CYBERDRAMA – EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES

Susan Davis
Central Queensland University

Abstract

What is cyberdrama and how can you create drama to be experienced through a fully mediated form on the Internet? This was one of the questions that underpinned the process for creating the cyberdrama www.cleo-missing.com in 2005. This article explores definitions of cyberdrama and outlines the possible elements of cyberdrama. It also focuses on how aspects of process drama offer up huge potential for the creation of on-line interactive drama.

Susan Davis *is currently lecturing at CQU Noosa Hub in the Bachelor of Learning Management and recently completed her Masters research at Queensland University of Technology (QUT). She has been a drama educator for twenty years and was until recently a secondary school Performing Arts Head of Department. She currently sits on the Queensland Studies Authority state panel for drama and was involved in the development of the Drama component of the Queensland 1-10 Arts Syllabus. Sue worked on the Drama Queensland committee for many years, initiating the XL-D Drama Showcase in partnership with Queensland Performing Arts Complex and has also been a project officer for Drama Australia developing two sets of guidelines.*

Keywords: *CYBERDRAMA, INTERACTIVE DRAMA, INTERACTIVE NARRATIVE, DRAMA AND NEW MEDIA, CYBERTEXT, PROCESS DRAMA.*

In recent times we have seen considerable interest in exploring the use of communications technologies in drama (Carroll, 2005; Carroll and Cameron, 2003; Flintoff, 2003; Haseman, 2004; O'Toole, 2004). This has included the incorporation of new media in live performance (Auslander, 1999; Schrum, 1999) and some work which has explored the nature of drama in a mediated form — i.e., performed through the Internet. For drama educators, however, there are not a lot of examples which are currently available online which explore how this might be realised in practice. Therefore in 2005, as part of my research studies I explored the process of creating an interactive online drama (cyberdrama or cybersoap) which became www.cleo-missing.com . Through the enactment of this process I wished to explore the nature of engagement that might occur for various kinds of participants (though this is not elaborated upon in this article). Within this article I'll discuss definitions of cyberdrama and elements of cyberdrama that may be relevant to drama educators. Reference is particularly made to the form of process drama and its relevance to the creation of interactive work to be experienced on-line.

Cyberdrama background

The study and project revolved around the development of a cyberdrama. To build an understanding of what this might look like, a number of definitions and concepts were explored. These included: the notion of 'cyber' as in cyberspace; the concept of an interactive drama or theatre and how the field of 'process drama' might be helpful in understanding how a cyberdrama might be created. A consideration of all these areas helped identify the elements of a cyberdrama.

The term 'cyberspace' was first used by William Gibson in his cyber-punk novel *Neuromancer* (1984). This term has since become popularised, with cyberspace generally being used to describe that world that exists in relation to the human-computer interface — the digitised space whereby physical barriers of appearance, geographical space and form disappear (LeNoir, 1999). The notion of cyberdrama then starts to emerge as a drama that is realised in this cyberspace. So, what might drama become in this space? In *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace*, Janet Murray explores the various kinds of emerging narrative and storytelling experiences available in cyberspace and loosely defines cyberdrama as such:

> . . . new kinds of narrative under the single umbrella term of *cyberdrama* because the coming digital story form . . . like the novel or the movie, will encompass many different formats and styles but will essentially be a single distinctive entity. It will not be an interactive this or that, however much it may draw upon tradition, but a reinvention of storytelling itself for the new digital medium. . . As a new generation grows up, it will take participatory form for granted and will look for ways to participate in ever more subtle and expressive stories. (Murray, 1997:271)

For Murray, narrative is a key feature of her defining of cyberdrama. For her the experience of the story is still important, combined with the opportunity for participation to help create experiences of immersion and satisfaction. This acknowledgement of the space for readers or participants to become actively involved is one that is important in trying to create a work or text that can operate within cyberspace and similar to the concept of 'open works' as outlined by the work of Eco (1979). He identified developments in some twentieth century artworks whereby the 'author' or creators had deliberately left some sections almost 'unfinished' and open to the individual artist or performer to complete the end product. He emphasised that this did not just mean open to interpretation and that not every text that is open (i.e. a dictionary) is an open work.

