Storytelling in Conjunction with the Virtual Reality Images from The Hero's Journey

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Abstract: There is currently a bottleneck in the production of Virtual Reality (VR) content in the continuous development of VR devices. Existing VR images content does not yet fully exploit the benefits of VR's immersion, interactivity, and other features. Today, it is still unclear how VR images content should be presented. Storytelling is an inextricably linked topic in contemporary literary and video content creation. A proper storytelling technique is also required for VR images content. This study seeks to investigate storytelling solutions suitable for VR images content from the standpoint of images storytelling, providing guidance for VR images production. In traditional narrative theory, there is a contradiction between the immersion and interactivity of VR content. This study introduces the theory of interactive digital storytelling. Resolve the direct contradiction between these two properties. This study introduces the Hero's Journey, a narrative strategy used in Hollywood films today. In narratology and mythology, it is a common template for heroic stories. Joseph Campbell in 1949 proposed the three stages of this narrative which are the Veil of Departure, the Veil of Initiation, and the Veil of Return. In 2017, screenwriter Christopher Vogler refined Campbell's original structure, expanding it from three to twelve stages. This creative template has served as an excellent source of inspiration for both literary and film writing. This paper analyzes the best VR games of The Game Awards（GTA）in the past five years by combining this narrative, Through the method of literature review, the study found that the introduction of interactive digital narrative (IDN) can resolve the direct contradiction between these two properties. The narrative structure of the hero's journey is suitable for the narrative of VR images.

Keywords: VR Images, VR Storytelling, The Hero's Journey, Cinematic Narration

1. Introduction

The structure of the story is the core and key to the creation of a screenplay. Ninety percent of the success or failure of a script depends on the story structure. Although it is not directly reflected on the study, a great movie must have an extraordinary story structure[1]. Both traditional and digital media need stories to engage the recipient. In the book *The hero with a thousand faces* (1949) the author Joseph Campbell summarized the inner structure and archetype of the stories in myths from ancient times to the present: The Hero's Journey narrative[2]. This is a common narrative template for heroic stories in narratology and comparative mythology. Today, whether it is Hollywood movies or various video

games, most of them can see the shadow of this narrative. The entire process of it is divided into three parts: departure, initiation , return. Moreover, each part is divided into several stages. So, the Hero's Journey can be seen as a narrative template for a standard production story.

With the development of technology, Virtual Reality (VR) images played by head-mounted display devices have appeared. VR images refer to images with immersion and interactivity created using VR technology. The technical characteristics of VR allow users to interact with the virtual environment from time to time, and the virtual environment gives feedback based on user behavior. Traditional narratology is an important theoretical source of VR narrative, but it is no longer fully applicable to VR media[3]. This study combines the characteristics of VR content with narrative and expounds the importance of narrative in VR content through the method of literature review. Introducing the concept of interactive digital narration, combined with the development of traditional narration, making Hero's Journey suitable for the creation of VR content.

2. Previous Research

2.1 VR Images

Virtual reality technology is a digital technology that uses computer technology to generate a digital environment that can interact with experiencers in real-time. A new type of human-computer interaction is created when watching VR movies, allowing the viewer to develop a three-dimensional world with the aid of a virtual reality computer system and sensor technology in order to "live the story." When VR images are presented, they can make good use of multisensory functions such as vision and hearing, allowing the audience to immerse themselves in the virtual realm, be guided or mobilized by the pre-set narrative of the film, and achieve an immersive viewing experience.

Immersion is a feature of VR technology, and the most important condition for evaluating VR experience. Immersion the experience of subject cognition in consciousness space and it is a situation of Flow. What Flow means in the dictionary is "to concentrate wholeheartedly on something"[4]. Immersion provides an immersive virtual three-dimensional space. For Mary-Laure Ryan once proposed that the only way to end the media is to replace the old media with new media to complete the opposite The replication of reality[5] essentially puts forward requirements for the immersion of VR.

