



## ANALYSIS OF NARRATIVE DESIGN



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VIDEOGAME DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT  
HYPERMEDIA NARRATIVE AND VIDEOGAMES ANALYSIS



*Do not Feed the Monkeys* (2018) is an indie videogame developed by the Madrid-based company Fictiorama Studios. In this game, the player is given the responsibility of watching over some primates in their natural habitat and, as the title and logo symbol itself command, to not feed them. This refusal implants the seed of curiosity and morbid interest, generating an incitement to feed these apes and even attempt against the main character's safety to do what he has been forbidden. And what is more interactive than the imperious need to do something?

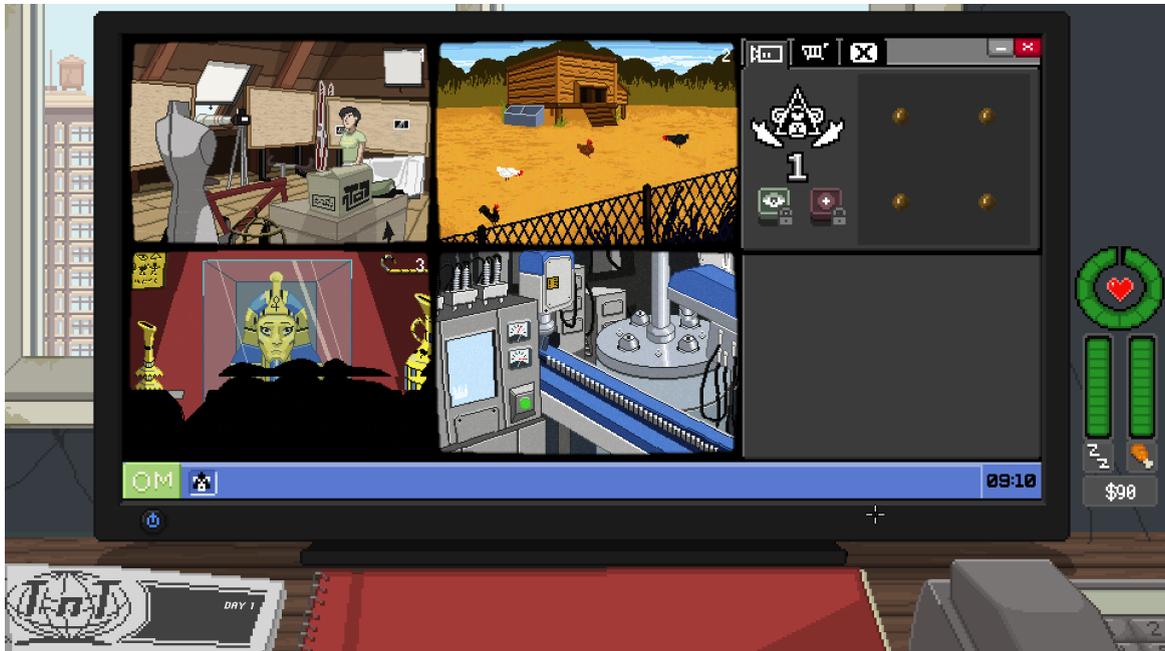


*The game's logo symbol.*

As mentioned in *Aprovecha el tiempo y juega* (Daniel Aranda and Jordi Sánchez-Navarro, 2009), videogames need the player's participation to become a reality since he is the one who brings the characters to life. However, in this title there is the following dichotomy: while if the gamer does not play, none of the cages are observed, and the main character simply limits himself to work, eat and sleep in consequence (as in life itself), the stories that the game wants to tell are not related, but they do exist, although they are not developed. They are like a movie playing in the background, like white noise, but they are there, they exist. This concludes that the observation mechanic is dispensable, a possible reward or penalty that is given in the game if the player decides to intervene, and that alters the enunciation. Thus, everything is an artifice for the gamer to interact, to play. The videogame itself is an insistent attempt to observe the cages, the primates, to feed the monkeys.

In the midst of the technological era, the lack of privacy and computer security is one of the prior citizens' concerns. The main mechanics of the game is the observation of other

people's lives. Moreover, with Orwellian and *The Truman Show* (Peter Weir, 1998)'s overtones, cameras, morbidity, and curiosity are everything. This story has been told before, a social critique with conspiratorial and Illuminati touches. However, it opts for a *mise en abyme*: the stories are told inside the protagonist's story.