For the purposes of this study, the focus was on exploring cyberdrama where the focus was more on creating a drama rather than an interactive role-play game. Other terms that may be used for this kind of drama (if you are looking for them on the Internet) include 'web series', 'webisodic' and 'cybersoaps'. A scan of the history of these kinds of cybertexts reveals a period of intense activity in the commercial sphere in the late 1990s. Most of these cyberdramas were quite short-lived and in some cases not particularly successful (Chwastiak, 1998a,b; Penenberg, 1997). Some of the issues identified for the development of commercial cyberdrama relate to how to generate revenue, the form (mix of text, graphics, etc.) accessibility for users and download issues. It is interesting to note that, even though technologically the potential for this market should have opened up in recent years, in fact there has been little new development in the commercial field. There have been some other explorations of cyberdrama from within educational contexts,

however, in contexts where funding and sponsorship does not need to be generated through the Internet users [See *To the Spice Islands*, De Montfort University interactive soap opera, *Candira*, and *Planet Jemma* (Carroll and Cameron, 2003; De Montfort University, 2003; mlab, 2001; XPT and NESTA, 2003)].

Some potential for interactive drama has also been explored through convergence with television series and interactive television — for example, the *Fat Cow Motel* series on the ABC (Tarica, 2003). Recent reports (Sinclair, 2005) about the development of new cybersoaps/mobisoaps in Australia (*24* and *Random Place* for Vodafone, *Girl Friday* for Telstra's i-mode) highlight how this emerging form is being created mainly as a means of generating more revenue. Production houses, in collaboration with media companies, are vying for income from the multi-million dollar mobile phone market; they are not people concerned so much with developing new art forms that engage young people as creators or meaning makers but, rather, with creating new income streams. It is probably fair to say overall that development in the field of cyberdrama (apart from role-play type commercial games) has not been as rapid as Murray might have expected. As a more recent publication *First Person* suggests,

> . . . cyberdrama exists as a powerful force of imagination . . . even if it has not yet been fully realized. (Wardrip-Fruin and Harrigan, 2004:1)

Defining cyberdrama

In working toward a definition of cyberdrama, perhaps it is the process of participants taking on roles in a fictional world realised within a digital space, with the potential for interaction in the development of a story or narrative. The specific nature of performers and audience are not defined here as these are roles which are often blurred in various kinds of drama processes and cybertext experiences. In this kind of framework it is possible that some video games, interactive fiction and live action roleplaying games such as in MUDs, MOOs and MMORPGs [see LeNoir (1999) and Prensky (2003) for details] may be included as well as cybersoaps or others cybertexts that include combinations of text, images and video material. To make the distinction between cyberdrama and many interactive games clearer, it is useful to reflect on comments which have been made by people who have been involved in both game and interactive story development. Chris Crawford (2005), for example, claims that games focus more on what you do with objects, whereas stories (and in this case drama) are about what happens to people. At it simplest then, cyberdrama could be defined as fictional stories about people *performed* on the Internet. Some of the on-line games certainly demonstrate many of these elements but the development of a strong story or narrative is not always evident.

Common to discussions regarding cyber-texts of this kind are the concepts of 'hypertext' and 'interactivity'. Basically put, hypertexts provide readers with points (links or nodes) whereby they may make choices about the pathway they wish to take. (Aarseth, 1997; Meadows, 2003; Punday, 2004; Ryan, 2004). The text is generally broken up into units, often called 'lexia', a term borrowed from Roland Barthes' work *S/Z* (1974), which refers to portions of text which each have a different meaning or effect. In an interactive narrative, the story may branch at various locations and the user can choose which direction to take, hence building a sense of engagement with users pulled into a process that continues to draw them deeper and deeper (Meadows, 2003). The nature of the interactivity can vary enormously, though, from choosing between limited pathways to those whereby

the user can affect and change the plot. It is these second kind of interactive narratives that many commentators are most interested in seeing developed further (Laurel, 1993; Meadows, 2003; Murray, 1997). An interesting term that Aarseth (1997) introduces in regard to this negotiation of different pathways is that of 'ergodic intrigue' — a kind of dramatic tension that helps engage the 'user' and structures the experience:

