

Egregore

Thesis Pitch - Michael Wahba



(Upton, *Situational Game Design*)

The diagram consists of two light blue rounded rectangles with orange outlines. The left rectangle contains the text "Game as Experienced". The right rectangle contains the text "Game as Understood". A thick orange arrow points from the right rectangle to the left rectangle.

Game as Experienced

Game as Understood

Situations

Player

(Upton, *Situational Game Design*)

Player Knowledge Representation

Player Knowledge Representation - Fill in the Blanks

This unknown soul
was shot with a gun
by an unknown attacker.

1 Memory

Return of the Obra Dinn

The scroll is filled in correctly.
All identities are filled in correctly.
Everything is filled in correctly.

Peter Battley was upset to receive aphorisms in Sebastian Cloudsley's will and ordered Adam Fear and James Fear to take the idol from Willard Wright.

Suddenly James Fear died from spontaneous combustion.

Adressed to Rose Cubert

We met so rarely after you left for colonies... Therefore I bequeath to you my savings, land, and the Blackfield man's house; come here and establish a museum of my life and accomplishments.

I want you to put your sharp mind to better use than new politics. Therefore I bequeath to you the notes from the research I have undertaken on astronomy. I grant you leave to finish and publish it under both our names.

Adressed to Edmund Cloudsley

My dear late sister poor mother disclosed your financial troubles to me long ago and I resolved to help you. I bequeath to you a compilation of my aphorisms to provide the direction in your life which you so clearly lack.

Adressed to Peter Battley

I bequeath to you the golden idol of Xenopolis. You will know what to do with it.

Adressed to Willard Wright

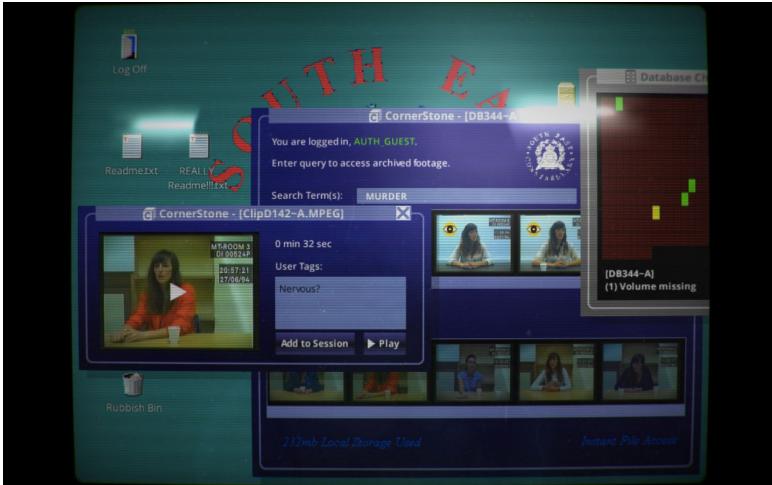
Exploring → Thinking

happy scared inspired house research

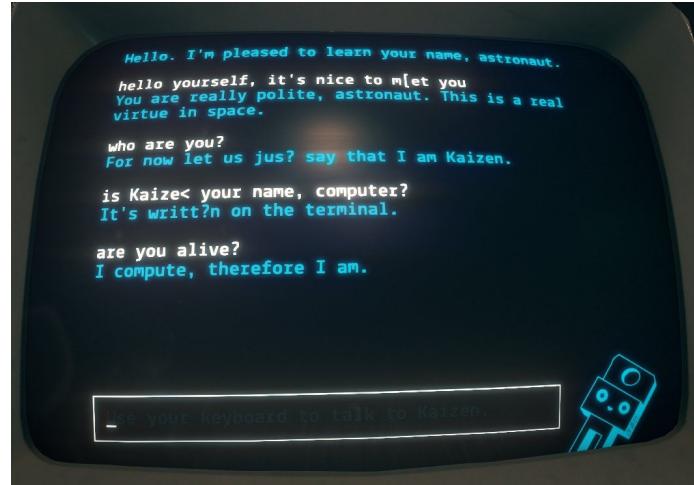
26/26 A-Z ?

