

The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow as a Performance

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Abstract—Richard schechner defines "play" as "performance". As a performance, "play" has the characteristics of structure, process and function. Through specific cases, this paper presented "The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow's structure, process and function, by which, people can discover the links between these elements.

Keywords—play; performance; structure; process; function

I. INTRODUCTION

"The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow" originally evolved from the "Mafia". "Mafia" was invented by a professor of psychology at the Moscow University of the former Soviet Union in 1986 and applied to the training of agents in spy organizations. In the early 1990s, "Mafia" was introduced to the United States. The science fiction writer Andrew Plotkin introduced the legend of the werewolf and improved "Mafia". The original game "The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow" was born.¹ Specifically, "The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow" is a strategy game with multi-person participation, language-driven promotion, eloquence and analytical judgment. The game is divided into two camps: Werewolf and Man. Humans vote for the final victory by voting the dead werewolves. The werewolves conceal among the villagers, killing in night and voting to eliminate the villagers as the means of winning.

The author will combine the specific game scenes to present the performance characteristics of "The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow".

II. THE PLAY AS A PERFORMANCE

In "The performance studies: An Introduction", Richard Schechner believes "play" as a kind of performance. He thinks that "like a ritual, the play is the center of performance."²

Schechner divides the game into four types³: Agon or competition; Alea or chance; Mimicry or simulation and Ilinx or dizziness. In analyzing the path of the game,

Schechner initially established seven dimensions⁴: structure, process, experience, function, evolutionary, species, and individual development of play, ideology and frame.

Schechner believes that in a competitive game, "there are winners and losers, and the outcome of the game is determined by the skills or strengths of the participants."⁵

The game story of "The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow" is based on the struggle between Werewolf and Villagers team. The ability of participants to influence and persuade others directly influences the final result of the game, which shows that "The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow" is a discourse-driven competitive game.

As a competitive game driven by oral communication, the analysis of "The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow" should be mainly from the discourse. The analysis of discourse must be carried out in terms of the context in which the dialogue is used, the composition of the discourse, and the effect of the discourse. This corresponds to the structure, process and function. This article will also analyze "The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow" combining these three dimensions through the specific game context.

III. "THE WEREWOLVES OF MILLER'S HOLLOW" IN SOCIAL CONTEXT: STRUCTURE AND SITUATION

The game consists of the game structure and the performance of game structure. Observing the performance must return to the specific context and the context must be presented and analyzed.

A. The Game Structure of "The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow"

Game scripts are fixed settings for game characters and game rules. These settings form the basic structural framework of the game. The traditional "The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow" is carried out in a face-to-face oral conversation in which participants persuade and influence others in the game. In the long-term practice of game performance, "The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow" forms a relatively fixed discourse mode of its own. Different characters have their own scripts, and the basic structure of

¹ "The Histories of The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow", New City Express, August 11, 2017. (in Chinese)

² Richard schechner, "Performance studies: An Introduction", Taylor & Francis Group, p89

³ Richard schechner, "Performance studies: An Introduction", Taylor & Francis Group, pp: 93-94

⁴ Richard schechner, "Performance studies: An Introduction", Taylor & Francis Group, p93

⁵ Richard schechner, "Performance studies: An Introduction", Taylor & Francis Group, p93

the game is formed among the scripts. Of course, the discourse script relies on the performance of the participants to perform the meaning function. The meaning is generated as the context activities, and the game exists as a process. Based on the dual grasp of structure and process, the player finally creates a discourse strategy in a specific game context. These strategies ultimately achieve the persuasive function with failure or success.

There are some common speech scripts for werewolf characters: ⁶ werewolves pretend to be a seer; werewolves deliberately betray their teammates⁷; werewolves stand on the side of the seer, and fight against the teammates who pretend to be the seers⁸; werewolves pretend to be good identifies everyone trust⁹; werewolves deliberately kill itself and cheat witch potion or pretend to be a seer after failing to cheat the potion¹⁰; and so on. In the party of village team, the seer should get the good identify¹¹ and check bad identity¹². The witch creates the night in which there is no death.¹³ The werewolf specifies to kill a player who may be a werewolf when it dies.¹⁴ The participants of this game understand and locate their role identities based on the above discourse scripts, and select these elements as scripts to implement utterance strategies in specific situations. These combined scripting elements provide participants with a framework of identity understanding and identity performance, which is "first assigned" and fixed for the specific game process. Specifically, the structure of "The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow" consists of opposing relationships such as "Werewolf — Man", "cheat" — "Revelation of the Truth", "Killing" — "Protection", which constitute the basic framework and the running script of "The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow".