Interactivity means that when experiencing VR images, the experiencer is in the real world and communicates and interacts with the virtual space in the images through interactive devices. The experiencer can become a character in the video, communicate and interact with other characters through the plot narrative. This feature is similar to a game, and the experiencer can interact in the virtual environment according to their own preferences and choices. The player's actions are what stimulates the virtual environment in real-time.

2.2 Interactive Digital Storytelling

The development of interactive narrative can be traced back to the 1960s. In 1966, Joseph Weizenbaum completed the first interactive narrative work ELIZA[6]. Thereafter, the interactive narrative has developed in four tracks. The first is hypertext fiction and interactive fiction, and the second is interactive film. The third is experimental forms of video games narratives and complex narrative design. The fourth is interactive theater and hybrid form interactive narrative experiments[3].

During the development of interactive storytelling, there was a debate about playology and narratology—does the concept of narrative apply to video games[7]? Juul believes that the story in the narrative is what has already happened, and it is impossible for us to influence what has already happened. This means that there is no interactivity and narrative in the game[8]. In video games, the

player's decisions and choices can alter the ending of the game. Juul used Star Wars as an example in his research. In the movie, there is only one ending. But in the game of the same name Star Wars (Atari 1983), the ending changes depending on how well the player completes the mission. Today, the same problem will be encountered in VR content with interactivity as an important feature. In fact, the narrative structure of many video games follows the trajectory of the protagonist's journey from concepts developed by Campbell Joseph and Aristotle[9].

At the inaugural international conference on interactive digital storytelling in 2008, Interactive Digital Narrative (IDN) was proposed.The emergence of IDN has eliminated the direct boundary between creators and receivers in traditional narratives. Interactive narrative is a multidisciplinary research field that includes both humanities-based and computational perspectives. Developed from the existing traditional literary narrative theory, disciplines such as computer and cognitive science have been added.

2.3 The Hero's Journey

According to Saussure, the important task of modern linguistics is "to search for the eternal and universal forces at work in all languages, and to collate the general laws that can summarize all historical particularities"[10]. Joseph Campbell's theory of the Hero's Journey can show that the structure and laws inherent in storytelling works can be distilled. These storytelling theories serve as a guide for constructing the story world of VR images. Under the hero's journey theory, each step of the protagonist's action possesses an inherent narrative dynamic, each part of the story assumes a narrative function, and each point of the plot possesses a storytelling logic.

The Hero's Journey (Monomyth). This narrativeis a common template for heroic stories in narratology and comparative mythology. The three stages a hero goes through on his journey proposed by Joseph Campbell in 1949 are: 1) the Act of Departure: the hero left where he lived; 2) the Act of Initiation: the hero embarks on an adventure into the unknown (the special world) and passes various tests and challenges to become a true victor; 3) the Act of Return: the hero returns in triumph. 2017, screenwriter Christopher Vogler, in A Practical Guide to Joseph Campbell's The Hero with a Thousand Faces refined Campbell's original space[11] by expanding Campbell's. He expanded Campbell's three stages into twelve. The twelve stages are [Fig. 1] : The Ordinary World , Call to Adventure, Refusal to the Call ,Meeting with the Mentor, Crossing the First Threshold, Tests, Allies, and Enemies, Approach to the Innermost Cave, The Ordeal, Reward, The Road Back, Resurrection, Return with the Elixir[12].

The screenwriting theorist Vogler adapted this into a set of narrative structures that could be used by Hollywood screenwriters. The normal world, the call to adventure, the refusal of the call, meeting the wise old man, crossing the first border, the test, the companion and the enemy, approaching the deepest cave, the ordeal, the reward, the way back, and the return bearing the cure-all are the twelve stages he divides the hero's journey into.Vogler sums up eight more archetypal characters in the Hero's Journey: the Hero, the Mentor, the Border Guard, Messenger, Changeling, Shadow, Companion and Deceiver. Since then, the hero's journey has become a regular narrative pattern in Hollywood films.

