Chapter 10

Encouraging and Rewarding Repeat Play of Storygames

Alex Mitchell

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10.1 INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS REPLAYING?

In this chapter, I will be exploring what it means to replay a story-focused game, or ‘storygame’, and how these types of games encourage and reward repeat play. As Hanson suggests, ‘almost all games and the pleasures associated with their play are reliant on the mechanic of repetition and replay’ (Hanson, 2018, p. 111). Before discussing how repetition and replay occur in storygames, it is necessary to consider what is meant by ‘replaying’. Taken literally, the term seems to suggest ‘playing again’, the implicit assumption being that there must have been a first, complete ‘play’ and that a ‘replay’ takes place after that first, complete playthrough. Interestingly, however, particularly in video games, players often fail to complete a first playthrough, and need to repeatedly try, fail, and try again,
gradually improving their skills and their understanding of the game rules and mechanics through this repeated play. This makes the notion of ‘replay’ a bit complicated, particularly if a game, such as Tetris (Pajitnov, 1984), is explicitly designed such that there is very little, or even no, possibility of completion. Instead, all a player can do is constantly restart the game, making more progress, and gaining more skill on each repetition. If a game can’t ever be completed, can it truly be replayed? And yet, at the same time, because many games can’t be completed, they almost have to be replayed, or at least played again, so that the player can get closer to (but maybe never reach) some form of completion.

One underlying assumption here is that the focus of the player’s experience is on the pleasure derived from mastery of the playable system. Each playthrough involves an encounter with the same game system, but the ways in which the player encounters that system allow for variability in the actual sequence of actions taken, and in the resulting play experience, thereby encouraging repeat play due to both challenge and variation. In contrast, games ‘built around more linear narratives in which the player may accomplish goals through singular solutions are considered to have low replay value’ (Hanson, 2018, p. 119). Similarly, Juul (2002) argues that games that involve a linear progression are ‘characterized by the fact that they can be completed, and that their replayability is subsequently very low’ (emphasis in original). This seems to imply that games with a strong, linear story are not replayable.

Further, Hanson suggests that in some games ‘player actions… determine their own experiential narrative, resulting in [a] far greater degree of variability on successive plays’ (2018, p. 112). This is similar to Juul’s notion of games with emergence structures, which ‘allow for much variation and improvisation’. However, the trade-off is that games with a linear narrative ‘often offer a greater narrative richness and nuance in their initial play, as such game types allow a game designer to more precisely craft the player experience through scripted events and predetermined sequences rather than emergent game narrative produced by the player’s play’ (2018, p. 120). This suggests that replayability requires an emphasis on variability and system mastery, with an implicit tension between the richness of the play experience and the richness of the narrative.

In this paper what I’m interested in exploring is what it means to replay a specific type of game: storygames. Reed defines a storygame as ‘a playable system, with units of narrative, where the understanding of both, and the relationship between them, is required for a satisfying traversal’
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Examples of storygames include adventure games such as *Zork* (Anderson, Blank, Daniels, & Lebling, 1977) and *The Walking Dead* (Telltale Games, 2012), and computer-based role-playing games such as *Mass Effect* (Bioware, 2007) and *Skyrim* (Bethesda Game Studios, 2011). In contrast, as Reed suggests, abstract games such as *Threes* (Vollmer, 2014), games such as *SpaceChem* (Barth, 2011) where there is no connection between the story and game elements, and even a game such as *Super Mario Bros.* (Miyamoto & Tezuka, 1985), where there are narrative elements but there is no need to understand these elements to progress in the game, are not storygames.

With storygames, the tension that Hanson identifies between a rich, playable game system and a rich narrative becomes complicated, as by definition the player’s experience is related to developing an understanding of both the playable system and the narrative units, and also an understanding of how these two aspects of the game relate to each other. In a storygame, the player should ideally want to go back to replay or reexperience both the game and the story, as the two are intertwined. There are, however, varying degrees to which the game and story are interconnected, depending on the design of the storygame.

To begin to consider how storygames may be able to move beyond the rich gameplay/rich narrative tension, and how this impacts replayability, it is worth considering why people reexperience stories (as opposed to games), beginning with non-interactive stories. As Calinescu (1993) argues, there are generally three reasons for people to want to go back and read a story again, which he refers to as partial rereading, simple rereading, and reflective rereading. Partial rereading involves going back in an attempt to complete your understanding of a text, as you may have missed some aspects of the work in your first reading. Simple rereading is an attempt to recapture the experience of the story. Finally, reflective rereading involves stepping back and reading analytically to, for example, understand the way that the text creates its effect on the reader, to explore possible intertextuality, or to look for deeper meaning. In all these cases, the story is still the same, so it is clearly not variation that people are looking for when they reread.

