in video games, assessing whether the players function as narrators or not. He arrives at the conclusion that players of video games, while co-authoring the narratives of their playthroughs through interactive engagement, do not thereby assume the role of narrators of those very stories (Kania, 2018, p. 142).

Picucci (2014, p. 102) posits that the game designers function as the game's narrator, meticulously interweaving the narrative threads and the sequence of events within the overarching fabric of the game world. In his book *Video Game Narrative and Criticism: Playing the Story*, Tamer Thabet also discusses the role of the narrator in video games. Thabet's game composition device (GDC) serves as the primary mechanism for the creation and management of the fictional world within the game. The program code is responsible for maintaining the configuration of both representational visual and audio elements, as well as those that facilitate player interaction within the game environment (Thabet, 2015, p. 7). The GDC can be conceptualised as a structural framework encompassing all the agents of storytelling, like narrators and monstrators, within a game.

In a manner akin to Thabet's GDC, Roe and Mitchell (2019, p. 3) explained

the 'Game Narrator' as the entity accountable for the visual, auditory, and interactive facets of a game that partake in the act of narration. Roe and Mitchell's (2019, p. 3) 'Game Narrator' can be regarded as an entity responsible for facilitating communication between the player and the game, like the GDC.

Despite the abundance of studies that have examined narrators in video games, a lack of research exists on monstrators in video games.

The research design of this article consists of, after playing or watching video games, the narrators and monstrators and their use in these video games are analyzed using the close reading technique. Close reading is a method based on the detailed examination, deconstruction, and analysis of a media text (Bizzocchi & Tanenbaum, 2011, p. 289). A framework is then developed, incorporating the notes taken during this process. After the development of the framework, *Baldur's Gate 3*, *Slay the Princess,* and *The Bard's Tale* are played and analysed using the close reading technique.

This study is limited to single-player video games with overarching stories. It is acknowledged that multiplayer or virtual reality (VR) video games may contain a variety of monstrators and narrators not encompassed by the scope of this study. In addition, the framework developed in this study can be upgraded in the future for a variety of reasons, including the other and new genres and platforms, such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), as well as the production of new narratives and gameplay mechanics.

Regarding the analysis of the games, it is not possible to fully analyse the narrators and especially the monstrators within a game. Consequently, it is plausible that there exist additional examples of narrators and monstrators in the analysed video games that have not been incorporated into this article.

Concepts of Narrator, and Monstrator

Concept of narrator

Narration is defined as the act of telling a story, which can be achieved through various means, including language, image, or performance. This concept is fundamental to narratology, which is defined as the study of narrative structures and their functions in various forms of expression, including literature, film, and everyday communication. As Monika Fludernik (2009, p. 1) states, "Narrative is all around us, not just in the novel or in historical writing. Narrative is associated above all with the act of narration and is to be found wherever someone tells us about something." Similarly, Prince (2003, p. 58) defines narration as both "a discourse representing one or more events" and "the production of a narrative; the recounting of a series of situations and events."

Oxford A Dictionary of Media and Communication defines narrator as a person telling a story (fiction or non-fiction) overtly or covertly (Chandler &

Munday, 2011, p. 713). Although this definition is clearly oriented towards the individual, it is also possible to consider the narrator as an entity in itself. According to traditional narrative theory, the presence of a narrator is an indispensable element of any text. However, alternative perspectives posit that the presence of a narrator is not a fundamental part of all texts (Dervişcemaloğlu, 2022, p. 8).

Concept of monstrator

The term 'monstration' is derived from the French word 'monstration', which means 'to show.' André Gaudreault, who has explored the term within his own works (2009, p. 69), defines monstration as a method of conveying or showing a narrative through the presentation of enacted actions, thereby enabling agents to comprehend the story.

In the words of Gaudreault (2009, p. 72), the monstrator is the agent responsible for modulating the various manifestations of what is commonly referred to as 'theatrical language'. This encompasses several different elements, including set design, lighting, and acting, amongst others. According to the provided definition, 'monstrator' in the context of video games is defined as the agent responsible for demonstrating elements such as visual, sensual, auditory, or interactive.