> But there is nevertheless a structuring element in these (cyber) texts, which in some way does the controlling or at least motivates it. As a new term for this element I propose *intrigue*, to suggest a secret plot in which the user is the innocent but voluntary target . . . with an outcome that is not yet decided — or rather with several possible outcomes that depend on various factors, such as the cleverness and experience of the player (112). Ergodic intrigue is directed against the user, who must figure out for herself what is going on. (Aarseth, 1997:113)

A feature of this kind of interaction is where the separate functions of the author and the reader, the actor and the audience are broken down and:

> users of such a system are like audience members who can march up onto the stage and become various characters, altering the action by what they say and do in their roles. (Laurel, 1993:16)

Cyberdrama and process drama

While Laurel draws extensively on classical dramatic theory to inform and underpin her vision of future cybertexts, there is another dramatic form — that of process drama — which offers up enormous potential for structures and processes which could help in the development of interactive cyberdramas. Similar to other kinds of interactive texts, process drama is another form whereby roles such as playwright, actor and character-spectator are blurred and where a framework can be created that offers narrative development as well as elements of user or participant freedom.

John Carroll started to draw together the similarities between the two fields in his *Spice Islands* project and has used the term 'Interactive Process Drama' to encompass work that draws on both traditions:

> The term 'Interactive Drama', introduced by Joseph Bates . . . and picked up by Marie-Laure Ryan, Brenda Laurel, Margaret Kelso and others, is well known in the field of the digital arts. 'Process Drama' draws on the drama work of Dorothy Heathcote, Gavin Bolton, Cecily O'Neill and Augusto Boal and, with its role-based improvisational performance conventions, is perhaps less well known within the digital performance area. (Carroll and Cameron, 2003)

The term process drama has arisen from the field of educational drama and originated from the kind of work conducted by Dorothy Heathcote (Wagner, 1976) and Gavin Bolton (1992), and has been extended upon by the likes of Brad Haseman (1991), John O'Toole (1992) and Cecily O'Neill (1995; Taylor, 1995). While there may be an end product to such a process, the focus is on the experience of participants as they help build fictional worlds, taking on various roles within specific frames, scenes and, perhaps we could add here, lexia. The concept of narrative is generally driven by the introduction of dramatic tension, often requiring the participants to investigate and problem solve — a kind of active engagement which helps strengthen and build commitment to their roles and the fiction. These kinds of processes are indeed open works and rely on the active participation of the process leader and other participants to be realised.

While the main action in a process drama is improvised, the role of 'leader' (Haseman, 2001; Simons, 2001) is a key one in this process, in helping create the fictional world, often introducing a stimulus or pre-text (O'Neill, 1995). The leader then initiates participants into the drama and works actively throughout the process, both *in-role* (as a character) and *out-of-role* (as the teacher reflecting and narrating dramatic episodes) (Morgan & Saxton, 1987). This active, ongoing, live involvement of a leader is something that is often missing from the literature on digital interactive drama.

Elements of cyberdrama

In considering the various elements and concerns presented in this section, it therefore seems useful to draw them together in a tentative model of the 'elements' of interactive drama or cyberdrama. Under each element a continuum has been created to show that there are a range of choices that can usually be made in relation to each of the elements, depending on the form and nature of the drama. While there are specific terms at each end of the continua, I wish to emphasise that these do not represent binary oppositions and there is no value judgment placed on either end. Often in the field of the digital arts there is a real valuing of the notion of works that are totally open and virtual. This is not the case with this model. It is possible that there are innovative, valuable and interesting works being created that draw on these elements at different points on these continua. The value of these continua is that they can help in identifying what might need to be considered in the creation of an interactive drama and how various elements might be manipulated.