In the context of this chapter, the question is: what happens to people’s experience of stories when they are playable? Mitchell (2012) extends Calinescu’s model of rereading to interactive stories, arguing that people initially reread interactive stories for closure, the feeling that they ‘get’ the way the various possible stories that result from their play relate to their
actions as the player. This can be seen as similar to Calinescu’s partial rereading. It is only after they reach this understanding that they actually consider what they are doing to be ‘rereading’, at which point they switch to simple or reflective rereading. What is not clear, however, is what simple or reflective rereading would involve in an interactive story such as a storygame. Simple rereading, as Mitchell (2013) has suggested, is complicated by the very tension that Hanson has highlighted. If the player is replaying for variation, the story will likely not be the same, so is simple rereading possible? And if the player is replaying for the story, and likely making exactly the same choices as in a previous playthrough, is the experience still interactive? Similarly, Mitchell (2015) has suggested that engaging in reflective rereading in an interactive story is problematic, as it likely requires the player to be rereading both to experience the story and the playable system. Again, the tension that Hanson foregrounds becomes problematic here, as it suggests that this type of rereading is not possible.

To further explore these ideas, I will now consider three different ways that storygames tend to encourage and reward repeat experience: by encouraging replay for variation, by making replay necessary for completion, and by encouraging replay for a deeper understanding of the game/story relationship that is intrinsic to storygames.

10.2 REPLAYING FOR VARIATION

One way that storygames encourage replay is by signalling, either explicitly or implicitly, that there is something more to be seen once the player reaches the end of the game. This could take the form of additional story content or branches not yet visited, or the suggestion that choices the player makes could lead to some form of procedural variation. Here, for simplicity, I consider the ‘end’ of the game to be a point at which the player feels there is no longer any possibility for progression without restarting, or possibly going back to an earlier point in the game through some form of rewind mechanics (Kleinman, Carstensdottir, & El-Nasr, 2018; Kleinman, Fox, & Zhu, 2016).

The desire to go back and try different paths tends to harken back to the early forms of (non-digital) storygames, such as choose-your-own-adventure (CYOA) books. In these works, players would literally turn to different pages when they make a choice, making it clear that if they had taken the other path, things might have turned out differently. In fact, storygames such as *The Walking Dead* (Telltale Games, 2012) and *Bandersnatch* (Netflix, 2018) directly continue the tradition of CYOA books in their use
of branching narrative structures. However, although this form of branching structure and variation allows for some degree of replayability, players quickly reach a point where they ‘get it’, and no longer feel a need to replay as they can roughly tell where the story will go on a subsequent replay (Mitchell, 2012). This, I argue, is due in part to the illusion of a complex playable system, an illusion that quickly breaks down on repeat play (Mitchell, 2015).

For example, The Walking Dead is an adventure game which makes use of a choice-based structure to allow the player to experience some degree of influence over the direction of the narrative. From the start, the game makes it known to the player that her choices will have an impact on the direction of the story. At the splash screen, the player is told that ‘This game series adapts to the choices you make. The story is tailored by how you play’ (see Figure 10.1, left). This sets up the expectation that your choices are important, and that they are in some way influencing the direction of the story. This is further reinforced by the reminders that appear after certain, seemingly important choices that the player makes, where the player is told that a particular character, such as Kenny ‘will remember that’ (see Figure 10.1, middle). In addition, at the end of each episode, the player is presented with statistics showing the choices made, and how those choices relate to those of other players (see Figure 10.1, right).

These mechanics clearly highlight the potential for doing something different – for example, what impact did the action that Kenny remembered have on his later responses to the player character? And how might the narrative have changed if the player had followed the choices taken by other players? All of this creates a sense that the playable system within the storygame is in some way adapting to the player’s choices, providing some motivation to go back and play again for variation. However, as Mitchell (2015) has argued, on replay it quickly becomes evident that, while there is some variation, the overall effect is what Cage calls ‘bending stories’ (Cage, 2006), where the narrative retains its overall shape.
but can be stretched to some extent by the player. Whatever the player does over the five episodes of *Season One*, the final outcome is the result of a single choice made in the final scene, and even that choice simply flavours the final events of the game, changing how the player is likely to feel about the main characters, Lee and Clementine, but not drastically changing their fates. Thus, this ‘stretching’ of the story allows the player to change some of the events that are encountered on the way towards the end of the story, and allows for some (minor) variation in the ending, but after a small number of playthroughs, the player is likely to have either exhausted all the variations, or reached the point where she has a good idea of which choices may lead to which variations, and no longer has any motivation to replay.