Case of the Golden Idol

Player Knowledge Representation - Limited Natural Language



Her Story



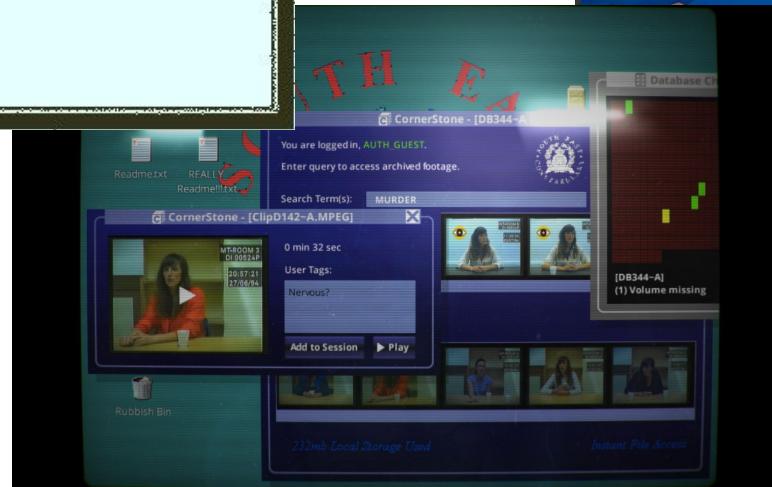
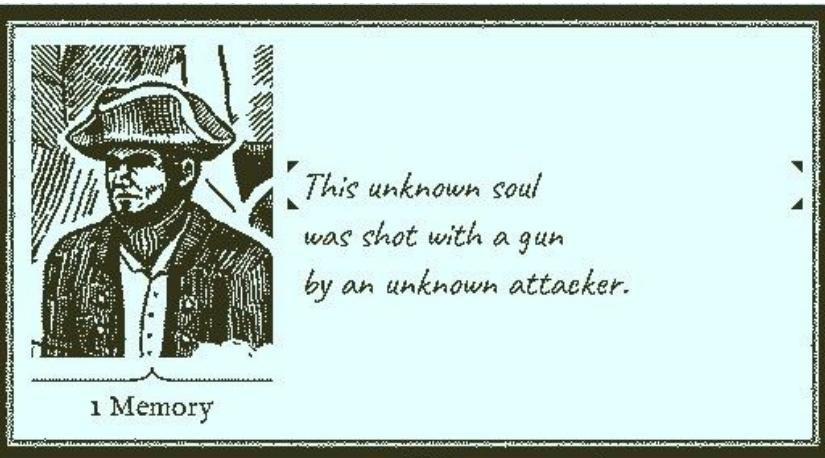
Event[0]