The Framework

Narrators as Agents of Storytelling in Video Games

Narrator types by participation

Character narrators

Character narrators are in-game characters (NPCs or protagonists) who narrate events or deliver the story through dialogue or in-world interactions. They are diegetic, limited by their knowledge and role in the game world. For instance, the story in *The Last Guardian* (Japan Studio & GenDesign, 2016) is told by the adult version of the protagonist, who recollects his adventure with *Trico* when he was a child. An additional illustration of this phenomenon can be found within *Dragon Age: Origins*. Within the game, there are instances where the characters -like *Morrigan*, *Alistair*, and *Wynne*-s hare stories about their lives and their thoughts with the player's avatar in the camp or in the world *(Figure 1)*.

Figure 1. Camp dialogue with Alistair in Dragon Age: Origins (Lady Ginnie, 2014)

Classic narrators

The classic narrator is characterised by its external position within the game world, providing commentary, explanations, or overarching information about the narrative. Also, this type of extradiegetic narrator typically possesses a broader narrative authority or a distinct storytelling style. When considering classic narrators in the context of video games, examples include narrators found in *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice* (Ninja Theory, 2017), *Firewatch* (Campo Santo, 2016), *Ōkami* (Clover Studio, 2006), and *Fable* (Lionhead Studios, 2004). Additionally, the classic narrator has also been observed in the *Fire Emblem* (Intelligent Systems) series *(Figure 2)* and *Dragon Age: Origins* (BioWare, 2009), in which ending cards (epilogues) seen after the game ends reveal the fate of characters or the world.

Figure 2. An ending card about player's character in Fire Emblem: New Mystery of the Emblem (Screenshot is taken by the authors)


Hybrid narrators

The hybrid narrator functions both within the diegesis (as a character or element in the story world) and outside of the diegesis (commenting and narrating from a perspective that deviates from the internal logic of the game). A prime example of this phenomenon is the character Bard Dandelion in *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (CD Projekt Red, 2015). Although he is an NPC (non-playable character) in the game, he also functions as a narrator, explaining the events taking place during the game in the non-playable sections such as loading screens. Another example of a hybrid narrator is found in a character named Varric in *Dragon Age II* (BioWare, 2011). Aside from being a playable character in the game, he also serves as the narrator, recounting the events to a character named *Seeker*.

Narrator type by method

Medium-based narrator

This type of narrator employs written, audio, visual, and hybrid in-game artifacts or objects such as diaries, letters, videos, holograms, voice recordings, and the music as the medium through which narrative content is conveyed. Examples include the diaries of *Arthur Morgan (Figure 3)* from *Red Dead Redemption II* (Rockstar Games, 2018), *Ellie* from *The Last of Us: Part II* (Naughty Dog, 2020), radio messages in *Bioshock* (Irrational Games) games, collectibles like research & records in *Control* (Remedy Entertainment, 2019), and cutscenes in any video game.

Figure 3. Two pages from Arthur Morgan's diary in Red Dead Redemption II (Teuton, 2020)
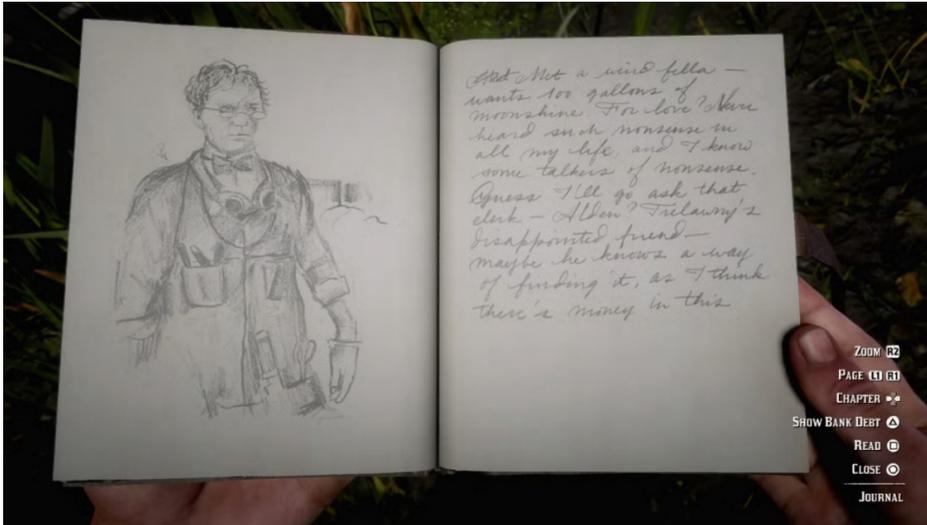
Narrator types by reliability