A similar journey is proposed by the German philosopher Nietzsche, where he introduced a concept in his Thus Spoke Zarathustra. The three creatures: the camel, the lion and the baby are used as a metaphor for the changes in the human spirit[12].

This Nietzschean concept is very appropriate [Fig. 2], but this study examines the three stages considered. The first stage is the garden, where the child is pure and beautiful in its Eden-like embrace; the second stage is the desert, where you are like a camel, walking a long journey with humiliation and bearing witness to a complex and complete humanity. You were trying to get along with others and even the world by simply doing good and enduring, holding on to some other simple and right beliefs, only to find that things always go against you and you are constantly frustrated; the third stage is the lion, where you have the strength to live and see the complexity of the outside world and the complexity

within you, and you find that you have to bring out your true self.
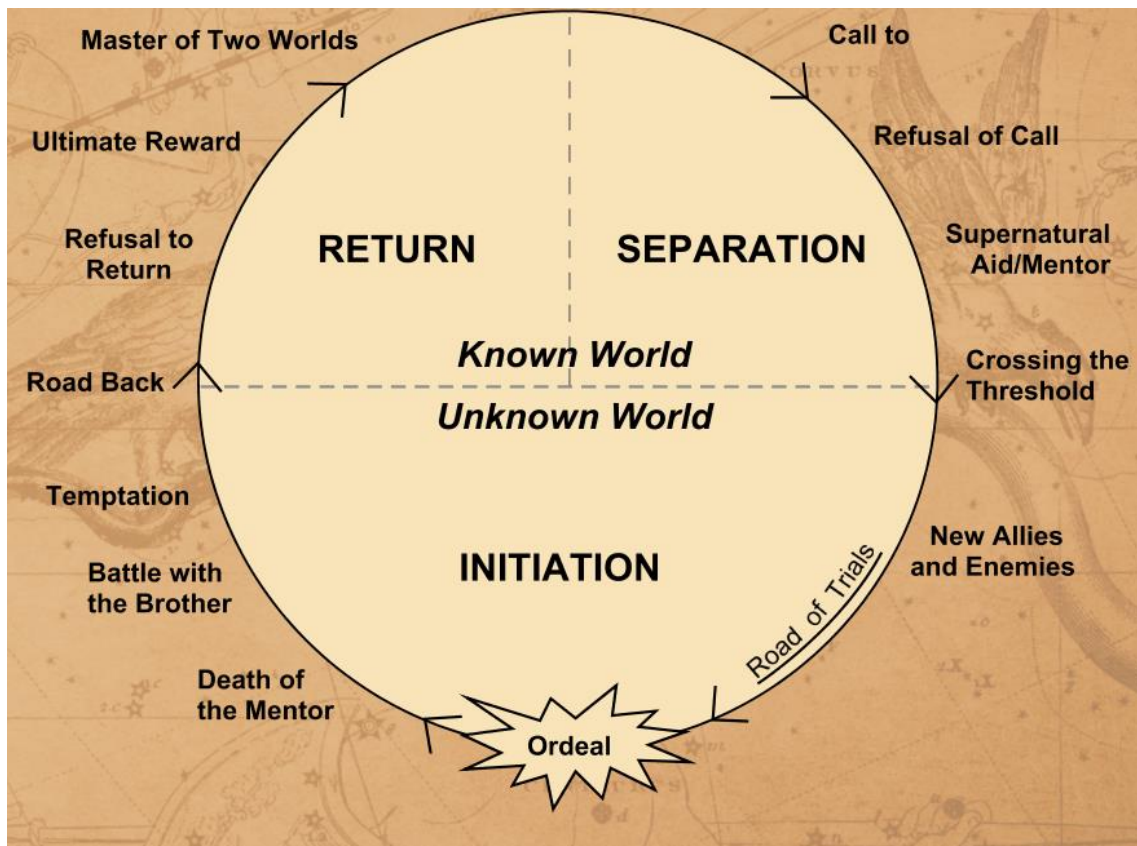
[Fig. 1] The 12 Stages of Vogler
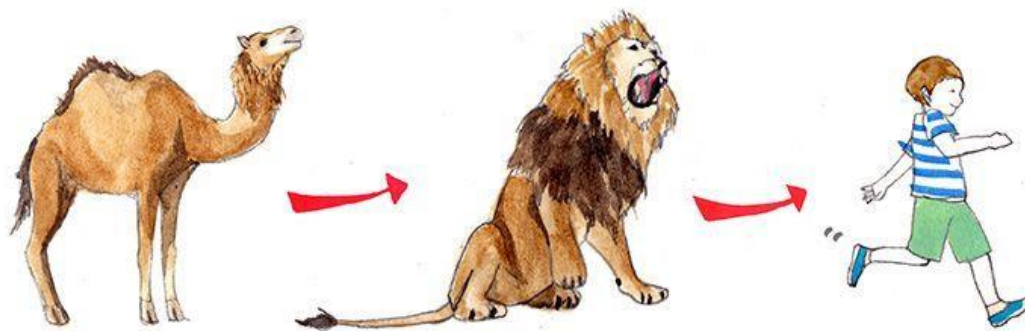
[Fig. 2] Nietzsche's Life Three Stages