Cleo- missing — creating a cyberdrama

The creative project on which the research was based occurred in the first half of 2005. There were four core project participants who were all QUT students as well as myself. The creation and editing of content were managed within the project team. We worked with professional website designers to create the shell of the cyberdrama site, and I uploaded content onto this through their content management system.

After viewing a range of sites and possible forms for our drama there were a number of issues that I identified as requiring consideration:

- Entry point and flow for the drama — is it just one person's story or a number of overlapping narratives? It seemed that dramas that focused on one main character or a small number of characters were easier to follow and made it possible for users to join at any stage;
- Nature and degree of interactivity — what features made users feel that they were involved in the drama and had some real interaction with it? Voting to determine between two paths for the narrative seemed to be a fairly common (but not very significant) option that had been used previously. The use of forums also seemed to be fairly important, helping create a community of interest around the website. The potential is there for them to be used as a means of impacting on the narrative and to allow users to take on roles within the drama and provide input into the narrative;

Place/space

'Real' World <<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>> Virtual World

Time

'Real' Time <<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>> Created Time

Characters

Predetermined, rehearsed <<<<<<<<<<<<<>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>> Improvised, open

Embodiment

Live/human <<<<<<< Mediated <<<<<< Re-mediated >>>>>>>> Artificial Intelligence

Text & Lexia

Written text or one kind of lexia <<<<<<<<<<<>>>>>>>>>>> Multi-media/Multi-model lexia

Narrative Flow

Closed <<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<< Work in movement >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>> Open

Dramatic Tension/Ergotic Intrigue

Dramatic hooks & questions <<<<<>>>> Searching for the pathway to the next lexia or out

Text Creation

Preconceived/Fixed <<<<<<<<<<<<<<<>>>>>>>>>>>>>>> Improvised/developmental

Playwright/Author Function

Single author function <<<<<<<<<<>>>>>>>>>> Multiple participant author function

Audience

Clearly delineated audience <<<<<<<<>>>>>>>> No audience other than participants

Audience/Interaction

Interaction through viewing only <<<<<<<<>>>>>>>> Interaction which changes the text

Use of digital technology/cyberspace

None<< support live performance >> performance platform >> poetics of performance

Figure 1. Elements of Cyberdrama

- Types of lexia to be used in the drama and technical requirements of these. There are a number of main ways that characters can be embodied. These include video segments, flash animation (using pictures of characters) with sound or voice-overs and text as narration, commentary or set out as script. At this stage I was interested in using all these options depending on the expertise of participants and access to equipment and software.

To help establish some guidelines for content development, I referred to some of the research about young people and their use of new media and the Internet (see, for example Cheskin Group, 2002; Livingstone, 2002; Roberts, Foehr and Rideout, 2005). From this material I extracted a number of key ideas and considered the practical implications for the creation of the cyberdrama. These formed the principles for structural development of the site and were used as the basis for discussion when I met subsequently with the website developer.

Findings from Research	Implications for creation of Cyberdrama
Young people often multi-task when on computer	Use small 'chunks' of narrative that can be accessed between other 'media' activities. Use short video-clips and material that does not take long to download
Young people are used to having interactive elements in computer-based entertainment	Have a range of possible ways people can interact with the narrative, range of ways of having 'real' impact on the narrative
Successful sites often utilise convergence-link to other products or communities People often use the Internet for social purposes and to communicate with friends	Link the drama to an actual community (university) Utilise friends and networks in promotion of the series
Sensory stimulation heightens the immersion factor	Try to incorporate a range of visual and audio material
Internet entertainment: forms mostcommonly utilised — music, interactive games, not strong on narrative forms	Don't just imitate TV soaps/serials as people access these if that is the kind of narrative experience they want.Utilise game or puzzle component

Figure 2. Key ideas from Research / Principles for development

In the field of process drama, the teacher or drama leader often takes on a role or various roles within the drama (Morgan and Saxton, 1987; O'Neill, 1995). From this perspective they are able to contribute to and manage the drama without having to step outside of the fiction and break the suspension of disbelief. After a group member left the project during our planning phase, it occurred to me that this was a role that I could take on. It was also from here that I began to see my role as a 'drama leader' (Haseman, 2001; Simons, 2001). I could see that, through taking on the role of an investigative character named 'Ivy', I could manage and contribute to the drama without having to necessarily script and direct the actions of other characters. This was an exciting moment for me when I realised I could make a connection with a field I was familiar with but explore the potential of this role in a new context.