Similarly, *Bandersnatch* is an interactive film that uses choices in a manner very similar to the style used in *The Walking Dead* and other games developed by Telltale Games, such as *The Wolf Among Us* (Telltale Games, 2013) or *Tales from the Borderlands* (Telltale Games, 2014). Much like *The Walking Dead*, gameplay in *Bandersnatch* is preceded by the declaration that ‘This is an interactive film where you make choices which alter the story’ (see Figure 10.2). Again, this sets up the expectation in the player that choices matter, and that there are variations to be explored. Here, choices take the player through a series of video clips, with choice points leading to potentially quite divergent endings. For example, early in the game the player is asked to choose whether Stefan, the main character, agrees to work on his in-development game, also titled *Bandersnatch*, in the offices of game publisher TuckerSoft. If the player agrees, then Stefan works on the game in the company offices, and it is released to a zero-star review, at which point the playthrough ends, taking the player back to the

FIGURE 10.2   Suggesting the player’s choices matter in *Bandersnatch.*
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There are two points to note here that differentiate Bandersnatch from The Walking Dead, other than the use of live-action video rather than cell-shaded animation. First, there clearly are a fair number of quite different endings, ranging from getting a bad rating on the Bandersnatch game that Stefan creates, to discovering that Stefan is actually a delusional actor on a Netflix sound stage who thinks he is Stefan. This variation in the paths and endings provides a certain amount of motivation for replay, as some players will want to try to reach some sense of completion and satisfaction in the form of ‘getting them all’. However, as with The Walking Dead, it isn’t clear how many times the player would actually want to go back and replay the work, rather than, for example, watching a YouTube playthrough of someone else completing the various endings of the work. It is possible that, despite the larger number of endings, as with The Walking Dead, the desire to replay for variation is eventually diminished due to the failure of the work to actually implement a strong connection between the playable system and the narrative units. As Mitchell (2015) argued in the context of The Walking Dead, this can be seen as an example of the ‘Eliza effect’ (Wardrip-Fruin, 2009), in which a system initially gives the impression of complexity, but it quickly becomes clear that the system is not as complex as it initially seemed, at which point, as Mitchell argues, the player’s interest in going back to re-engage with the playable system is diminished or lost completely (Mitchell, Kway, & Lee, 2020).

The second difference is that in Bandersnatch, the structure of the work seems to be designed explicitly for replay. In fact, after many of the ‘endings’ the player is immediately given options to go back and ‘try again’ by jumping back to an earlier choice point and skipping over irrelevant choices. For example, as described above, if the player agrees to have Stefan work at Tuckersoft, Stefan’s game ends up with a ‘zero stars out of five’ rating, and the game appears to restart. However, in this second playthrough the game quickly skips ahead to the previous choice, jumping past some earlier, apparently inconsequential choices. This type of ‘rewind and retry’ happens frequently, often taking the player back to an earlier choice while selectively skipping over previous choices (see Figure 10.3, left). There are only certain endings where an ‘exit to credits’ option appears, at which point the player can choose to initiate an ending, taking the player back to the Netflix interface (see Figure 10.3, right). There are also a few endings...
where the credits immediately roll, after which the player will have to explicitly start again to replay the work.

This structure raises an interesting question: when exactly is the player replaying Bandersnatch? Does going back to ‘try again’ count as a replay? As mentioned earlier, the question of what it means to replay a game if the game hasn’t been completed, and even what it means to complete a game, is not immediately obvious. The ‘try again’ loops in Bandersnatch are more like the rewind mechanics that Kleinman et al. (2018, 2016) describe as explicit meta-game mechanics for moving the story forwards, rather than an actual replaying of the work.

The structure of Bandersnatch, and the number of (sometimes incompatible) variations that the player can encounter on repeated replays, also raises the question of whether a player to some extent feels that she must replay or rewind in a work like this, otherwise she won’t get the ‘complete’ story. By constantly suggesting that there is more, and hinting, through the repeated use of fourth-wall breaking moments and suggestions of cross-sessional memory (Koenitz, 2014; Mitchell, 2018), where characters are perhaps aware of the player and her attempts to replay the game, the game seems to be deliberately withholding any sense of closure, so as to encourage the player to play again and again in an attempt to make sense of the story. In the next section, I will explore this type of replay in more detail.

