

Exploring the Narrative Methods of Indie Games from Scarlet Cage

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Abstract. With the rapid development of science and technology, high-tech means are increasingly applied to games, which has also brought about the increasingly serious problem of homogenization of game products. Many games are removed from the shelves due to lack of features or practical significance, or similar games are misunderstood as harmful to the next generation. Therefore, a good game should be both interesting and rich in connotation. *Scarlet Cage* is such a computer narrative indie game. It has its own unique theme and significance, and reshapes its value on the basis of breaking stereotypes.

Keywords: Games, Gender Equality, Independence and Autonomy, The Princess and the Dragon

1. Introduction

Against the background of the rapid development of contemporary science and technology, high-tech means such as Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are more and more widely used in games, making games increasingly rich and immersive [1]. However, with the prosperity of the market, the homogenization of game products has become more and more serious. Many games have similarities in gameplay, stories, characters and other aspects, lacking much innovation and originality. This not only reduces players' sense of freshness and makes them lose interest in games, but also leads to severe homogenized competition in the entire game market. Moreover, some games only focus on the superficial entertainment function of games in pursuit of short-term benefits, while ignoring the inherent connotation and value of games themselves. These games often fail to bring people real spiritual enjoyment and growth inspiration due to the lack of profound thinking, so they are quickly forgotten by players and disappear from the market. In addition, due to the influence of these inferior games, online game players have been labeled as "a scourge to the next generation" and misunderstood by many people [2]. Such misunderstanding is not conducive to the long-term development of the video game industry, but also restricts its potential as a cultural form.

2. The creative background of *Scarlet Cage*

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are the main reference source for *Scarlet Cage*. Before developing this game, the production team of *Scarlet Cage* investigated the 17 Sustainable

Development Goals proposed by the United Nations, which cover social, economic, environmental and other aspects and will lead the world to a sustainable future. After interpreting the above goals, the team decided to design the game with the theme of "gender equality". While guiding the public to deeply reflect on social reality, it also inspires the public to explore the meaning of games.

Although the concept of gender equality has gradually gained universal recognition in society, gender inequality and gender discrimination still exist widely in real scenarios [3]. Women still face multiple restrictions in employment, family life and participation in public affairs. As a widely covered mass cultural carrier, games have the function of value dissemination. The game design in this study takes gender equality as the core theme, guides players to pay attention to gender equality issues through narrative and interactive settings, and reflects on related phenomena in real society.

In addition, the theme of "gender equality" can provide sufficient narrative space and material support for game creation. The game design team can build the core narrative framework around this theme, set conflict levels derived from gender inequality, guide players to perceive the real dilemmas caused by gender bias in the process of gameplay, and understand the practical value of gender equality.

To enrich the narrative level and enhance the fun of the game, the production team selected the classic fairy tale *The Princess and the Dragon* as the adaptation base. In the original story, a dragon abducts the princess, and the king offers a reward for a warrior to rescue her. The warrior Dala Bengba volunteers to go, breaks through multiple tests, goes deep into the dragon's lair and rescues the princess. Finally, the king marries the princess to the warrior as a token of gratitude. However, the creative team did not directly follow the original narrative, but adapted the character settings, endowing the princess characters from different kingdoms in the game with the independent and brave traits traditionally associated with "princes". This adaptation breaks the rigid gender role division in traditional fairy tales and also strengthens the narrative recognition of the game.

3. Introduction to the game *Scarlet Cage*

3.1. Story background

Scarlet Cage constructs a fantasy world containing multiple heterogeneous kingdoms, each with its own unique cultural settings. The game breaks the image of princesses in traditional narratives and endows the princess group with diverse personal ideals and hobbies. The protagonist Princess Freya has a special background: the kingdom she belongs to is facing a serious ruling crisis. The story takes Freya's adventurous experience as the clue and finally presents the narrative result of the crisis being resolved.

3.2. The adapted story of "The Princess and the Dragon"

In *Scarlet Cage*, the adapted story of "The Princess and the Dragon" is presented in a brand-new way. The giant dragon is no longer the embodiment of evil, but brings light and hope to the resolution of the kingdom's crisis. The princess is no longer a passive figure waiting to be rescued. Instead, in response to the internal crisis of the kingdom, she bravely stands up, tries every means to leave the kingdom and seeks help from the dragon. In the process of leaving the kingdom and finding the dragon, she fully demonstrates her bravery and intelligence. After arriving at the Dragon Valley, she resolves the crisis of her motherland, and unites with princesses from other kingdoms to explore the world together and pursue the journey of their own destinies. This adaptation subverts

the traditional plot pattern in fairy tales where the princess is rescued by the prince, and endows the princess with greater freedom and autonomy.