At the first meeting we spent considerable time talking about what the cyberdrama or cybersoap might be about, where it should be situated and what form it might take. It was decided that we would like to create tension from the start to engage and involve users in solving a problem — the idea of working within a mystery genre then followed with a storyline to focus on a girl who goes missing from the university campus.

What was interesting to note is that mystery- or inquiry-focused dramas are often used by many drama practitioners in process drama (O'Neill, 1995). This is because as they are enrolled participants can be engaged and motivated to investigate past events, to be able to arrive at an understanding of a present situation. What is also interesting is that the mystery genre also seems to be one that crosses over, to some degree, the boundaries between stories and games. Game creator, now interactive storytelling creator, Chris Crawford argues that stories are about 'people' whereas games are about 'things' and what you do with them, incorporating aspects of puzzles. He acknowledges that the idea of a puzzle however is a key component of mysteries.

> Stories are not puzzles. It's true that puzzles often form a part of the story; indeed, puzzles play a large role in mystery stories. The puzzles in a mystery story are primarily about people, however. (Crawford, 2005:17)

The mystery genre therefore seemed to be one that could combine strong narrative elements while allowing for aspects of game play or puzzle solving, aspects which are often strong in interactive environments.

How do you engage and maintain an audience?

> The promise of vast audience connected worldwide by the Internet to experience performances is tantalizing to artists. But the problem is that the audience demands involvement in the performance, because the digital connection goes both ways. (LeNoir, 2003:125)

So many millions of people engage with the Internet every day, it can be temping to imagine that, once you have a product on-line, you will have an instant audience but, as LeNoir warns, that is often not the case. Many people go on-line with a specific purpose in mind and, even if they are web-surfing, it is not all that likely that many people are actively looking for a cyberdrama or cybersoap to engage with. This point was brought home early in the project through the literature review but also through early discussions with participants:

> When I go to sites, I go for a purpose. It has to be connected to something 'real', something I need to find (P5 from Meeting Notes, 11 March 2005).

With our project it was decided that we would be the main 'participant' group but that we were also aiming the drama at a wider 'user' group, who could experience and contribute to the drama on-line. While theoretically this could be anyone with Internet access, in reality we decided that the main user audience for our cyberdrama would be within the university. In particular, we targeted Performance Studies students and others within the Creative Industries Faculty, although it was acknowledged that drama educators and others interested in this kind of drama might also be a potential audience.

Interactive Process Drama

Another way that I hoped to engage an audience and encourage them to return was through the laying of trails and creation of dramatic tension or ergodic intrigue. In her analysis of the work of Brad Haseman in conducting a 'leaderly drama', Jenny Simons identifies a number of abilities that he used, these included:

> . . . laying trails, weaving ideas together, sensing what the group wants, withholding in order to maintain tension and surprise, and 'smelling' emerging scents. (Simons, 2001:234).

I was keen to lay a number of trails and see how various users might respond. It was my intention to then incorporate user input and ideas and weave these into the story wherever we could.

For example, after we uploaded the first set of profiles and interviews, two of the trails were responded to with outside 'users' providing details and expressing opinions. We then tried to build these into new material. For example, one photo essay that we created responded to user input about seeing Cleo. The uploading of this material then indicated a response to user input and an extension to it. This reflexive action was appreciated by at least one user, with an on-line survey respondent noting that this was one of her favourite sections of the cyberdrama.

The forum was our key focus for interactive engagement by users (though at one point we did set up a live chat option but we were the only people who used it). This meant that, throughout the life of the project, I eagerly followed the postings made on the forum, noted the trails users had responded to and sought to acknowledge and respond to these.