The Hero's Journey is a great fit with VR imagery. The hero is "the most perfect symbol of the human libido", the unconscious structure within the human spirit. In a VR storytelling, the director usually puts the viewer in the hero's role, who is a symbol of the viewer's self, and the this narrative is a story of individual development and psychological maturation. The viewer imagines the growth of the self in it,

and the notion of individual heroism is put into practice for the ordinary viewer.

Following the narrative structure of The Hero's Journey, VR images can have different textual structures, but their core always revolves around the individual growth of the audience, allowing them to gain value labels and heroic experiences in the film. In the genealogy of stories formed by the different transformations of it, the symbols of adventure, courage and dreams become the mapping of the audience's psyche, forming a story world that interacts with the audience's heart.

3. Discussion

3.1 Interactive Narrative Paradox

According to the research in the previous chapter, interactivity and immersion are important characteristics of VR. But in traditional narrative, these two features are contradictory. This contradiction is called the interactive narrative paradox[13]. The addition of interaction will cause the experiencer to intervene or even change the narrative process, thus breaking the immersive state of the narrative. This will affect the author's creative method, and may even cause the narrative text form of the interactive narrative to greatly differ from the previous text.

A movie or TV narrative is usually based on a relatively complete script, wherein the narrative is completely pre-designed and written. But for the stories in the virtual environment studied by interactive narrative, the viewpoint and line of sight of the audience will be difficult to predict and design, and they can freely choose the point of view and interact with the story world according to their own ideas[14]. The paradox of interactive narrative has aroused the discussion of narratology and ludology. But their debates were not actually based on acerbic conflicts of opinion. Their shared goal was how to better reconcile the two and complement narrative theory.

In order to solve the interactive narrative paradox, scholars start from two aspects. The first is to reconcile the issues of interactivity and immersion, then we should first clarify and unify the meaning of so-called interactivity and narrative, as well as the level and type of immersion. Second, the previous creative experience shows that interactive narrative needs to be considered as a brand-new narrative form, rather than supplementing previous narrative concepts, which needs to be established at the theoretical level.

In 2005, Janet H. Murray proposed emergent narrative to respond to the interactive narrative paradox. In theory, it is first admitted that this narrative is incomplete[15]. The author did not completely establish the story, but the experiencer and the virtual environment in cooperation created subsequent stories.

3.2 Narrative Structure and the Hero's Journey

Owing to the conflict between interactivity and immersion in VR content, VR narratives develop from traditional narratives like movies or TV dramas. But from the narrative structure, there are still places that can be used for reference. In Hartmut Koenitz's research on various narratives of Indian, Arabic, Native American, and North African literary traditions, after excluding the influence of traditional narratology, using the method of neostructuralism, It enumerates how incidents and conflicts influence how a story unfolds. How the many stages are introduced and distinguished from one another, as well as whether tension plays a role throughout any single stage or during the transition between stages [9]. Koenitz's research on narrative structure is as [Table 1].