10.3 REPLACING (AS NECESSARY) FOR COMPLETION/CLOSURE

A work such as Bandersnatch seems to be designed for replay, foregrounding the possibility of variation and providing explicit mechanics for rewinding and replaying. Going beyond this, there are storygames that seem to require replay, either for variation or, more commonly, to reach some sense of completion or closure. Even more so than Bandersnatch,
these works begin to question what it means to replay a storygame and highlight how this relates to the relationship between the playable system and the narrative.

An example of this can be seen in *Save the Date* (Paper Dino Software, 2013), a visual novel that starts off as a simple story about trying to literally save your date, but then quickly becomes a multi-layered, self-referential story about playing and replaying (Mitchell, 2018). In the first few playthroughs, the player tends to focus on trying to make choices that avoid having the non-player character, Felicia, end up dying for a variety of reasons (including peanut allergies, ninja attack, and a collapsing deck) (see Figure 10.4). Soon, the player starts to realize that the only way forwards is by replaying the game, this time with the goal to convince Felicia that the player character (not just the player) is actually replaying a game and trying to figure out how to stop her from dying.

This shift in goal alters the process of replay, essentially unwinding the replay loop into a single, continuous play session. This is another way that the notion of what it means to ‘replay’ can become problematic – if the player is constantly ‘dying’ and then restarting the game, much like in a game of Tetris, but begins to see this as part of a longer process of progressing, both in terms of the playable system and the narrative, in what

![Figure 10.4](image-url)
sense is the player ‘replaying’? It is important to note here that, unlike in *Tetris*, the repeated restarts are not just providing the player with an opportunity to better understand the playable system and therefore make progress towards the ‘ending’, but the player is also developing a better understanding of and making progress in the *narrative*. In this sense, the fact that *Save the Date* is a storygame becomes important to understanding the process of replaying.

Interestingly, it eventually becomes clear to the player that the only way to actually ‘end’ the game is to realize, as Felicia says, that it’s better to stop playing before the inevitable death of the character, thereby ‘saving the date’ from death, but at the same time failing to reach the end of the game, as the play session is prematurely terminated. However, at this point it is still possible to restart one more time, with a change to the original option to not go on the date, which was previously presented as failure to go on the date, but is now presented as a somewhat positive outcome (see Figure 10.5). Here, the player has realized that the system works in such a way that it is possible to move from one set of puzzles to the next (save Felicia from the first restaurant death, save her from the second restaurant death, save her from the meteor death on the hilltop, and realize that the only way to save her from the final death is to quit), and has also realized that the narrative

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**FIGURE 10.5** Playing beyond closure in *Save the Date*. 

*On the balance, maybe this isn’t such a bad place to end the story after all.*
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of the game is not so much about saving the date, but about reflecting on the process of saving the date. This implies that the player has both reached what Mitchell et al. (2020) call system closure, similar to Murray’s electronic closure, which ‘occurs when a work’s structure, though not its plot, is understood’ (Murray, 1998), and narrative closure, the ‘phenomenological feeling of finality that is generated when all the questions saliently posed by the narrative are answered’ (Carroll, 2007).

This approach to replay, which requires the player to repeatedly restart the game to progress in the story, is something that Kleinman et al. (2018, 2016) refer to as a ‘metagame mechanic’, a mechanic that sits above the standard in-game mechanics but is a necessary part of progression in the game. It is important to stress here that this is not necessarily a new phenomenon. Similar strategies of requiring repeat play of the same sequences, either within a play session or across play sessions, have appeared in classic storygames, such as Spider and Web (Plotkin, 1998). It is also similar to the mechanism seen in Eternal Darkness: Sanity’s Requiem (Miyamoto, 2002), which, according to Hanson (2018), ‘prompts its players to replay the entire game several times, with each iteration revealing more of the game’s backstory and recasting its conclusion, culminating with a final true ending that explains and encapsulates each iterative play-through’. As Hanson says, this is perhaps a somewhat dubious approach to replay as it essentially defers the ‘real’ ending as a way to encourage players to replay, requiring extensive replay to reach completion. However, in Save the Date, what is perhaps different is that there is an attempt to reframe the narrative at the level of the individual playthrough in terms of the larger set of replays, creating a higher-level narrative that incorporates the need to replay as part of its internal logic. There is a reframing and what could be considered a ‘twist’ in the narrative, but this twist is not limited to the story – it also changes what the player is doing as they replay. Rather than replaying to save Felicia, the player is replaying to solve the larger puzzle of how to convince Felicia that they are in a game. Later this shifts again to replaying once again to save Felicia, but now across rather than within play sessions. It is worth considering whether this change in what the player is doing as she replays is similar to the shift in what the reader is doing during rereading as described by Mitchell (2012). According to Mitchell, ‘rereading actually involves doing something different’ (2012, p. 74) (emphasis in original), either unconsciously in the case of simple rereading, or consciously in the case of reflective rereading. As the player goes back and shifts goals during these repeated play sessions, initially it
would be safe to assume that she is involved in partial rereading, but possibly, both due to the changing goals in the playable system, and also the meta-fictional nature of the narrative, the player may also be engaging to some extent in reflective rereading.