Reliable narrator

Quoting Booth, a narrator is considered reliable when it speaks in alignment with the established norms of the work (1983, p. 158). For instance, *Kratos* and *Atreus* in the post-2018 *God of War* games (Santa Monica Studio) can be regarded as reliable narrators. This is due to the congruence between the events depicted in the game and the content of their journal.

Unreliable narrator

According to Booth (1983, p. 158), the concept of an 'unreliable narrator' is defined as the narrator who does not speak for or act in accordance with the norms of the work. Video games like *Stanley Parable* (Galactic Café, 2011), *Doki Doki Literature Club* (Team Salvato, 2017), and *Tales from the Borderlands Episode 1* (Telltale Games & Gearbox Software, 2014) are the most known examples of unreliable narrators in video games (Saroğlu, 2023, p. 11-12). In *Doki Doki Literature Club*, *Mitchell* and *Roe* identify *Monika*'s unnatural awareness of the game medium as the most salient indicator of unreliability (2019, p. 10).

Monstrator as Agents of Showing in Video Games

Visual monstrators

Spatial monstrators

Dubbelman asserts that, in contradistinction to cutscenes or scripts, environmental storytelling is contingent upon player interaction. For instance, when a player navigates through a virtual environment, the physical characteristics of the environment can serve to inform the player about the setting, the characters, and the conflict within the game (2016, p. 41). The spatial monstrator is the agent that provides what *Dubbelman* mentioned above by leveraging the layout and design of the game environment to enact the story and gameplay.

Spatial monstrators are widely used in video games. It can be said that many video games make use of this monstrator, albeit in different forms. For instance, the presence of ruined buildings *(Figure 4)* in *Horizon Zero Dawn* (Guerrilla Games, 2017) provides the player with a narrative representation of the game's story. Some video games, such as *Journey* (Thatgamecompany, 2012) and *Gris* (Nomada Studio, 2018), exclusively use spatial monstrator to tell their story.

Figure 4. Devil's Grief in Horizon Zero Dawn ('Devil's Grief', 2025)

User interface (UI) monstrators

These elements constitute the visual components of the game's user interface, the purpose of which is to present information to the player, typically in a manner that is not directly integrated into the game's diegetic world. Examples of such elements include HUDs (heads-up displays), menus, mission markers, maps and, as is often the case in FPS (first-person shooter) games, red lines, or blood stains on the screen to indicate that a character has been injured *(Figure 5)*.

Figure 5. Red lines on screen indicate low health in Final Fantasy XVI (Screenshot is taken by the authors)

Cinematic monstrators

This monstrator uses techniques like camera angles, framing, movement, lighting, and costumes to establish mood, tension, and narrative progression. Besides, they can be utilized for gameplay requirements such as making the execution of specific actions simpler. For example, in *Ōkami* (Clover Studio, 2006), the camera angle dynamically changes depending on the character's current position, thereby making navigation and playing easier *(Figure 6)*. This dynamic adaptation of the camera angle is also observed in other games such as *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune* (Naughty Dog, 2007); the camera angle occasionally changes to direct the player towards a specific destination or to provide an overview of the surroundings.

