

Benchmark Fiction

a framework for comparative new media study

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BENCHMARK FICTION

definition

Benchmark Fiction is a methodology for creating sets of adaptations of the same content across different new media forms for the purpose of comparative study.

example

The Lady, or the Tiger
Frank R. Stockton
(1882)

...
as a
hypertext

and
as a
stretchtext

and
as a
chatbot

etc.

...
and compare them

what can we learn
about the forms?

Benchmark Fiction is
a methodology for creating
sets of adaptations of
**the same content across
different new media forms**
for the purpose of
comparative study.

*same content?
different form?*

Total equivalence
is impossible...
...but praxis
remains important

Let's do it:

By creating 'equivalent' forms and critiquing them, we reveal and create our own definitions of media through process

critic / theorists making art?

maybe, but emphasizing method and critical / pedagogical applications

paper overview

- **historical precedents** (Lorem Ipsum, Hello World, Cloak of Darkness, Gabriella Infinita)
- **contemporary theories** (adaptation, remediation, media-specific analysis, transmedial and crossmedial storytelling)
- **example benchmarking work** on a sample work, inspiring a framework for displaying sources through interchangeable modules (chatbots, wikis, search art, cellular automata)

talk overview

- How can we compare eliterature (eliterature fiction)
- Why comparison?
- Selected theories, precedents, practices

a story

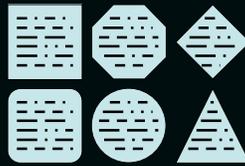
BENCHMARK FICTION

question

how can we compare eliterature?

eliterature?

eliterature



hypertext
fiction



interactive
fiction



generator
fiction



email
fiction



blog
fiction



wiki
fiction



tag
fiction



etc.

eliterature


comparative
 

comparative
 

comparative
 

comparative
 

comparative
 

comparative
 ?

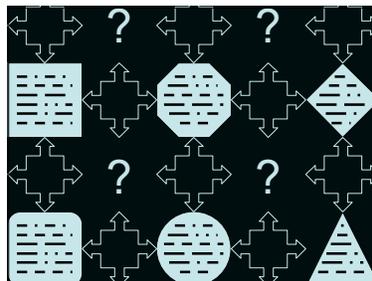
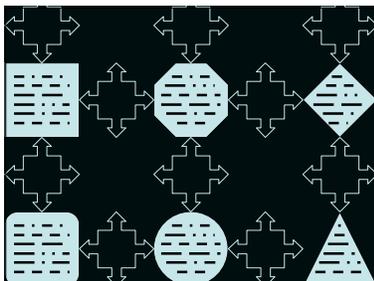
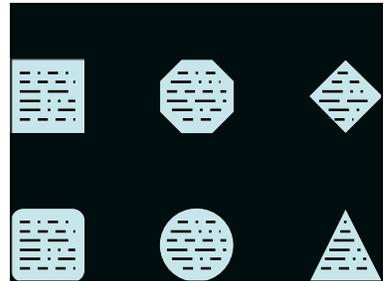
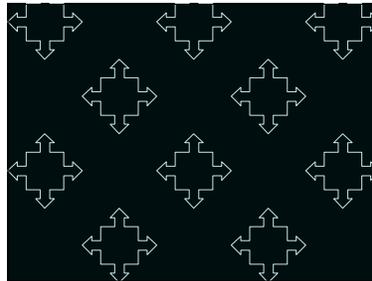
regular

in what way?

benchmark
fiction

*framework
for comparative
new media*

framework



methodology
for comparison

practice

of comparison

how?

~~*how?*~~
why?

eliterature

explosion of
forms

examples

hypertext
fiction


interactive
fiction


generator
fiction


email
fiction



blog
fiction



wiki
fiction



tag
fiction



etc.

explosion of
forms

or

explosion of
categories

explosion of
genres

explosion of
sub-genres

defined by
formal
features

form

hypertext IF
generator email
blog wiki

links parsers
outputs messages
entries edits

interaction method
arrangement structure
enabling technology

explosion
is ongoing

development of
new methods
new structures
new technologies
is ongoing

explosion of
forms

good thing

but

*how do I
survey?*

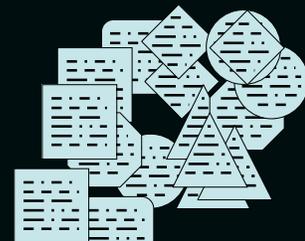
features
typology?

problems

features
overlap



individual variety



question

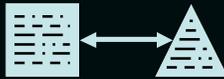
*how can we
compare
eliterature?*

more strict

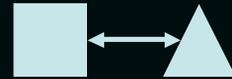
compare



not instances



but forms



restate

when a work of
eliterature
is implemented



in one form

or another



what
happens?

how
does it matter?