Player Knowledge Representation - Time and Space

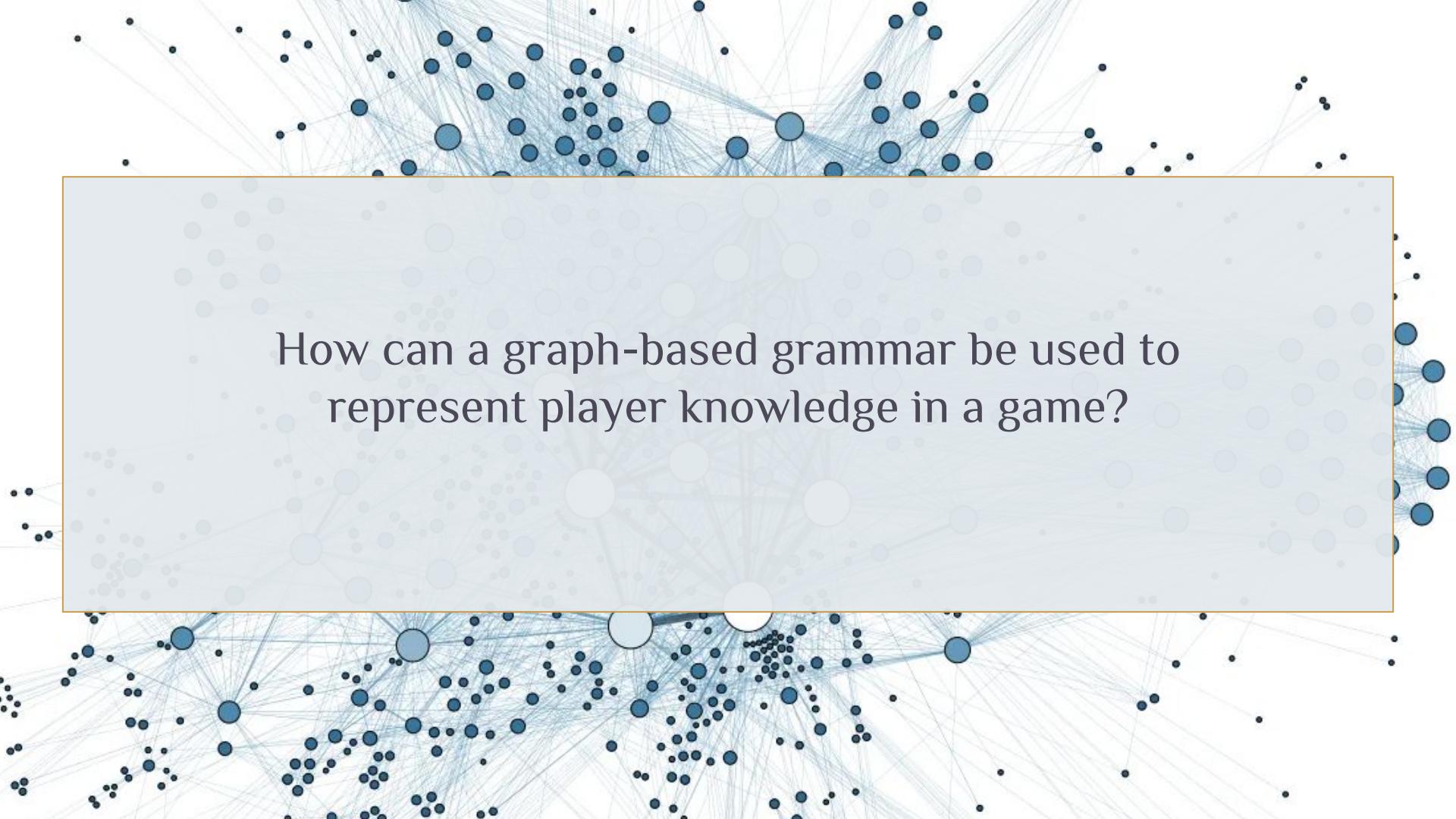


Outer Wilds

Player Knowledge Grammars







How can a graph-based grammar be used to represent player knowledge in a game?

Egregore

First-person adventure game, set in modern Egypt, where you uncover an occult conspiracy by manipulating nodes on a graph to shape your reality.