Based on the above-mentioned discourse script, the author will take "The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow" in the daily social context as an example to observe how the fixed game script structure is unfolded in the performance in the context.

B. "The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow" in the Social Context

On November 15, 2018, 10 PhD students from the Y College of CUC University held a dinner party to promote friendship with new students. In order to make the relationship among the students more close, everyone decides to play "The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow" after

the dinner. Before presenting this game, it is necessary to introduce the basic relationship among the game members. There are 3 male participants: M1, M2 and M3. There are 7 female participants: W1, W2, W3, W4, W5, W6 and W7. As doctoral freshman in 2018, all 10 participants are post-90s, and most of them are from Northern provinces and cities. Although they are all freshmen at the same level, the relationship between them is different. M1, M2 and M3 are the roommates. M2 and M3 are the classmates from the same major. Among girls, W1, W2 and W3 are roommates and schoolmates from the same major. W4 and W5 are roommates and schoolmates from the same major. Neither W6 nor W7 has the classmate relationship and roommate relationship with other people. W1, W2 and W3 are inseparable in daily life, and they are closely related. They are relatively unfamiliar with other girls. W6 and W7 are relatively unfamiliar with other students present. In the relationship between boys and girls, M1 and W1, W2, W3 are classmates, and daily relationships are harmonious. M2, M3, W4, W5 are the classmates from the same major, and they are familiar with each other. M2, W4 and W5 are good friends. In addition, M3, W3 and W4 are class cadres, more or less in contact with the people present. In summary, it can find that among the 10 people, the relationship among M1, M2 and M3; M1 and W1, W2, W3; M2, W4, W5 is closely related internally. M3, W3 and W4 are the bonds that connect all the players present. The rest people are unfamiliar.

Ten participants sat around the big round table and played the game. Since the participants are not familiar with each other, everyone was seated in accordance with the principle of acquaintance relationships. The author as a "referee" observed the entire game process.

1) Acquaintance interaction

"The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow" is known for the strong interactivity, and the interactivity is shown from the debate and persuasion during the game. However, at the beginning of the game, the interaction mainly occurred in the acquaintance circle.

According to the game setup of "The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow", the chances of the participant acquiring the game character are random, and the formation of the team in the game is also random. The important purpose of this setup is to allow strangers to gain familiarity through collaboration and enhance the sociality of the game. However, in the early stage of the game, the strange relationship among the participants is not immediately broken.

For example, W1 and W5 of the unfamiliar relationship did not reach a substantial cooperation after forming a werewolf camp. This kind of cooperation involves: identifying the objects of mutual killing, demonstrating innocence between members of the debate, mutual encroaching on an enemy, and so on. However, due to the unfamiliar relationship between W1 and W5, the cooperation between them is limited to killing one object together. In the debate, there is not much interaction based on role tasks. On the contrary, they are more inclined to do more confrontation with people in the acquaintance circle. And this kind of

⁶ The werewolf pretends to be a seer.

⁷ The werewolves deliberately betray their teammates.

⁸ The werewolves stand on the side of the seer, and fight against the teammates who pretend to be the seers.

⁹ The werewolves pretend to be good identifies everyone trust.

¹⁰ The werewolves deliberately kill itself and cheat witch potion or pretend to be a seer after failing to cheat the potion.

¹¹ The seer checks the good identify.

¹² The seer checks the bad identify.

¹³ The witch saves villagers who may have been killed by the werewolf. There is no death in this round.

¹⁴ After the werewolf is killed, he also specifies to kill a player who may be a werewolf.

confrontation does not have any substantial effect on the cooperation of the same camp. For example, W1 as a werewolf is more inclined to interact with good friend W2, which may be just a way to avoid the embarrassment of playing with strangers. After the game, W1 told the author: "I was not familiar with W5 at first, I don't know how to cooperate with her, and I am a little embarrassed. Thanks to W2 next to me, I can find a topic with her whenever I have a chance." It can be seen that even if the participants who are unfamiliar with each other have reached a cooperative relationship, there is a lack of understanding and embarrassment in the specific process of cooperation.