Figure 6. Changing the camera angle according to surroundings in Ōkami (Screenshot is taken by the authors)

Symbolic monstrators

This type of monstrators focuses on the presentation and enactment of the game world or narrative elements through symbols, signs, or other methods. For instance, in *Life is Strange* (Square Enix, 2015), the themes in *Mark Jefferson*'s photography center on the themes of dominance and sexuality of youth. This may be seen as an indication of him killing the young girls after drugging and photographing them. Another example of this can be found in *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* (Nintendo, 2017). Within the game, there is a flower named "Silent Princess," which is believed to serve as a symbol for the main character, Link, due to him being silent, and for *Princess Zelda*, given her status as a princess by the fans. However, for these symbols to have a meaning, it is crucial that the players establish a connection between the symbol (sign) and the meaning it points to (Fernández-Vara, 2011, p. 5). Furthermore, this monstrator has higher degrees of subjectivity, which can result in different interpretations of the symbolism inherent in any game, given its subjective nature.

Mechanical monstrators

Järvinen's definition of mechanics is as follows: "the means to guide the player into particular behaviors by constraining the space of possible plans to attain goals" (2008, p. 254). Sicart states that "game mechanics are methods [behaviors] invoked by the agents, designed for interaction with the game

state" (2008).

Mechanical monstrators are mechanisms or game design elements that illustrate the full range of actions or interactions that are possible within the game world. They serve to guide players to the full extent of their capabilities and the limitations to which they must adhere. For example, in many video games, it is not possible to fast travel or rest when enemies are nearby *(Figure 7)* or harm children. Tutorials serve as exemplars of mechanical monstrators, illustrating both the potential for player action and the constraints on those actions, whether directly or indirectly, to players.

Figure 7. Disabled fast travel in The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim (Waifu Simulator 27, 2018)
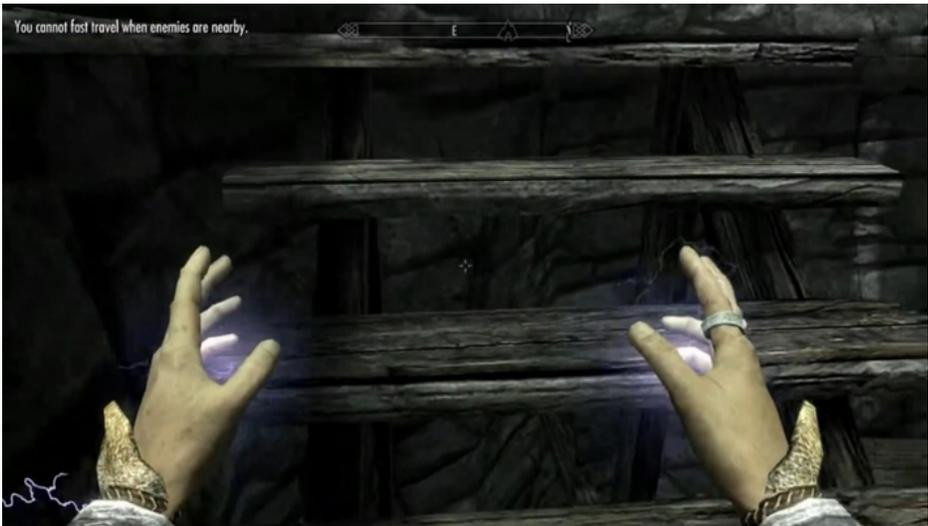
Sensory monstrators

Haptic monstrators

Feedback through vibrations or physical sensations in the controller or other devices like Razer's *Freyja* haptic gaming cushion that provides narrative or gameplay feedback are all examples of haptic monstrators. For example, haptic feedback technology found in *Sony*'s *DualSense* 5 controller enables the player to feel a range of distinct sensations. These sensations can include the sensation of driving a car on a gravel road and the tightness of the trigger when drawing a bowstring as seen in *Horizon Forbidden West* (Guerrilla Games, 2022). This is achieved through adaptive trigger technology that mimics the sensations by increasing the resistance of the trigger pull. Additionally, players playing *Red Dead Redemption II* (Rockstar Games, 2018) with a game controller can feel heartbeat-like vibrations when *Arthur Morgan* gets close to his

former love *Mary Linton*.