A similar strategy can be seen in *Doki Doki Literature Club* (**DDLC**; Team Salvato, 2017). Here, the player completes one playthrough of the game, but then goes back through the story, with each playthrough increasing the degree to which the characters break the fourth wall (Roe & Mitchell, 2019). It eventually becoming apparent that, rather than restarts, these are actually ‘pseudo-restarts’ that are unwinding the series of replays, much as in *Save the Date*, into a single, extended narrative. An interesting, extreme example of extended play can be seen in *Nier Automata* (Taro, 2017), in which the player needs to play through the game multiple times, often changing perspective and encountering radical reframings of the narrative, before she has ‘completed’ the game. Also appearing in earlier games in the series, the approach taken in *Nier Automata* requires extreme dedication from the player to actually ‘complete’ the game given the length of each playthrough, as Gerrish (2018) and Jacevic (2018) both discuss in detail.

This strategy of repeated restarts and extended play can take many forms, either in the form of pseudo-restarts, as is the case with **DDLC** and other games such as *The Stanley Parable* (Galactic Cafe, 2013), the use of persistent data that leads to a new game actually continuing from the previous game unless the player explicitly deletes the save game, as in *Save the Date* and *Undertale* (Fox, 2015), or a ‘new game plus’ mode which, as in *Oxenfree* (Night School Studio, 2016), leads to the player eventually discovering that each replay is actually a continuation of a previous playthrough. All of these examples tend to tie together the player’s motivations to both progress in the playable system and also advance their understanding of the narrative, and they do this by requiring repeat play as a means of progression. At the same time, they throw some doubt on the notion of replay, as the repeated play involved in these games seems to actually be part of a larger, single play session moving towards a broader sense of an ‘ending’.

### 10.4 REPLAYING FOR A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

The above discussion suggests that although some storygames are designed so as to *require* replay, it eventually becomes clear that what is happening in these games is not so much a replay as a continuation of the previous
or current play session, focusing much more on the inclusion of additional narrative units rather than revisiting previous aspects of the narrative. *Nier: Automata* is an extreme example of this. Once this extended, linear narrative is complete, there is likely to be little reason for the player to actually replay the game, particularly in cases such as *Nier: Automata* where the length of the game is potentially somewhat prohibitive. There are, however, some storygames where the player is encouraged to replay not simply to complete the extended narrative, but rather to attempt to come to some understanding of the game as a storygame, for example, to understand both the playable system and narrative, and the relationship between the two. This can arguably be seen as similar to Mitchell’s (2015) concept of reflective rereading in interactive stories, as the player is not just looking to complete their understanding, but instead is looking deeper into the work, possibly at both the system and narrative level.

One example of this approach can be seen in *Cultist Simulator* (The Weather Factory, 2018), a ‘rogue-like card game’ that requires the player to repeatedly fail and play again, so as to both uncover the narrative and also develop an understanding of the various layers of game mechanics and how those mechanics relate to the story. *Cultist Simulator* involves the player working to manage a number of ‘timers’ that consume ‘cards’ and produce other ‘cards’, in the process uncovering a narrative about a character who is working to uncover occult mysteries and build a cult (see Figure 10.6).