[Table 1] Koenitz's Research on Narrative Structure

Narrative type	Narrative structure	Masterpiece	Features of Narrative Structure
Etiological Oral Narratives	Such narratives do not end with traditional conclusions Rather, some natural phenomenon is usually used to explain some lesson of the state of the world today	Metamorphoses	Origin story because it serves as a reference point for different audiences
Bengail Widow's Narratives	Rise to tragic outcome after climax, usually with the protagonist being abandoned by her family After orgasm the protagonist becomes the opposite of her son's bride		Having two variants in one narrative
Ganga Comics	This type of narrative is based on Indian mythology adapted in comics where the resolution of one conflict immediately leads to the beginning of the next	Mahabharata	Accumulation mode The consequences of solving each problem affect the entire narrative
Sira Narratives	This type of narrative structure has a central hub from which many smaller episodic journey narratives depart and return, set within the framework of a larger community's survival and eventual demise	Bedouin tribe	Features an accurate historical framework of migrations and conquests A series of intricate stories built on tensions between a series of central characters
Epiphanic Structure	Such narratives typically recreate an epiphany moment, where the player suddenly understands the events of the narrative from a different perspective, and then explores the narrative again from the beginning to discover the consequences of this revelation	NieR : Automata	Cycle of conflict

These structures tend to thrust immediately the experiencer into an action, event, or a conflict right away[9]. This not only satisfies the interactivity of VR, but also promotes the development of stories in VR. Therefore, the narrative structure of Journey of Heroes has a strong fit with VR images. The hero is "the most perfect symbol of the human libido," the unconscious structure within the human psyche. In VR narratives, the director usually lets the audience play the role of the hero, and the hero is the audience's self-symbol. The Hero's Journey is a story of personal growth, moreover a process of psychological maturity. The audience imagines their own growth during the hero's journey, and ordinary audiences can also practice the concept of personal heroism. The Hero's Journey is adaptable to non-traditional forms of storytelling[16] and can be readily used in whatever way appropriate to the screenwriter.

As with other forms of media, numerous of the most popular and influential games and gaming votes feel to hearken back to the Hero's Journey in their narratives, and this is most apparent in games that offer players fantasies of manly power. One example of this is the first-person shooter game "Call of Duty"[9]. According to the narrative structure of Hero's Journey, VR movies can derive different text structures, but its core always revolves around the individual growth of the audience, allowing the

audience to obtain value labels and hero experience. In the story lineage formed by the different transformations of the hero's journey, those symbols such as adventure, courage, and dreams become the reflection of the audience's psychology, forming a story world that interacts with the audience's heart.

4. The Hero's Journey and VR games

The Hero's Journey structure proposed by Campbell can be summarized as a process of "departure-enlightenment-return". Campbell mentioned that mythology is relevant to human beings in general and is the archetype of human growth. The process of human beings being born as human beings, forming a society, overcoming trials, and growing into human beings with survival value are all reflected in mythology.

Campbell discovered a fact through studying the myths of the world, that is, there is a prototype general myth that contains all the myths of each nation, era, and country, which is the "monomyth" mentioned above. Basically, the myths of each nation The basic purpose is the same, so myth is the mask of a god through which people all over the world can relate themselves to the miracle of existence[17]. Although Campbell himself did not explicitly state it, it has to be said that this is a structure The idea of " monomyth " that it deciphers is the root of their structure. Although every myth scattered in the world has its own appearance, it cannot be separated from the context of " monomyth "system.