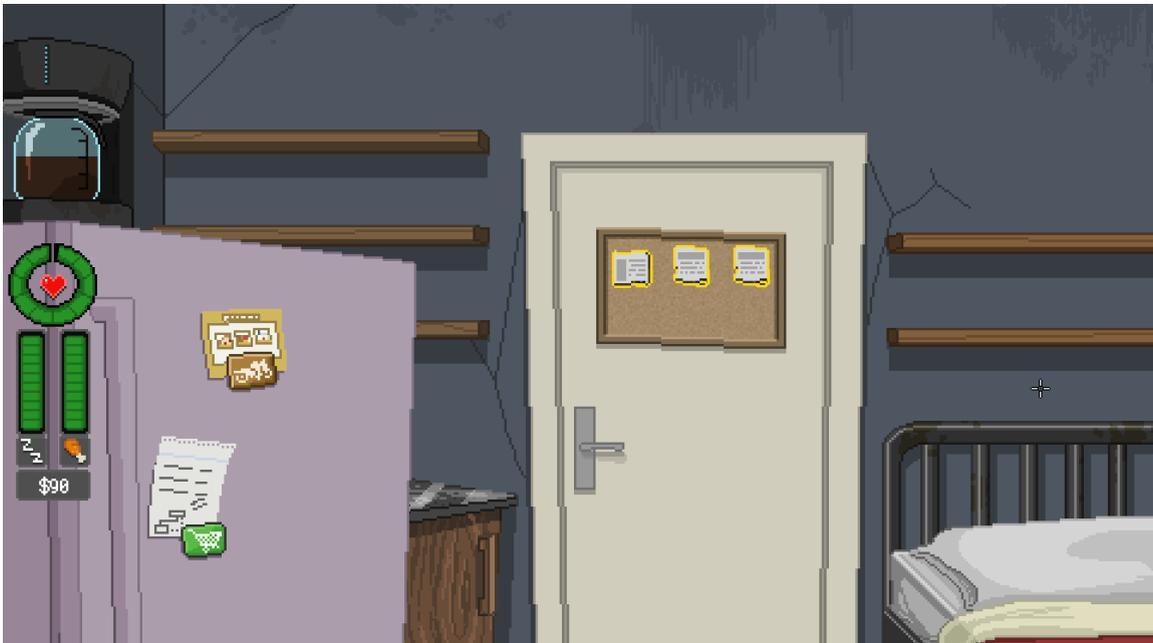


*The interface. Point-of-view shot.*

This absolute identification, together with the interface, evokes *Her Story* (Sam Barlow, 2015), a game in which each experience is different, each player will live his adventure, even though the story is the same. This fact also happens in this game from Madrid: each player will have his own experience since the progress of the plot depends on the gamer itself. In addition to this, the existence of varied cages makes the possibility of seeing all of them in one game almost impossible (leading to an emergent narrative). This reality provides replayability as a vital factor, and like in *Undertale* (Tobby Fox, 2015), the player will continue his adventure to see what will happen, playing with the lives of the apes as a God. Moreover, this idea of superiority is reinforced by the presentation of the monkeys since the name itself is derogatory.

This interface in the format of multiple cameras, totally static, gives room for multiple out-of-plane and half-hearted conversations. This fact, as the study conducted by a team of researchers from Cornell University (New York, USA) states, makes the gamer unable to predict what is coming next, forcing him to pay more attention. On the other hand, the use of a framing-based observation contributes to an increase in curiosity and serves as an incentive to investigate and probe deeper into the question.

Since the game is Spanish, there is an element of social criticism. In this case, it stands out the fact that the main character lives in an apartment worthy of being rented in the very center of Madrid: 900€ a month for barely 10m<sup>2</sup>. Every so often, the landlady will come to ask for the rent. The character must pay her without making her wait too long since she is a mother (either presumably single or very busy, possibly both) of two twins, so she needs to maintain her family. Meanwhile, a satirically Donald Trump-like president decides to take a vacation after an arduous presidential fight to get re-elected again, bombarding his people with intrusive advertising, as can be seen on the Billboard camera. This dichotomy extends to the apes, as they live in different environments: while one of them accepts the end of his life, condemned by a megacorporation, another one enjoys his money at the expense of the less privileged. That is where the protagonist comes in: he is the game-changer, the justice, the omnipotent god who is not omniscient.



*The room.*

It is worth highlighting the use of the Internet and, more specifically, of a pseudo-YouTube: *Shock-TV*. The monkeys will do some actions that can be recorded and uploaded to the network. However, the decision of what is worthy of becoming content does not fall on the player but on the video platform itself. These mechanics may evoke to *We become what we behold* (Mismatch Studio, 2016) since it encourages morbidity, violence, and those acts that are considered ridiculous and a reason for mockery.

In conclusion, *Do not feed the monkeys* is a game that has a lot to say about such overused concepts as the discomfort of the lower middle class, the excessive use of the Internet, misinformation, and morbidity. However, this experience stands out for how these themes are told: the interactivity that provides the player with a great sense of freedom, using a

branching path structure, as well as curiosity, which attack the most instinctive part of the human being, the most primitive, because, in the end, the player is the one who decides to accept the terms and conditions. He is the one who looks at the apes and chooses to feed them, but why does he do it? Does he want to feel superior? Does he believe that his moral judgment is the right one? Or, does he know it is all just a game, and, what does it matter? They are just binary numbers, right? Monkeys don't feel, don't think. They're there for us to throw them some peanuts and dance to our will.



*"Mediocre Monkey" end.*

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