Auditory monstrators

Auditory monstrators include communication through ambient sounds, voice, soundtracks, and in-game effects that guide players' perception and mood. For example, in *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* (Nintendo, 1998), players can hear a variety of different sounds, like the game's soundtrack and sound effects, which change based on factors like location, time of day, current activity, and health status. Additionally, in many of *The Legend of Zelda* games, sound effects indicate the successful completion of a puzzle. As a further illustration, during moments of lower tension during the story within *The Last of Us: Part I* (Naughty Dog, 2013), the mood is conveyed through the utilization of sound effects that possess a positive tone. Some examples of this include birds chirping, a gentle wind, and the rustling of vegetation (Solarski, 2017, p. 89).

Analysis of Games: 'Baldur's Gate 3'

Analysis of narrators

Narrator types by participation

Baldur's Gate 3 uses a classic narrator, heavily drawing considerable inspiration from Dungeon Masters (DM) of *Dungeons & Dragons*. The narrator will describe locations, characters, environment, and items; voice the player characters and companion's thoughts and feelings *(Figure 8);* recount the player character's actions and observations; and recount the results of various skill checks (e.g., persuasion, perception, wisdom) and combat rolls. Additionally, the narrator will provide context to non-player character interactions by describing tone and body language.

Figure 8. The narrator describes what the player character sees (The Game Archivist, 2023)


Examples of character narrators also can be found. In the game, there are times when the characters share their life stories and thoughts with the player's character in the camp or in the world.

Narrator type by method

Items like books, notes, and letters are used to convey narrative and information *(Figure 9)*.

Figure 9. A letter from Baldur's Gate 3 (The Game Archivist, 2023)
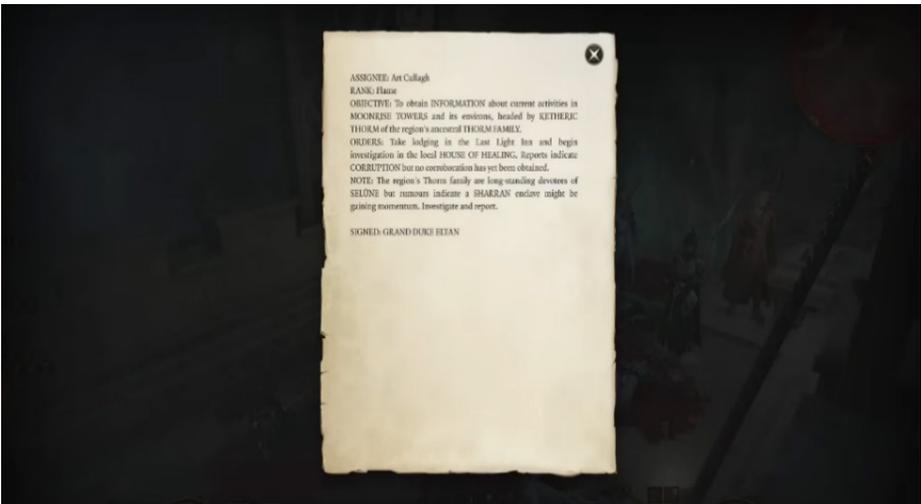
Narrator types by reliability

The Dream Guardian/the Emperor is, at first, portrayed as a benevolent guardian uttering phrases such as "I'm on your side. I have been since the very beginning." However, later revelations, including its connections to the Absolute, indicate that its motivations extend beyond the mere protection of the player character. Consequently, this casts doubt on its reliability and credibility, thereby making it an unreliable narrator. Meanwhile, the game's default narrator can be considered a reliable narrator because their narration follows the game's established logic and describes events, environments, and mechanics objectively.

Analysis of monstrators

Visual monstrators

Baldur's Gate 3 employs spatial monstrators to leverage the environment's design, layout, and details to convey narrative and gameplay information. For instance, the *Ruined Battlefield* and *Reithwin Town's* ruins in *Shadow-Cursed Lands* offer a glimpse into the region's past with past battles.

Like many other video games, *Baldur's Gate 3* utilizes user interface monstrators extensively for elements such as maps, menus, and the action bar (hotbar). The game will modify its viewing angles according to player actions to provide examples of cinematic monstrators. For instance, during pivotal conversations or cutscenes, the game will transition from a top-down view to a close-up, third-person perspective.