The " monomyth " proposed by Campbell summarizes the hero's life, that is, the standard track of the hero's mythical adventure is "departure-enlightenment-return". The hero came to the supernatural world of miracles from the world where he originally lived, where he met a huge force and finally won a decisive victory. In this mysterious adventure, the hero gained the power to help his companions and finally returned to reality world. In other words, its three-step model consists of: break with the original world, insight into new powers and ecstatic return[18]. In terms of structure, it can be said that it has the basic binomial opposition structure of native world/strange world, departure/return. Within the narrative framework, the original world is combined with departure. Furthermore, the strange world is combined with the return.

This section selects the best VR games from The Game Awards (TGA) in the past five years, and focuses on the respective stages and functions of Canberra's Journey of Heroes narrative, and analyzes the narratives of the award-winning games one by one, making the following [Table 2].

[Table 2] The Best VR Games from TGA(2017-2022)

Year	Game	Main Character	Departure	Enlightenment	Come Back
2022	Moss: Book II	little mouse Quill	The brave hero Quill is finally reunited with Uncle Argus.	But after rescuing her beloved family member, the enemy began to target her. A tyrant with outspread wings is leading an arcane force in the hunt for Quill.	Go through hardships and defeat the enemy.
2021	Resident Evil4 VR	Lyon	Lyon was dispatched to a mysterious village in Europe this time, and was ordered to rescue President Graham's abducted daughter Ashley.	Ashley gets caught by the bad guys.	Lyon successfully rescued Ashley and escaped.

2020	Half-Life：Alyx	Alex Vance	Alex Vance is humanity's only hope for survival.	After Alex witnesses the death of his future father. Decided to rescue his father.	Alex was sealed away, waiting for the future awakening.
2019	Beat saber	Player	/	/	/
2018	Astro Bot: Rescue Mission	Captain Astro	The spaceship of the little robots was destroyed by the alien boss, and the companions and important parts of the spaceship were scattered among the five planets.	Find the hidden digital companions in each level, defeat the boss at the end of the level and retrieve the parts.	Rescue all companions.
2017	Resident Evil 7：Biohazard(United States) Biohazard 7：Resident Evil(Japan)	Ethan Winters	An email was sent by Mia Winters, who vanished three years ago. He was investigating the creepy house for any sign of his wife when he was suddenly attacked by an unidentified attacker and went unconscious.	Ethan finds his wife and goes through all kinds of difficulties.	The couple were rescued.

5. Conclusions

Modern people are obsessed with the virtual world. In the VR image, the experiencer can freely choose the person he wants to control and control its behavior. The higher the level of VR equipment, the stronger the satisfaction will be. In the image controlled by the experiencer. The character is actually a symbol representing oneself. The experiencer gets a new "social classification" in the VR image and gives himself an ideal position. Every time he completes a task, the game money and equipment are upgraded, and he will talk about finding a sense of satisfaction and security in the virtual environment of the story that cannot be obtained in reality.

Compared with movies, the characteristics of VR are more similar to games--nteractivity and immersion. But these two properties are narratively contradictory. This article introduces the content of interactive digital narrative, which cannot only better integrate immersion and narrative in VR content, but also solve the problem that interactivity and narrative cannot appear at the same time. As the most commercially mature game in the field of interactive narrative, it has always been an experimental position for various new technologies and methods. The characteristics of video games and VR content have great similarities. VR storytelling can learn from the success of interactive digital storytelling. Also, VR narrative does not have to be limited to film and literature theories.

By analyzing the VR games awarded by TGA in the past five years, it is found that out of the five games, four works use The Hero's Journey. At present, The majority of the current VR images on the market are basically outside the gate of mainstream Hollywood narratives. Many successful images on the market have incomplete worldviews, fragmented story structures, and insufficient characters, which pose problems for script adaptation. The development of VR narrative is the key to solving these problems. This study proposes the use of a "Hero's Journey" narrative structure in a VR narrative

structure. It can not only conside the immersion and interactivity of VR, but also promote the development of the story during the interaction process. Mythologists believe that heroic adventures are the eternal theme of the macrocosm and artistic life, while psychologists believe that the "Hero's Journey" awakens and opens the soul of each life. As a result, the narrative energy generated by "The Hero's Journey" play structure.

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