There is another example. At the end of each round of the game, it requires the "survived" members of the game to take turns to speak in turn. The main content of the speech is to prove that he is not a werewolf killer or speculate who may be a werewolf killer. Objectively speaking, through their own judgments and other participants' speeches, it is not difficult for participants to judge who is a werewolf or who is a good person. However, in the early stage of the game, participants were more inclined to refer their acquaintances as werewolf killers. Their reason for judgment was not to use "logical feelings" but "feeling": "I believe that by the werewolf is he/she by feeling", "he/she is usually sneaky, and I guess so". After the game, W2 said: "Unless there is 100% of confidence, I will not identify strange students. I feel that this is too offensive, and I would rather identify an acquaintance if I am not sure." Indeed, identifying the werewolf / the accused man defending himself is the most competitive and confrontational part of the game, which is also the inherent structural setup of the game. But for participants in unfamiliar relationships, this kind of competition and confrontation is to be avoided. Therefore, they are likely to transfer the confrontational game link to the acquaintance relationship, thus avoiding the embarrassment of conflict.

According to the above two paragraphs, in the early stage of social interaction, the game only bring people's body distance closer, and do not substantially close the psychological distance. Games that are originally designed to promote unfamiliar relationships have become a field of interaction between acquaintances.

2) Key characters in the game

The original intention of social games is to break the barriers in interpersonal relationships, but in the early stage of the game, participants are still separated into familiar/unfamiliar opposites. The key to break the relationship barrier is the member who has a relationship with each participant, namely M3, W3 and W4 mentioned above as class cadres.

In the process of the game, M3 intentionally or unintentionally introduced the basic situation of the boys present to the girls. He also used some aspects of the game to facilitate interaction between strangers. For example, he would refer the W2 and W5 who are unfamiliar with the each other as killer associates in the identification process. This forced W2 and W5 to prove their innocence and mutual innocence in the defense. Self-certification and mutual

authentication objectively helped them establish common goals.

W3 and W4 were very acquainted in the game, and the two people can make everyone integrate into the game as much as possible. When W3 and W4 were both killers, they tended to kill participants who were relatively silent in the game. The "victim" will be directly connected to the "witch" and "savior" (the witch will be told whether to treat the victim, the savior should carefully consider the "interpersonal relationship" of the victim before the death). The interaction and familiarity creates the conditions. In addition, W3 and W4 also focused on promoting internal relationships among girls. As mentioned above, according to the relationship, the girls were divided into four relational units such as W1, W2 and W3; W4 and W5; W6; W7. Because of the tacit understanding and deliberate creation of W3 and W4, their close friends W2, W3 and W4 gradually became familiar with each other. The "lonely" W7 and W8 were also taken care of. For example, in the process of voting, W3 and W4 tended to protect W7 and W8. They formed an "alliance" with W7 or W8 in the debate and persuasion process. With the deliberate management of W3 and W4, the familiar/unfamiliar relationship among girls was gradually broken.

Through the above game fragments, it is known that people who have a certain relationship with everyone in daily relationships can complete the integration within the group by using certain interaction mechanisms, which in turn promotes the reproduction of the interaction mechanism.

3) Activated relationship and game

As the tie-up characters, M3, W3 and W4 used their own strategies, and made full use of the game's own program settings to break the binary opposition between the game participants' familiarity/strangeness. And everyone entered the interactive field. For example, in the middle stage of the game, the original "lonely" W6 and W7 changed the attitude of keeping distance from the game interaction at the beginning of the game, and repeatedly used tricks and strategies such as "pretending to be a seer" and "pretending to be good identifies that everyone trust". Deceptive persuasion is a necessary condition for the success of the trick. This shows that W6 and W7 had taken the initiative to assume the obligation of persuasion, integrated into the interaction of the game.

As the relationship between them was opened, the interaction and confrontation of the werewolf game was fully developed among the participants. It can see the sign judging the game's full-scale development. "The average speech time of each participant becomes longer"; "the suspense of the game is constantly increasing"; and "the tacit understanding of any team member has been improved". The increase in speaking time means that participants stay longer in the game space, and the vitality of the game performance is stimulated. The game structure of "The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow" consists of several sets of opposing relationships such as werewolves — people, deception — revealing the truth, killing — protecting. Both parties of the game move among the three opposite categories. The

vagrancy creates a game, and the suspense is generated in the game. This also shows the enthusiasm of the participants to play the game. The tacit improvement between any members shows that the members who are unfamiliar have begun to understand each other and cooperate with each other. And the understanding and cooperation are necessary for the game. The above situation has already appeared in the middle stage of the game. It can be said that only when the relationship among the participants is established, the operation of the game may cover everyone.