Platforms: PC and Mac

Audience: 18+

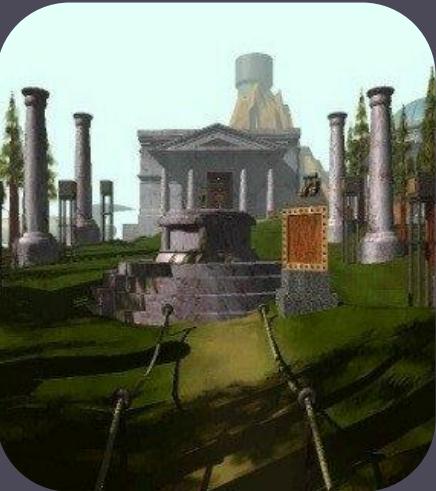
Tools: Unreal Engine 5



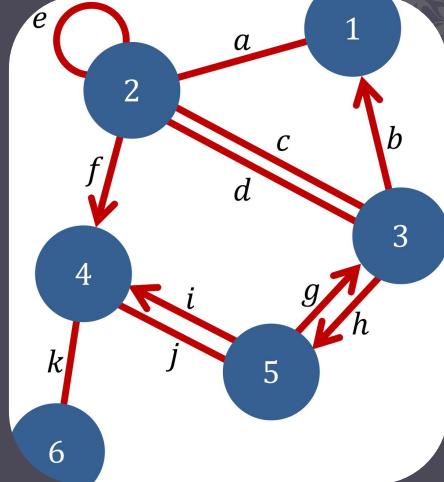
Inspirations



Case of the
Golden Idol



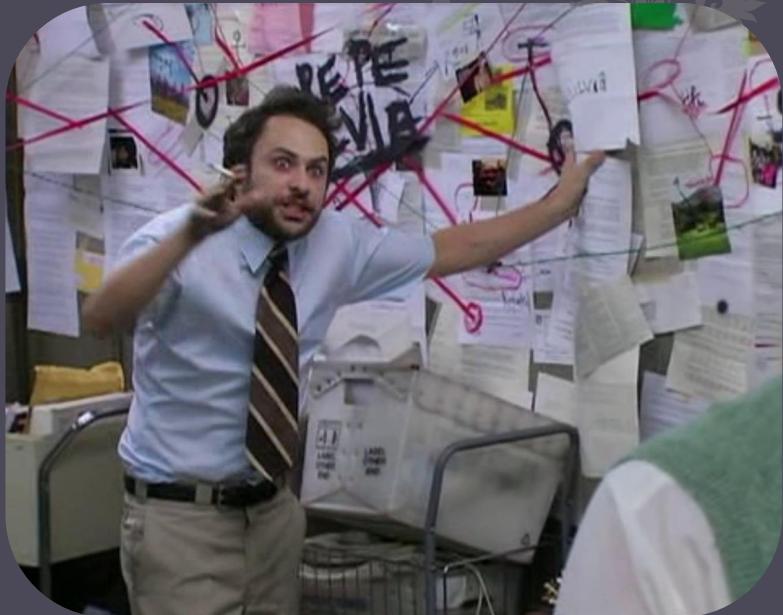
Myst



Graph Theory

Narrative Hook

- You are involved in an esoteric cult using mass social engineering to manifest an Egregore - a non-physical entity which arises from the collective thoughts of a group of people.
 - You will decide to what extent you go along with their plans or try to disrupt them.
 - You will question whether the cult actually exists or whether you are reading too much into something that is not really there.



Experience Goal

Players will feel surprised by discovering the affordances of a new interaction mechanic and experience the paranoia of uncovering a conspiracy while being fed misinformation.

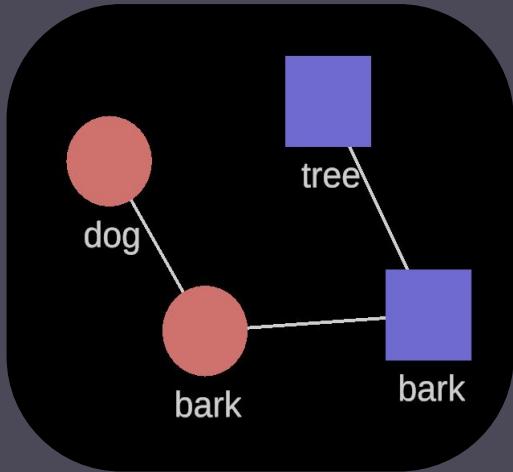
Switch Mode



Salim

Too drafty? How is

Further Design Plans



Constraints on
Nodes/Graphs



Graphs Hidden in
Plain Sight



Realtime
Dynamic
Environments

Core Loop



Exploring



Talking



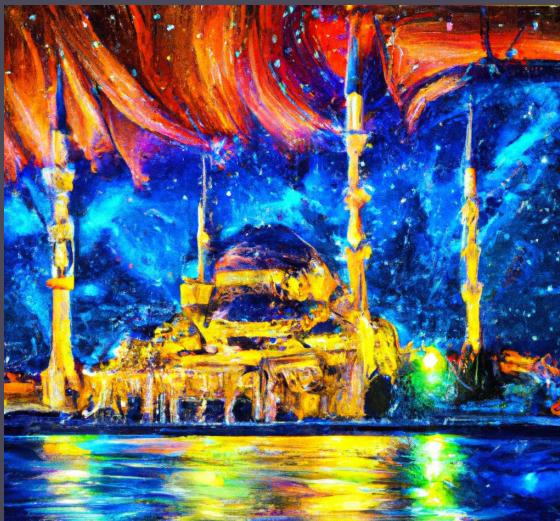
Graphing

Controls
Left Mouse - Create
Right Mouse - Draw
Left Mouse + Ctrl -
Arrow Keys - Pan
Mouse Wheel - Zoom