One of the interesting aspects that we had to grapple with, however, was how to respond to significant offers being made that would take the narrative off into new directions. Two in particular were of interest — *Fearful*, posted by Alan Smithee and *Secret*, posted by Kasey. The first posting was suggesting that Cleo was involved with some serious drug taking and that this was linked to her abduction. The second example introduced the idea of Cleo having had a twin sister as a child, a sister who had died. While both of these narrative developments could have been possibilities in a totally open work, in both cases project participants felt that these were not storylines that we wished to pursue.

This seems to highlight one of the issues that might exist for a cyberdrama which is realised by users in the virtual realm. In a 'live' process drama, you can generally see other participants and their responses. When it comes to negotiating developments to the drama, you often have the opportunity to do this either in-role and/or out-of-role. When it comes to making offers to extend the drama, participants will generally have been through a number of stages in a drama process — being introduced to the context through stimuli and pre-texts, enrolling (as a character) in the drama, and experiencing deepening levels of engagement. This is not necessarily the same with cyberdrama users. Users who posted on the forum adopted fictional identities but these were not created within the context of a group process. Therefore sometimes the offers made toward extending the drama were quite dramatic — perhaps more so than in a face to face negotiated drama. It seemed that, because people had time to think about what they would say before they posted an entry, some therefore wanted to make sure they made significant entries. While a live chat (or synchronous) component could perhaps have helped with possible negotiation of such offers, the use of the forum as the main vehicle for creating an interactive drama component meant the opportunities for negotiation of the drama were limited.

As the project continued, the responses on the forum reduced in number and very few new trails were responded to. The final stages of the project therefore moved in some respects from being like a process drama to becoming more like an on-line theatre

piece. The nature of the collaboration with the users in creating the text became more related to which parts of the narrative users engaged with, in what order and what this meant to them. The potential for intervention and co-authorship existed but was not fully utilised — whether this was because users felt the text did not require intervention or the means to do so were not accessible or interesting enough, I'm not sure. What was interesting to me however, as drama leader and a 'performer' in the cyberdrama, was how much I missed the participant and audience response that you would normally be able to sense in a live process drama or theatre performance. It would seem that cyberdrama, like other kinds of drama, only comes to life and is in a sense completed when framed by the performance context of having an audience who responds.

Negotiating the text — Narrative in an age of discontinuity

Much has been made in recent times of the discontinuous nature of text and experience, particularly in relation to computer interaction. It is often suggested that this is impacting on the way people (in particular young people) think and make sense of experience. An interesting corollary of this is that somehow linear logic and narrative are passé, are of another age that is passing:

> . . . as these new discontinuous media permeate our life, they are changing not only our way of thinking but even our perception of reality. Soon we will no longer expect a beginning, middle and end. Instead, we will expect the freedom to jump in a discontinuous fashion from idea to idea, independent of the constraints of space and time. Ultimately, the computer and new digital media will reshape the very ways we think (172) . . . The tradition of linearity, sustained narrative, and cohesive argument is coming to an end. (Holtzman, 1997:173)

These kinds of ideas influenced the early stages of the 'cleo-missing' project where one clear narrative pathway was not established. I had thought that, once users worked through the different character pages and various links, they would put together the narrative or experience in their own way. However, participants identified the different ways the story could be negotiated as a factor which *reduced* the effectiveness of the website. Rather than most people seeing this as an exciting new experience, it was suggested that many saw it as confusing and didn't want to invest the effort into working it out (it was after this discussion that we added the 'clips only' link on the home page).

I would suggest that the experience of dealing with various pieces of information through different media in a discontinuous way does not mean that narrative has ended or that linear narrative is dead. People can deal with discontinuous experiences in their lives and in the navigation of information and still enjoy (and have certain expectations about) linear narratives.