The game is extremely unforgiving, with no explicit ‘save’ mechanism, and a ‘permadeath’ mechanic, such that failure requires a complete restart. The game also does not provide any information as to how to play the game, much like other permadeath games (*Don’t Starve* (Klei Entertainment, 2013) comes to mind), forcing the player to replay many times to simultaneously uncover the workings of the game world and the related story. In fact, at the start of the game the player is explicitly told that ‘You won’t always know what to do next. Keep experimenting, and you’ll master it’ (see Figure 10.7). This tends to retain the player’s focus on both the playable system and the narrative units. It also draws attention to the possible relationship between these two elements, both at a metaphorical level (both the player and the player character are trying to understand ‘how the world works’ and to dig into the system under the surface of the world, either in terms of game mechanics or occult mechanics) and at a mechanical level (unlocking narrative units and unlocking gameplay tend to coincide). Unlike a game such as *Bandersnatch*, where the connection between
playable system and narrative is not particularly strong, leading to a loss of motivation for replay, in _Cultist Simulator_, the player needs to continue working to understand both aspects of the work, and how they relate to each other (Mitchell et al., 2020). This helps to sustain the player’s desire to replay.

Similarly, _Blood and Laurels_ (Short, 2014), an iPad-based story built on the now-defunct _Versu_ (Evans & Short, 2014) system, closely ties the

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**FIGURE 10.6** Game mechanics and narrative units are closely connected in _Cultist Simulator._

**FIGURE 10.7** Encouraging the player to explore in _Cultist Simulator._

“**The Wood grows around the walls of the Mansus.**

As any student of Histories knows, the Mansus has no walls.”

*Christopher Ilopopo, Travelling at Night*

*Explore. Take risks.*

*You won’t always know what to do next. Keep experimenting, and you’ll master it.*
playable system to the unfolding narrative. In *Blood and Laurels*, the player actions, conveyed through dialogue choices, change the underlying state of the storyworld, with available actions determined by a set of ‘social practices’ that model what conversational moves would be appropriate for the player character to take in the current situation (see Figure 10.8). A similar model is used to determine what actions non-player characters have available, and which actions are selected to move the story forwards. The actions the player takes, the potential directions the story can move as represented by the display of each character’s mental state, and the actions taken by NPCs, all represent a complex playable system which generates

![](image-url)

**FIGURE 10.8** Making choices in *Blood and Laurels*. 

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the narrative units. These narrative units, in turn, help to determine how the player makes sense of what she has done, and what she can do next to move the story forwards. As with *Cultist Simulator*, in *Blood and Laurels*, the ongoing process of play, and the resulting progression, requires the player to keep all the elements of the storygame, both the playable system and the narrative units, in mind while playing the game.

As Mitchell (2015) describes, the complexity of the playable system and the resulting narrative in *Blood and Laurels* allows for repeated playthroughs, with each playthrough not following on from the previous playthrough, and not representing a ‘branch’ in a predetermined set of paths, but instead representing an emergent narrative as determined by the player’s actions and the authored set of social practices. As such, repeat play involves trying to work out the impact of the player character’s actions and how these actions fit into the larger ‘social physics’ (Murray, 1998) that characterizes the way the storyworld works. This allows for repeated plays that do not end when the player has ‘seen everything’, but rather when she ‘gets’ the system, and its relationship to the narrative. Designing the playable system around a model of social practice makes it possible for *Blood and Laurels* to enable both variability across repeat plays, and a deeper level of nuance and narrative richness, as the player comes to appreciate the nature of the playable narrative system. Rather than a separate playable system and set of narrative units, these two aspects of the storygame are inextricably connected, making playing one the same as attending to the other. This allows for the *storygameness* of the work to persist across repeat plays (Mitchell et al., 2020), making the understanding of the system an engaging reason for the player to continue to play, and replay, the storygame.

**10.5 CONCLUSION**

In the above discussion, I have shown that there are a number of ways for a game designer to encourage and reward repeat experiences of storygames:

- using variation to encourage replay;
- requiring replay for closure (effectively unwinding the replays into a longer narrative); and
- requiring replay for a deeper understanding of both system and narrative.

Each of these approaches has advantages and disadvantages. Replay for variation is satisfying to some extent, as is replay for closure, but both tend
to require a lot of content, and eventually the player’s interest in replaying will be exhausted either once the content is exhausted, or (more likely) once the player ‘gets it’, and no longer feels the need to actually see new content, instead feeling that she can predict what the content will be based on the previously encountered variations. Replay for a deeper understanding, in contrast, requires a much more complex playable system, and it can be very challenging to effectively tie this playable system closely to the narrative. However, this approach potentially leads to a much more replayable storygame, creating an experience in some ways closer to traditional replayability of non-narrative games, due to the incorporation of the story into the game mechanics, rather than seeing the narrative and the playable system as separate types of experience. This merging of replay of a rich playable system and the experience of a rich narrative closely tied to the playable system may be one way to move beyond the tension Hanson (2018) identified between a rich, replayable game system and a rich, but ultimately linear, narrative experience.

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