When the participants are fully in the game state, the vitality and meaning of the game have been greatly expanded. The personality and personal intelligence of the participants merge with the game framework, creating countless possibilities. For example, the M2 is lively and good at inciting others' emotions. M2 had repeatedly concealed his werewolf identity by deception, and the situation had been reversed. W5 had a very strong logic. She had a confrontation with M2. The confrontation between the two was very intense. People were erratic in the face of rational reasoning and emotional instigation. It was not until the last game that the dust settled. The organization ability of W4 was very strong. Once he was the guardian, he always led the civilians to cooperate with the police to win the werewolf. Participants who are immersed in the game create infinite meaning in the interaction based on their own personality and endowment.

Combined with the above, it can be found that the game structure composed of each script is not equal to the game itself. Participants are familiar with the rules of "The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow". However, in the early days, they could not play the game. The leaders have broken the barriers of the relationship between the participants, liberating people's enthusiasm for participation and contributing to the game itself. The active participation of the participants contributed to the vitality of the game.

4) *The game constructs a new relationship in daily life*

In the end stage of the game, the enthusiasm of the participants in the game had been very high, and the entire room was full of lively atmosphere. The role relationship in the game world would end with the end of the game. However, the sense of connection brought by the game character relationship would extend to the real life world. After the game was gone, the participants returned to school together. Unlike the way to having dinner, the participants did not choose to walk with familiar companions as they had done at the beginning, as they reviewed and discussed the game scene with enthusiasm. Along with the heat generated by the game, people who were not familiar with each other began to understand each other's basic information, add contact information such as WeChat and Weibo, and some unfamiliar students agreed to eat and shop together in the future.

The interaction generated by the game is not limited to the game field. The influence on people's relationship extends into daily life and brings new interpersonal relationships to relevant people.

IV. GAME SHOW BASED ON STRUCTURE, CONTEXT, PROCESS AND FUNCTION

A. *Game Structure*

"The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow" has its complete theme, rules, role settings and basic strategies, which together constitute the game structure of "The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow". The game structure is the premise of running the game. The game theme has "summon", and it calls for the players enter the special field. The players should prepare for the game. The theme of "the Werewolves of Miller's Hollow" is "confrontation". All participants who are ready to join the game must be prepared to debate with others. The rules of the game maintain the existence of the game field, which lays the basic style of the game and shapes people's behavior in the game. Equal voice and voting rights are the most representative rules of "The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow", which embodies the spirit of "democracy". The democratic style of "The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow" creates an equal context for the participants, which also determines that the game is conversational. The role setting provides the identity of the participants in the game. The identity determines the responsibilities and powers of the participants. The responsibilities and powers provide the basis for interaction between them. The werewolves killing the villagers, the policemen chasing the werewolves, the witches and the savior saving the villagers, interact with each other and wrestle, making "The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow" full of tension. The game strategy condenses the previous experience of the game participants. "The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow" has many classic game strategies, and they all have corresponding phrases. These strategies make the game more intense and exciting. Everyone knows these strategies, and it is bound to produce strategies to cope with the strategy.

B. *Context and Process*

The game can't be separated from the specific context, and the specific context will also affect the process of the game. From the game case of this article, to carry out the game is "to meet new students" and "to increase the relationship" and so on. These contexts affect the follow-up process of the game. As it is the meeting of new students, in the early stage of the game, the participants can't fully integrate into the game. The three cadres with the leadership intend to use the rules of the game to guide everyone into the game, so as to make each classmate participate in the game. It is because of the organization of the class cadres that everyone has gradually entered the game field, and then the game interaction is fully developed. The participants who play the game have their own style of game strategy: someone is good at logical reasoning; someone is good at inciting others' emotions; someone is good at pretending and taking the initiative to unite with others. The interaction of various strategies brings a rich and varied game scene.

C. *Function*

From the case of this article, "The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow" has played an entertainment function and

social function. Of course, the premise of the above functions is that participants can interact in the game. On the one hand, entertainment comes from the interaction among people. On the other hand, entertainment comes from the creativity of the participants: they can always combine their personality and wisdom with the basic game structure, releasing unlimited interest; social function is not only present in the game, and it will extend into the daily life space. In other words, the game space and the daily life space are connected.

V. CONCLUSION

"The Werewolves of Miller's Hollow" has its own structural framework, game process, entertainment and social functions. As a group game performance, the game structure provides a basic framework and platform for game performances. It constructs a field space that accepts participants into the game, which is the premise of the game performance. Game performances may present a phased process — from being strange to being familiar. The cadres make the game hot. The function of the game will not be played until the game is interactive. It not only affects the game process, but also affects the daily life after the game.

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