Far from being passé in an age of discontinuity, narrative is perhaps more important than ever as we seek to find the connections and make sense of human experience. Whilst for other content on the Internet it may not be so important (searching for information, communicating with friends, playing a game), narrative seems to retain its significance in relation to meeting young people's expectations of what should occur when engaging with a 'drama' or a 'story'. It would seem that people seek out a sense of 'narrative satisfaction' when engaging with these kinds of texts (whether in a novel, on television or the Internet) and they don't want it to be too hard to achieve.

Conclusion

In terms of what the project achieved, there are aspects that I would like to have developed further — in particular, the building of a user community or audience and developing a clearer frame for user response and input. As for exploring possible processes and forms for cyberdrama, some general points can be made. The field of process drama provides a strong foundation for creating cyberdrama with the combination of a guiding structure and open form being particularly relevant. The role of a drama 'leader' can be quite useful in providing source material and frameworks for the developing text, with participants having scope to collaborate and create within this. The notion of 'teacher' or 'leader-in-role' is also relevant, with the drama leader being able to take a role within the drama and help weave together narrative threads, manipulate tension and oversee textual coherence.

The combination of the different kind of lexia that we used also seemed quite effective, incorporating character profiles, short video and audio clips and photo stories with linking narrative and commentary in text form. The forum as a site for generating user input (in-role) certainly has the potential to work if the community's interest and commitment to role is generated early on. There needs to be some feedback loop directly to users, however, perhaps through the use of customised emails. This could help heighten the level of commitment and engagement for all but, in particular, for the end-point users.

In regards to narrative, if a cyberdrama is going to be narrative based, it is probable that most users want to be able to follow it in a fairly linear manner (that doesn't mean that it has to be a linear narrative, however) although opportunities for interaction and input are important.

As for the future of cyberdrama, while commercially it may be difficult to produce cyberdramas which can pay their way solely through Internet exposure, there is definitely huge potential for the development of cyberdrama in educational arts fields, where creative agency and engagement is the focus (rather than commercial success). In these fields there is enormous scope for hybridized processes and performances whereby mediated performance and live improvisation can be combined. Drama educators and youth drama producers can play an important role in the future development of meaningful cyberdramas. Furthermore they can also help young people create meaning and significant moments in their lives — providing contexts and frames for making sense of the human experience in a digital age.

Works cited

Aarseth, E.J. (1997). *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Auslander, P. (1999). *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. London and New York: Routledge.

Barthes, R. (1974). *S/Z*. New York: Hill and Wang.

Bolton, G. (1992). *New Perspectives on Classroom Drama*. Hemel Hempstead: Simon and Schuster Education.

Carroll, J. (2005). 'YTLKIN2ME? *NJ (Drama Australia Journal)*, 29(1).

Carroll, J. and Cameron, D. (2003). To the Spice Islands: Interactive Process Drama. *Fine Art Forum*, 17(8).

Cheskin Group. (2002). *Designing Digital Experiences for Youth*. Market Insight Series: Fall. www.cheskin.com

Chwastiak, M. (1998a). *Webisodics – Part Two: An Overview of the Current Field*. Retrieved 16 February 2005, from http://www.sideroad.com/gethooked/column11.html

Chwastiak, M. (1998b). *Webisodics: A Brief History*. Retrieved 16 February 2005, from http://www.sideroad.com/gethooked/column10.html

Crawford, C. (2005). *Chris Crawford on Interactive Storytelling*. Berkeley: New Riders.

De Montfort University. (2003). *Leicester's First Interactive On-line soap*. 09/10/2003 Retrieved 3 March 2005. http://www.dmu.ac.uk/

Eco, U. (1979). *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Flintoff, K. (2003). Stepping into the Virtual – is Virtuality a Contemporary Alternative to Drama? In H. Heikkinen (Ed.), *IDEA Special Interest Fields of Drama, Theatre and Education*. Brisbane: IDEA Publications.

Gibson, W. (1984). *Neuromancer*. New York: Ace Books.

Haseman, B. (1991). Improvisation, Process Drama and Dramatic Art. *London Drama, 1991* (July), 19-21.