Symbolic monstrator

According to Kat Clay, the theme of freedom from tyranny is illustrated by a variety of elements, including major character arcs and NPC dialogues (2023).

Mechanical monstrator

Dice rolling and dialogue choices are notable examples of mechanical monstrators in *Baldur's Gate 3*. Dialogue choices not only show the range of narrative paths a player can take but also demonstrate the player's agency within the story. Conversely, dice rolling *(Figure 10)* determines the outcomes of various actions, such as combat maneuvers, skill checks, and dialogue-based persuasion attempts, thereby introducing an element of chance to the game.

Figure 10. Dice rolling (The Game Archivist, 2023)

Sensory monstrators

Baldur's Gate 3 uses both types of sensory monstrators. An example of a haptic monstrator in *Baldur's Gate 3* can be seen when using the *Sony DualSense* controller, where pulling the trigger lightly will show a glimpse of the radial menu, while a hard press past the point of resistance will lock it. Examples of auditory monstrators include voice acting, the sound of an item being taken from the environment, and the use of music.

Analysis of Games: Slay the Princess

Analysis of narrators

Narrator types by participation

The narrator is classified as a hybrid narrator because he interacts with the player and talks outside the diegesis. Additionally, there are instances in which an alternative narrator is presented *(Figure 11),* indicating the presence of a classic narrator within the game. While the player's voices, such as the voice of the hero, the voice of the smitten, and others, do not qualify as "characters" in a standard sense, they do represent distinctive personality traits or emotions. In this regard, they can be classified as character narrators.

Figure 11. An example of a classic narrator in the game (Screenshot is taken by the authors)
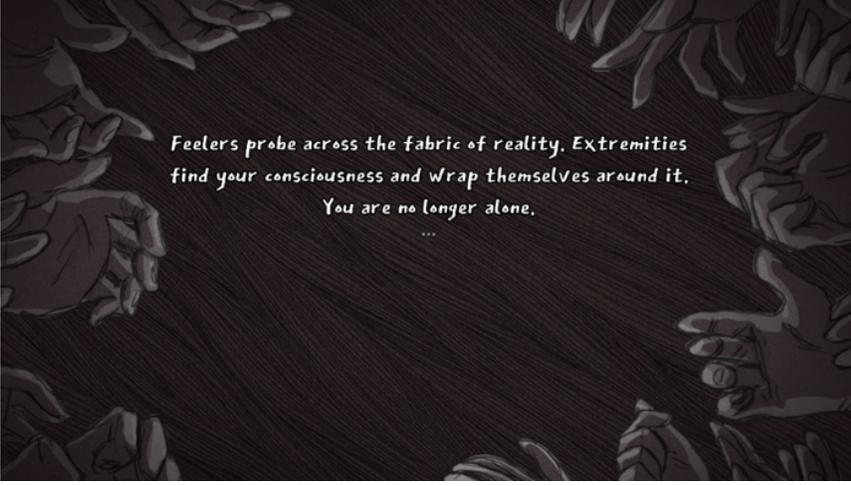

Narrator type by method

The game does employ narrators through a variety of media, including diaries, letters, videos, holograms, or voice recordings.

Narrator types by reliability

The narrator in *Slay the Princess* can be classified as an unreliable narrator due to the presentation of conflicting information and motives to the player (Pass, n.d.) *(Figure 12)*. Despite his attempts to establish his reliability by asserting, "I have a duty to report facts as facts, and the fact is that you dropped the blade" certain voices of the player, notably the voice of the smitten, remain unconvinced. Even though the narrator is an unreliable narrator, it is nonetheless possible to regard him as a reliable narrator as well, on the grounds that he does in fact furnish reliable information.

