

GAMEPLAY ANALYSIS

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# THE STANLEY PARABLE

ELOI FROMANGE-GONIN

**LET'S BEGIN AGAIN.**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- ▶ Overview
- ▶ 3C
- ▶ Core Gameplay and Game Loop
- ▶ Level Design Flowchart
- ▶ Conclusion

### OVERVIEW:

The Stanley Parable is a PC exploration game, released on Steam on October 2013 by [Galactic Cafe](#) and based on a 2011 Source mod.

The scenario speaks about an office worker named Stanley and labelled as employee N° 427.

The player incarnates Stanley, a day when all of his coworkers are gone.

A Narrator is speaking during the majority of the game, giving the player specific instructions about his/her progression and unravel the storyline.

## 3C: CHARACTER

The player controls directly Stanley. Stanley can:

- ▶ Walk
- ▶ Look Around
- ▶ Interact

While in the menus, the player can also restart the game from scratch. Some part of the level design actually requires this if the player doesn't want to be stuck.

## 3C: CONTROLS

The controls are keyboard and mouse based. Default controls are set like this:

- ▶ Walk: WASD keys
- ▶ Look Around: Mouse
- ▶ Interact: E key or Mouse1 button

## 3C: CAMERA

The camera is controlled by the player and by the player's point of view during the vast majority of the game, using the mouse control.

Like in Half Life, it is one of the major gameplay elements. The player doesn't see the "cutscenes" he/she lives the cutscenes and stays in total control of the camera (excepts for a few very rare times).

Some texts that appear on screen sometimes look like being UI but are in reality 3D text in the level, and the player could take some time to notice and move the camera.

## CORE GAMEPLAY

The game is heavily based on exploration and on unraveling the story/the narrator interactions with the player's decisions.

There is no real game over, as there is no real victory. Even going in the menus is part of the game and can trigger some reaction events from the narrator, which is basically there to reward the player by discovering some news aspects of the game.

Sometimes the only way to "win" is to hit the "Restart game" button from the game menu

For the purpose of this presentation, I will only focus on two major things: the player's interaction with the world/the level, and the narrator's reaction to these interactions.

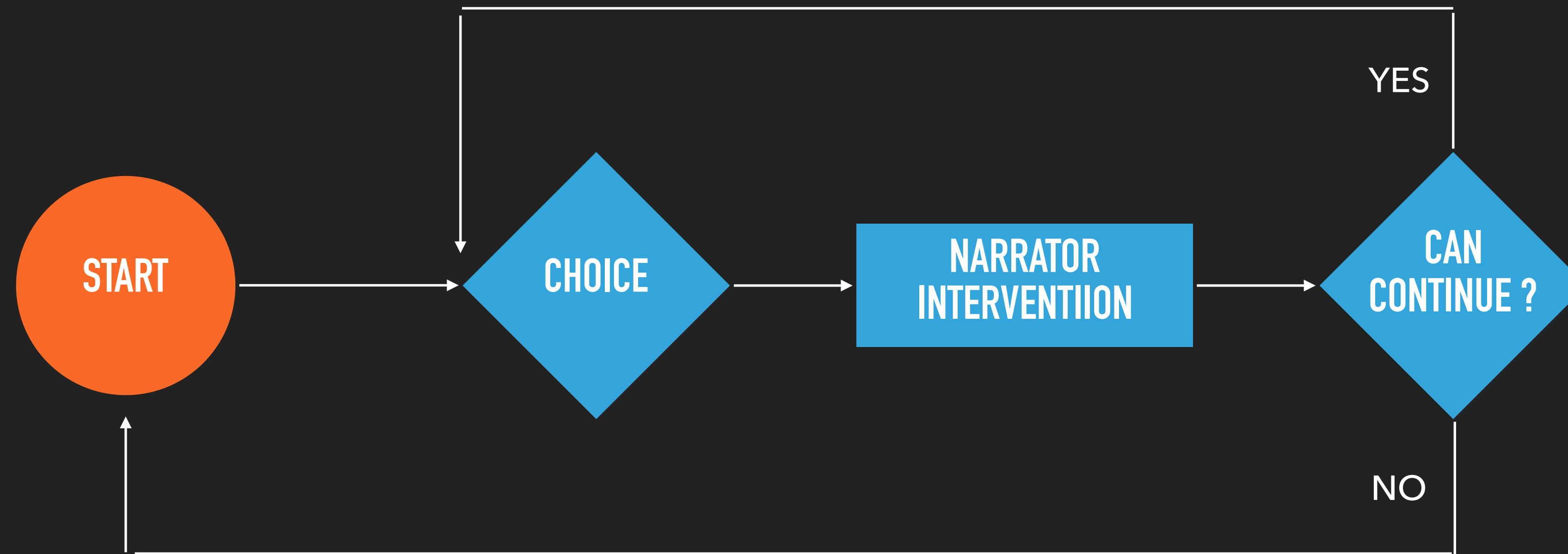


## CORE GAMEPLAY

The first interaction the player can have is to choose one path or another. The level design will offer a set of two doors, and the narrator will phrase an affirmation in the past tense. Such as: "Stanley took the door on the left".

The player can still choose which way to go, and the narrator will react accordingly. The further the player goes away from the established line of the "main narrative", the more the narrator will break the fourth wall.

# MAIN GAMEPLAY LOOP



## LET'S BEGIN AGAIN

The main loop resets at the end of each narrative, (and sometimes even have to be restarted by the player). Each time the game is restarted, a lot of elements are randomized. It does not have any impact on the main gameplay loop (see LEVEL DESIGN: FLOWCHART in this very presentation for more info).

Sometimes the game appears to have restarted, but it is in fact the following of one of the storylines.

## LEVEL DESIGN

The game offers 11 endings. The player can also discover some new places which hold some easter eggs or restart the game from scratch whenever he/she wants.

# LEVEL DESIGN: FLOWCHART



# CONCLUSION

By its nature, the game is a reflexion on the videogame medium itself.

Stanley is described as a character who only follows instructions coming from a screen "He have to push buttons, and is telled what button to push, how long to push it, and in what order". That's exactly what a PC player experiences when playing, but he/she is not aware of this fact.

The core loop is about choices and at the same time shows the lack of meaningful choices. The song/voice ending, which appears when the player goes through a fake collision bug is a great exemple of how large game design can be built and how little the player's agency might be.

The Steam achievement are by their very nature in the game here to make the player think about the medium and the presence of the achievements themselves. One of the achievement is literally "Don't play the game for five years", when one of them is "Unachievable".

**THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION**

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