Haseman, B. (2001). *The 'Leaderly' Process Drama and the Artistry of 'Rip, Mix and Burn'*. Paper presented at the Playing Betwixt and Between: The IDEA Dialogues, Bergen: Norway.

Haseman, B. (2004). Cooking Drama and Drama Education in the Global Kitchen. *NJ (Drama Australia Journal)*, 28:2, 15-24.

Holtzman, S. (1997). *Digital Mosaics: The Aesthetics of Cyberspace*. New York: Touchstone (Simon and Schuster).

Laurel, B. (1993). *Computers as Theatre*. Boston: Addison Wesley.

LeNoir, N. (1999). Acting in Cyberspace: The Player in the World of Digital Technology. In S.A. Schrum (Ed.), *Theatre in Cyberspace: Issues of Teaching, Acting and Directing*. New York: Peter Lang.

LeNoir, N. (2003). The Audience in Cyberspace. In S. Kattwinkel (Ed.), *Audience Participation: Essays on Inclusion in Performance*. Westport and London: Praeger.

Livingstone, S. (2002). *Young People and New Media*. London: Sage Publications.

Meadows, M. S. (2003). *Pause and Effect: The Art of Interactive Narrative*. Indianapolis: New Riders.

mlab. (2001). *Candira*. Retrieved 2 February 2005, from http://www.mlab.uiah.fi/candira/day1/index.html

Morgan, N. and Saxton, J. (1987). *Teaching Drama: A World of Many Wonders*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Murray, J.H. (1997). *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace* (2001 edition). Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press.

O'Neill, C. (1995). *Drama Worlds: A framework for process drama*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

O'Toole, J. (1992). *The Process of Drama: Negotiating Art and Meaning*. London and New York: Routledge.

O'Toole, J. (2004). Illuminated Texts: from Homer to the Home-page. *NJ (Drama Australia Journal)*, 28:2, 5-14.

Penenberg, A.L. (1997). Why Cybersoaps Don't Clean Up. *Forbes, 09.12.97*.

Prensky, M. (2003). *Digital Immigrant Remedial Vocabulary*. Retrieved 4 February 2005, from http://www.marcprensky.com/writing/Prensky-Digital%20Immigrant%20Remedial%20Vocabulary.htm

Punday, D. (2004). Involvement, Interruption and Inevitability: Melancholy as an Aesthetic Principle in Game Narratives. *SubStance #105*, 33:2, 80-107.

Roberts, D.F., Foehr, U.G.. and Rideout, V. (2005). *Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Year-olds*: The Kaiser Foundation.

Ryan, M.-L. (2004). Multivariant Narrative. In S. Schreibman, Ray Siemens and John Unsworth (Eds.), *A Companion To Digital Humanities*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Schrum, S. A. (1999). *Theatre in Cyberspace: Issues of Teaching, Acting and Directing*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.

Simons, J. (2001). *Following the Leader: An Observation of the Work of Brad Haseman on 'Leaderly' Process Drama.* Paper presented at the Playing Betwixt and Between: The IDEA Dialogues, Bergen, Norway.

Sinclair, L. (2005, Thursday March 31). *Soap Wars Ready to Go Mobile*. Retrieved 3 May 2005, from http://australianit.news.com.au/articles/0,7204,12704763%5E16681%5E%5Enbv%5E,00.html

Tarica, E. (2003). *Milking Fat Cow For All It's Worth*. Retrieved 5 June 2005, from http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2003/07/01/1056825387300.html?oneclick=true

Taylor, P. (1995). *Pre-text and Storydrama: The Artistry of Cecily O'Neill and David Booth (NADIE Research Monograph 1)*. Brisbane: NADIE.

Wagner, B. J. (1976). *Dorothy Heathcote: Drama as a Learning Medium*. Washington DC: National Education Association of the United States.

Wardrip-Fruin, N. and Harrigan, P. (Eds.). (2004). *First Person: New Media as Story, Performance, and Game*. Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press.

XPT and NESTA. (2003). *Planet Jemma*. Retrieved 20 May 2005, from http://www.planetjemma.com/