Figure 12. The narrator asserts the absence of a mirror, despite the presence of one on the wall (Screenshot is taken by the authors)
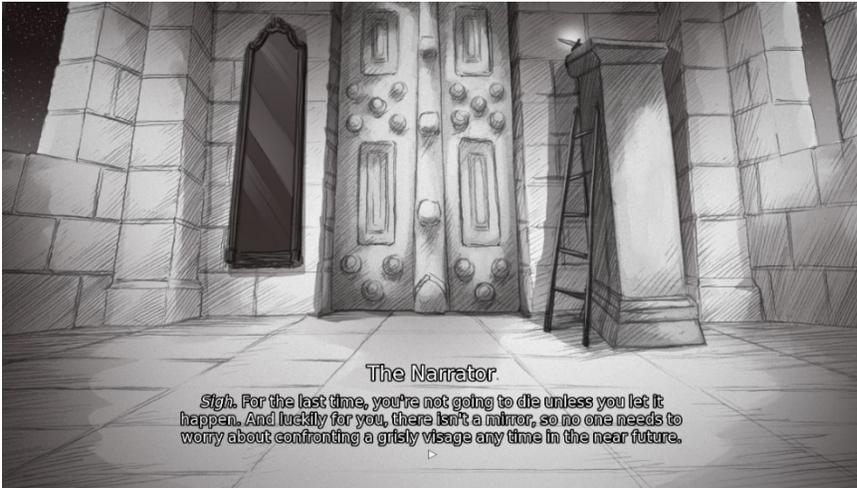
Analysis of monstrators

Visual monstrators

User interface (UI) monstrator is manifested in elements such as fonts, text boldness, text colors, and cursor icons *(Figure 13)*. These elements undergo changes in accordance with gameplay and current narrative progression. The use of spatial monstrators has been observed in various settings, such as the cabin, the basement, and abstract spaces. These places contribute to the pervasive atmosphere of the game's narrative, which is characterised by its eerie and unsettling themes. The low-angle framing of the princess in the tower version serves to accentuate her imposing presence and power. This is an example of a cinematic monstrator *(Figure 13)*.

Figure 13. An example of changing the text color, font and use of low angle in the game (Screenshot is taken by the authors)

Symbolic monstrator

It can be posited that the princess in this game functions as a counterpoint to the archetypal fairytale princess. The narrator repeatedly asserts that the princess is malevolent, and the primary character is instructed not to rescue her but to slay her (hence the title of the game). Additionally, the variety of outcomes serves as a reflection of the game's underlying symbolism. Within the context of the game, there is no singular 'truth' or 'right' choice.

Mechanical monstrator

The employment of branching narratives with dialogue choices functions as mechanical monstrators by constraining and revealing possibilities. For instance, the player's inability to escape the narrative loop until they make specific choices demonstrates how mechanics 'show' the futility of defying the game's core premise.

Sensory monstrators

Despite the absence of haptic monstrators in the game, auditory monstrators like soundtracks, sound effects, and voice acting are utilized.

Analysis of Games: 'The Bard's Tale'

Analysis of narrators

Narrator types by participation

The game's primary narrator is a hybrid in nature. While he is not a character within the game itself, the bard's capacity to respond to him effectively establishes the narrator as a hybrid narrator *(Figure 14).* Additionally, there is an abundance of character narrators. This is exemplified by the conversations between NPCs and the main character.

Figure 14. The bard replies to the narrator (Screenshot is taken by the authors)

Narrator type by method

While the game incorporates diaries and books, these documents are inaccessible for reading. Nonetheless, given the unreadability of these documents, it remains impossible to assert the presence of a medium-based narrator within the game.

Narrator types by reliability

The reliability of the narrator is evident in the alignment between the narrator's account and the events depicted in the game, thereby establishing a coherent narrative. Conversely, the princess's reliability is unreliable. Despite her initial demeanor, which suggests a virtuous character, it is ultimately revealed that she is, in fact, a figure of malevolence.

Analysis of monstrators

Visual monstrators

The cinematic monstrators in this game manifest most evidently in the camera angle changes that occur during transitions between gameplay and cutscenes. For instance, gameplay is depicted from a top-down view, whereas in cutscenes, more third-person like view is employed *(Figure 15)*. In the same way as many other video games, *The Bard's Tale* uses user interface monstrator elements such as a map, health bar, and mana bar. The utilisation of spatial monstrators in this game is evident in the environmental design of various locations, including taverns, houses, burned down villages, dungeons, etc.