Design Pillars

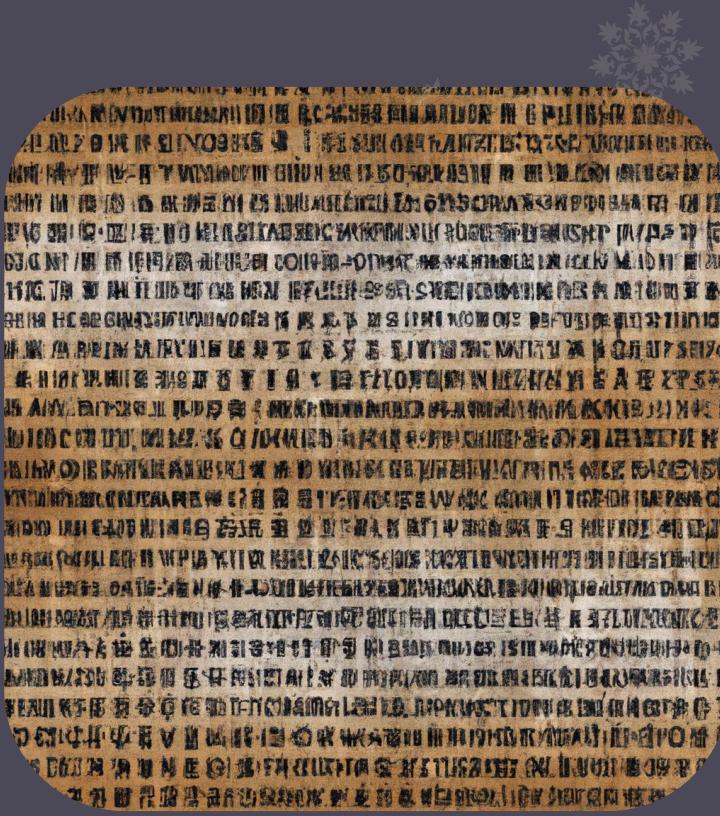
1. Graph-Based Player Knowledge Representation
2. Dynamic and Responsive Game World
3. Aesthetic Recontextualization of Middle East
4. Ambiguous Narrative and Unreliable Information





Narrative Themes

- How does information shape our perception of reality?
- How can information spread like a virus?
- How do the networks of information that surround us manipulate us?
- Interrogating the usage of symbols in our modern society.
- Literary/Narrative influences
 - *The Crying of Lot 49*
 - *Foucault's Pendulum*
 - *Immortality*
 - *Pentiment*



Technology Solutions

Engine Prototypes



Team and Schedule

- 1 - Director
- 2 - Producers
- 2 - Designers
- 3 - Engineers
- 6 - Artists
- 2 - UI/UX
- 1 - QA
- 1 - Narrative
- 2 - Audio
- 1 - Marketing
- 1 - Usability

Spring/Summer 2023

- Pre-production
- Recruiting

Fall 2023

- Sept
 - First Playable
- December
 - State of the Game

Spring 2024

- Feburary
 - Alpha
- April
 - Beta
- Gold Master
- USC Expo

Risks

<u>Risks</u>	<u>Mitigation</u>
UI/UX and Usability Challenges	Usability testing early and often. Working closely with faculty
Teaching a new mechanic to players in short amount of time	Prioritizing tutorialization
Designing graph puzzles/obstacles that are not too esoteric	Rapid, low-fi prototyping of in-game puzzles/obstacles

Thank You



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Appendix



Narrative Beats

Act I

- Player is first exposed to cult in a short intro sequence that also acts as a tutorial.
- Player is motivated by discovering their connection to this mysterious cult.

Act II

- Find more evidence and go down the occult rabbit hole.
- Uncover their plans and potentially start sabotaging them or aiding them.

Act III

- All leading up to a final climactic moment.
- Right before the moment where it appears the truth will be revealed - cut to black.

Act IV (Outside the Game - Inside the Mind)

- The player comes to their own conclusion whether the egregore has been manifested into the world.