4. Analysis of the game's narrative methods

By analyzing the game process and plot of *Scarlet Cage* and combining with players' experiences, it can be found that the narrative methods of this game have the following characteristics.

4.1. Intertwined presentation of main and subplots

There are five princesses from different countries and cultural backgrounds in the game, each with a completely different birth background and personality. Players can understand the diversity and complexity of the world through interactions with these princesses. The main plot of the game centers on the protagonist Freya, whom players can control to explore the game world and complete tasks along this main line. In addition to the protagonist Freya, several other princesses and the giant dragon appear as subplots. The main plot and subplots complement each other and are presented in an intertwined manner, jointly supporting the game's tasks.

4.2. Multi-dimensional disclosure of characters' backgrounds

In the *Final Fantasy* series, the identity of the protagonist Freya has always been a mystery. After completing corresponding tasks, players will see some hints that gradually reveal Freya's story. The main line of the game is not only an exciting and interesting adventure journey, but also a repeated revelation of Freya's past experiences. At the same time, there are many hidden Easter eggs and little secrets in the palace waiting for players to discover. These hidden secrets contain information and clues that hint at Freya's life experiences, or some historical stories and legends related to the game world. Finding these Easter eggs and clues can help players better understand the protagonist Freya. Meanwhile, in the dungeons, players can also learn about the backgrounds of the other escaped princesses by asking them. Since different princesses come from different countries, each has her own story and experience. Through interactions with them, players can understand the cultural customs of different countries and see the bravery and wit of the princesses in difficult situations.

4.3. Conveying positive values

Each character in *Scarlet Cage* has a unique life experience, which constitutes the entire plot of the game and is also a reflection of real life. By understanding the characters' past experiences, players can experience the joys and sorrows brought by different lives, understand the reasons for their choices, and thus transition from simple entertainment activities to reflection on the meaning of life, enhancing the fun of the game. At the same time, as an emerging cultural medium, games have extremely strong influence. *Scarlet Cage* conveys correct values to people in a unique way, advocates gender equality and self-awareness in the process of playing, brings this concept into real life, broadens people's thinking and improves their inclusiveness. In addition, *Scarlet Cage* brings players wonderful adventure experiences, allowing them to feel the hearty battles and ups and downs of the plot in the game. At the same time, players can learn knowledge about gender equality, self-reliance and self-improvement, and then understand the meaning behind the game and improve themselves while having fun.

5. Enlightenments of *Scarlet Cage* for game narration

5.1. In-depth exploration of thematic value

To avoid being led by traffic and homogenized competition, the creative team of *Scarlet Cage* made great efforts in theme excavation and diversified expression, and finally chose the real social theme of gender equality and independence, making the game narrative have the characteristics of the times and universality, and turning every game experience into a spiritual dialogue.

5.2. Promoting in-depth player interaction

Scarlet Cage breaks through the traditional framework in narrative design, adopts a structure combining main narrative and sub-narrative, deeply integrates scene art, background music and narrative content, and solves the problem of separation between gameplay and narration. Players' operations directly affect the plot development, character unfolding and theme transmission, enabling them to obtain a stronger sense of narrative participation.

5.3. Clarifying the target audience of the game

Accurate audience positioning is the premise and foundation of game development and marketing, and should run through the entire project process. After extensive research and discussion by the creative team, the game finally determined its target audience as female groups. As a result, the character settings and narrative perspectives all fit the content preferences of this group, thus achieving the matching of content supply and audience needs.

5.4. Conclusion

Scarlet Cage is a representative computer narrative game with innovative theme setting, complete narrative logic and a certain depth of ideological expression. At the same time, *Scarlet Cage* specially sets game links to allow players to understand the importance of gender equality, self-reliance and self-improvement in the game, and fully perceive the personality and charm of each character in the story. This shows that games are not only an important form of cultural entertainment, but also an important medium to convey positive energy and promote social development [4, 5]. It is hoped that *Scarlet Cage* can provide a valuable reference for the development of the game industry, so that more games can, like it, have stronger interest and profound connotation, and provide players with richer and more meaningful gaming experiences.

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