Figure 15. a) Third person like view b) Top-down view (Screenshot is taken by the authors)

Symbolic monstrator

The game's narrative functions as a satire of the conventional 'chosen hero saves the princess' trope. In contrast to the traditional fairy tales, the bard's motivations are not rooted in honor or love, as would typically be the case. Instead, his actions are driven by financial gain and the prospect of a (probably) sexual relationship with the princess. Furthermore, it subverts the conventional tropes associated with traditional fairy tales by portraying the beautiful princess as the antagonist.

Mechanical monstrator

The game incorporates a dialogue system that can be characterized as 'snarky or nice'. This system is known to result in multiple endings, with the bard sometimes having to adopt a snarky demeanor to progress through the game. A notable example of this is when the bard must employ a snarky tone with *Hrafn* to successfully advance through the *Royal Door*.

Sensory monstrators

Notwithstanding the absence of haptic monstrators, the game uses auditory monstrators with auditory elements such as soundtracks, songs, sound effects, and voice acting.

Discussions, and Conclusions

The objective of this study is to develop a framework for the analysis and classification of monstrators and narrators in video games. The framework was grounded in the concepts of narrators in narratology and monstrators in cinema studies. The three video games selected for the game analysis section were analyzed using the close reading technique. The research design of this article consists of, after playing or watching video games, the narrators and monstrators and their use in these video games are analyzed using the above-mentioned technique. A framework is then developed, incorporating the notes taken during this process. After the development of the framework, chosen games are played and analyzed using the close reading technique.

This article introduced a three-category framework -participation, method, reliability-for narrators and a four-category framework -visual, symbolic, mechanical, sensory- for monstrators. To enhance comprehension of this framework, it was reinforced with examples from twenty-nine different video games. The framework from this research has shown that narrators and monstrators are used in video games for both narrative and gameplay purposes. The games *Baldur's Gate 3*, *Slay the Princess*, and *The Bard's Tale* are analysed comprehensively, providing an in-depth examination of the application of the

proposed framework in video games. Moreover, the study indicated that video games employ a variety of monstrators and narrators, with these elements often intersecting and complementing each other, thereby contributing to the multifaceted character of the medium of video games. In conclusion, the framework provided by this study offers a comprehensive perspective on the multifaceted nature of video games.

This article puts forth a theoretical framework for the classification of narrators and monsters in video games. The proposed framework is exemplified through a series of video game titles. The analysis of three video games -*Baldur's Gate 3*, *Slay the Princess*, and *The Bard's Tale*- utilises this framework, thereby expanding the study's scope beyond the confines of the theoretical domain. The selection of these three games was predicated on the utilisation of the narrator in these games, which was found to be extensive. The rationale behind the exclusion of monstrators as a selection criterion pertains to the fact that all video games employ monstrators to varying extents. In the selection of the analysed game moments, those moments that could show the analysed feature in the most explicit and detailed way were selected for the analysis.

This study is limited to single-player video games with overarching stories. It is acknowledged that multiplayer or virtual reality (VR) video games may contain a variety of monstrators, and narrators not encompassed by the scope of this study. In addition, the framework developed in this study can be upgraded in the future for a variety of reasons, including the other and new genres and platforms, such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), as well as the production of new narratives and gameplay mechanics. Even though this study does not incorporate multiplayer, virtual reality, or augmented reality games, it can be posited that this framework is nevertheless applicable to the analysis of these genres. Despite notable variations in terms of platform, technology utilized, target audience, and game mechanics, these games exhibit substantial similarities in their fundamental principles of being a game. For instance, the majority of first-person shooter (FPS) multiplayer games, such as *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare III* (Infinity Ward & Sledgehammer Games, 2023), exhibit shared user interface (UI) monstrators indications of injury, akin to those observed in *Final Fantasy XVI* (Square Enix, 2023). In addition, the proposed framework is founded on fundamental components that are present in virtually all games, regardless of platform or genre, including but not limited to gameplay mechanics and visual and auditory elements.

Regarding the analysis of the games, it is not possible to fully analyze the narrators and especially the monstrators within a game. Consequently, it is plausible that there exist additional examples of narrators and monstrators in the analysed video games that have not been incorporated into this article.

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