**Play! Critical Response 4**

“Her Story” & “The Stanley Parable”

*My Play! Experience*

**Her Story**

The game “Her Story” provided a very unique experience to players by using unconventional rules and gameplay to tell a linear story in a non-linear way. You begin investigating into the missing case / murder of Simon Smith using a video database containing interview clips of his wife, Hannah Smith. I found this game to be a perfect candidate for defining video games as an art form for its excellent narrative. As previously mentioned, it tells a story, like a book, in a non-linear way. The player is given little guidance, being encouraged to search for key words of their own thoughts to find information in the form of more video clips in order to solve the mystery. There is a very clear linearity to the clips as each one contains a date of when the interview was conducted. The player coauthors the story as the story is told at the players own pace. One player may search a keyword leading to specific interviews while another may go another direction. This kind of interactive story telling combines the artistry of books and movies and incorporates interactivity. So in a sense, would that not be video games as an art as well? The story progresses in a way unique to the mindset of the player. For example the player may focus on the twin aspect of the character Hannah and look for all relative information to Eve. Following this path may lead the player to a final conclusion based on jealously between the twins, making the drama fairly player driven. I felt that this game really brought a unique perspective to narrative in video games. It kept me invested throughout, and every interaction felt meaningful and progressive.

**The Stanley Parable**

Every once in a while a game will come along that tries to turn players’ perceptions of a game upside down. “The Stanley Parable” is one of those games. It uses audio, character, and level design to challenge the player into either obeying or disobeying the rules of the Narrator, a character specifically designed to impose rules on the player. The Narrator is a form of meta-communication, essentially conveying the rules of the game as a person rather than innately through visual or interactional queues. It main charm is the ability to do what you want, when you want. If you don’t feel like listening the Narrator direct you anymore, you can do the opposite. You can even take it to such an extent as jumping off the expected map into new areas. I found the game to be a story about interactivity. Its entire purpose was to bring to light how we as players interact with video games, telling a narrative based on how we choose to interact based on the rules provided to us or how we choose to explore disregarding the rules. There is something for everyone in this game as it almost captures every type of play style, and provides a response. For example those like myself who love to explore will find reactions to every attempt at looking around at different objects in the world. Those who like a straight forward story can follow the Narrator and take the given paths. The freedom “The Stanley Parable” provides is what makes this game so enjoyable and its narration style lends this game to be analyzed for how to better improve all genres of games through its psychological interpretation of the mind of a gamer.

1. *What kind of gameplay experiences do so-called classic games provide modern players?*

These games provide an insight into the potential story telling has in video games as a whole. While both “Her Story” and “The Stanley Parable” are both more to the side of paida. They represent a piece of all games, the narrative. They present the concept of player driven stories, or rather, players as a co-author, where the player determines the direction the story goes. These games both show that it is possible to create stories that are so versatile that the player can be given the freedom to choose their own fate.

1. *Are old games only worth historical analysis, or do they fascinate & hold staying power?*