*When a work of
eliterature is
implemented in one
form or another what
happens and how
does it matter?*

[new audiences]

implemented?

designed
experience

actualized
simulation

narrated
story

designed-actualized-narrated
experience-simulation-story

'implemented'
prioritizes acts:
designed-actualized-narrated

priority as if

prior to art



content



entered form



designing

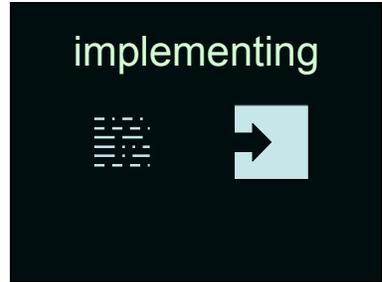
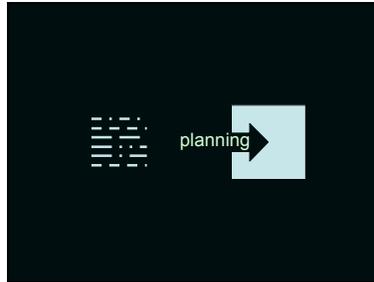
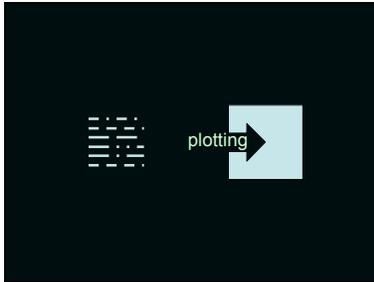


actualizing

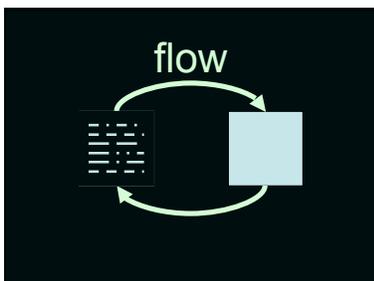
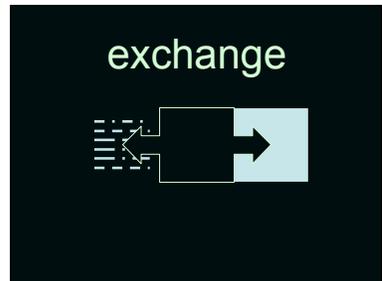


narrating





design
doesn't
happen
that way



design
doesn't
happen
that way

design
doesn't
happen primarily
that way

design usually
doesn't
happen primarily
that way

we don't get 

we don't get 

we don't get 

we don't get 

we don't get 

we don't get 

and

we don't get 

but

if we did

we might ask

parallel
implementation



*When a work of
eliterature is
implemented in one
form or another what
happens and how
does it matter?*

parallel
implementation



formal
comparison



...

parallel
adaptation



BENEFIC
IN THEORY

adaptation

transmedial
narrative

cross-media
storytelling

media specific
analysis

remediation

BENEFIC
IN HISTORY

not strict
parallels

lorem ipsum

*Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur
adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor
incididunt ut labore et dolore magna
Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud
exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip
ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure
in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse
dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur. Excepteur
occaecat cupidatat proident sunt*

Hello, World!

```
Java:  
public class HelloWorld  
{  
    public static void main(String[] args)  
    {  
        System.out.println("Hello, world!");  
    }  
}
```

```
Visual Basic .NET:  
Module HelloWorldApp  
    Sub Main()  
        System.Console.WriteLine("Hello, world!")  
    End Sub  
End Module
```

```
Inform:  
[ Main;  
    print "Hello, world!^";  
];
```

```
Inform:  
{ Main;  
    print "Hello, world!^";  
};  
  
Java:  
public class HelloWorld  
{  
    public static void main(String[] args)  
    {  
        System.out.println("Hello, world!");  
    }  
}  
  
Visual Basic .NET:  
Module HelloWorldApp  
    Sub Main()  
        System.Console.WriteLine("Hello, world!")  
    End Sub  
End Module
```

Hello, World!

Adventure and Cloak of Darkness

Welcome to Adventure!

ADVENTURE

The Interactive Original
By Willie Crowther and Don Woods (1977)
David M. Baggett's 1993 reconstruction, ported by Graham Nelson
Release 3 / Serial number 951220 / Inform v1.600 Library 6/1
Standard interpreter 1.1

At End Of Road

You are standing at the end of a road before a small brick building. Around you is a forest. A small stream flows out of the building and down a gully.

>EXAMINE BUILDING

It's a small brick building. It seems to be a well house.

>DOWN

The "Cloak of Darkness" specification

The various implementations have been made as similar as possible. That is, things like object names and room descriptions should be identical, and the general flow of the game should be pretty comparable. Having said that, the games are implemented using the native capabilities of the various systems, using features that a beginner might be expected to master; there shouldn't be any need to resort to assembler routines, library hacks, or other advanced techniques. The target is to write naturally and simply, while sticking as closely as possible to the goal of making the games directly equivalent.

"Cloak of Darkness" is not going to win prizes for its prose, imagination or subtlety. Or scope: it can be played to a successful conclusion in five or six moves, so it's not going to keep you guessing for long. (On the other hand, it may qualify as the most widely-available game in the history of the genre.) There are just three rooms and three objects.

- The **Foyer** of the Opera House is where the game begins. This empty room has doors to the south and west, also an unusable exit to the north. There is nobody else around.
- The **Bar** lies south of the **Foyer**, and is initially silent. Trying to do anything other than return northwards results in a warning message about disturbing things in the dark.
- On the wall of the **Chalkroom**, to the west of the **Foyer**, is fixed a small **crucifix**.
- Taking an inventory of possessions reveals that the player is wearing a black velvet **cloak** which, upon examination, is found to be light-absorbent. The player can drop the **cloak** on the floor of the **Chalkroom** or, better, put it on the **book**.
- Returning to the **Bar** without the **cloak** reveals that the room is now lit. A **message** is scratched on the sidewalk on the floor.
- The **message** reads either "You have won" or "You have lost", depending on how much it was disturbed by the player while the room was dark.
- The act of reading the **message** ends the game.

BENEFIC IN PRACTICE

our first source:

The Lady, or the Tiger
Frank R. Stockton
(1882)

In the very olden time there lived a semi-barbaric king, whose ideas, though somewhat polished and sharpened by the progressiveness of distant Latin neighbors, were still large, florid, and untrammelled, as became the half of him which was barbaric. He was a man of exuberant fancy, and, withal, of an authority so irresistible that, at his will, he turned his varied fancies into facts. He was greatly given to self-communing, and, when he and himself agreed upon anything, the thing was done. When every member of his domestic and political systems moved smoothly in its appointed course, his nature was bland and genial; but, whenever there was a little hitch, and some of his orbs got out of their orbits, he was blander and more genial still, for nothing pleased him so much as to make the crooked straight and crush down uneven places.

Among the borrowed notions by which his barbarism had become semified was that of the public arena, in which, by exhibitions of manly and beastly valor, the minds of his subjects were refined and cultured.

But even here the exuberant and barbaric fancy asserted itself. The arena of the king was built, not to give the people an opportunity of hearing the rhapsodies of dying gladiators, nor to enable them to view the inevitable conclusion of a conflict between religious opinions and hungry jaws, but for purposes far better adapted to widen and develop the mental energies of the people. This vast amphitheater, with its encircling galleries, its mysterious vaults, and its unseen passages, was an agent of poetic justice, in which crime was punished, or virtue rewarded, by the decrees of an impartial and incorruptible chance.

When a subject was accused of a crime of sufficient importance to interest the king, public notice was given that on an appointed day the fate of the accused person would be decided in the king's arena, a structure which well deserved its name, for, although its form and plan were borrowed from afar, its purpose emanated solely from the brain of this man, who, every barleycorn a king, knew no tradition to which he owed more allegiance than pleased his fancy, and who ingrafted on every adopted form of human thought and action the rich growth of his barbaric idealism.

examples

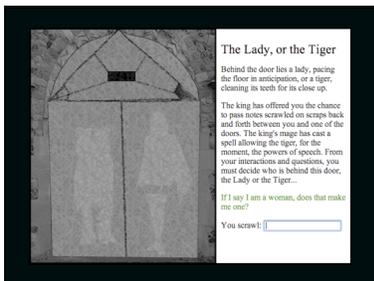
linked



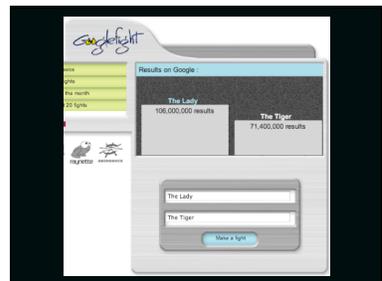
wiki



chatbot



search



cellular
automata



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