THE GENRE SPECIFICITY OF INTERACTIVE CINEMA

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Summary

This article aims to investigate the genre specificity of interactive cinema by analyzing the transformation of traditional cinematic genre conventions under the influence of key characteristics of interactivity, such as user agency and narrative non-linearity. The relevance of the study stems from the growing popularity of interactive media and the necessity for theoretical conceptualization of their hybrid nature, which complicates genre classification. The research methodology comprises a theoretical analysis of genre concepts in film studies and interactive media theory, a comparative analysis of interactive cinema, traditional cinema, and video games, as well as case studies of representative interactive works: Black Mirror: Bandersnatch, Late Shift, and Detroit: Become Human. The research findings establish that interactive cinema functions not as a distinct genre, but as a spectrum of hybrid forms. It was found that interactivity fundamentally reshapes plot structures, character evolution, and stylistic elements. It is demonstrated that the nature of this transformation depends on the interplay between the technological platform, which determines the available toolkit of interactivity, and the conventions of the source genre, which influence how these tools are applied. The scientific novelty lies in the systematic analysis of the specific mechanisms of genre convention transformation, which enables a deeper understanding of the specifics of genre formation in interactive cinema. The work substantiates the prospects for further research in this dynamic field.

Key words: interactive film, interactive storytelling, genre theory, user agency, nonlinear narrative, hybrid media, gaming.

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1. Introduction

The contemporary media-cultural landscape is increasingly characterized by the proliferation of hybrid forms emerging from the convergence of traditional artistic practices and novel digital technologies. A significant manifestation of this synthesis is interactive cinema – a phenomenon that integrates cinematic aesthetics with interactive mechanics, largely borrowed from video games. Although the origins of interactive cinema date back to early experiments with interactivity in media, recent years have witnessed a renewed scholarly and practical interest in this phenomenon, driven by the development of streaming platforms, the advancement of game engines, and virtual reality technologies. Despite its growing popularity, this phenomenon remains insufficiently conceptualized, particularly regarding its genre identification. The hybrid nature of interactive cinema complicates its unambiguous categorization within existing taxonomic systems of cinematic or game genres. Thus, the key research question concerns how fundamental characteristics of interactivity – primarily user agency and narrative non-linearity – transform established conventions of the cinematic genre.

Analysis of current research. Analysis of the scholarly literature indicates that significant attention is devoted to the conceptualization and definition of the concept of 'interactive cinema' itself and related terms such as 'interactive narrative' and 'interactive storytelling'. Researchers acknowledge the inherent hybridity of these forms, which combine elements of cinema and video games. Historically, the term 'interactive cinema' was often associated with technologically specific formats, such as Full-Motion Video (FMV) games of the 1990s *(Kalender & Ucan, 2022; Perron, 2003)*, leading to discussions regarding its essence and potential oxymoronic nature *(Veale, 2012)*. The contemporary understanding is broader, encompassing a spectrum of works where the viewer/user influences narrative development in some way. In this context, the work of H. Koenitz is significant; he emphasizes the need for a unified theory of Interactive Digital Narrative (IDN) which would encompass narrative analysis, interoperability, sustainability, and user-centered design *(Koenitz, 2015)*.

Active investigation into the nature of interactivity and user agency results in typologies of interactivity, analysis of its role in shaping the user experience, and refinement of the concept of agency *(Cruz, 2019)*. It is precisely the type of agency that raises a key question in interactive works: the balance between authorial control and user freedom *(Hassapopoulou, 2021)*.

The study of narrative structures and technological aspects of interactive works involves analyzing the transition from linear to branching narratives and non-linear plots *(Aarseth, 1997; Ryan, 2001, 2015)*. Particular attention is paid to technological solutions, such as 'drama managers' (software for controlling plot logic and narrative flow) *(Szilas, 2003)* and the use of engines for tracking variable states *(Salen & Zimmerman, 2003)*.

Furthermore, attention to ethical dimensions and the specifics of reception should be noted. M. Hassapopoulou, in particular, analyzes 'the ambiguous ethics of media participation', criticizing binary oppositions (liberation vs. manipulation) *(Hassapopoulou, 2021)*. Research explores how interactive works can be used to immerse users in morally complex scenarios, either stimulating reflection or, conversely, potentially trivializing ethical choices *(Night Watch: An Analysis of Late Shift, 2018)*. However, despite the breadth of the research field, the analysis of the transformation of specifically cinematic genre conventions under the influence of interactivity remains fragmentary. There is a lack of systematic research into the mechanisms of restructuring plot structures, character functions, and stylistic devices across a broad spectrum of traditional cinematic genres during their adaptation to the interactive format.

2. Main part

In film studies, the concept of genre is defined as a classification system for films based on a set of shared narrative, stylistic, and thematic conventions that are shared and recognized by both creators of audiovisual content and its audience *(Neale, 2000; Schatz, 1981)*. This system performs an important function, serving as a specific communicative framework within the cinematic process. On the one hand, it provides filmmakers with proven models of narrative and expression; on the other hand, it shapes certain expectations for viewers regarding content, style, and potential emotional experience *(Miracalize, 2024)*.

However, it should be emphasized that genre categories represent dynamic systems in a state of constant evolution, transformation, and interaction, resulting in the emergence of hybrid genre forms *(Genre Conventions - Film and Media Theory, n.d.)*. Key to understanding the viability and development of genres is the dialectical relationship between the repetition of established elements and their variability or difference *(Neale, 2000)*. The repetition of familiar conventions—typical plot points, visual motifs, character archetypes—ensures genre recognition

by the audience and activates corresponding schemas of perception and interpretation *(Steve Neale – Genre Theory, 2017)*. At the same time, it is precisely difference, innovative reinterpretation, and variation within these conventions that maintain audience interest, preventing genre stagnation and its transformation into a rigid template. This dialectic allows genres to adapt to changes in the sociocultural context, technological innovations, and the evolution of audience preferences.

To analyze the genre specificity of a cinematic work, researchers typically address a complex of interconnected conventional elements. In particular, Rick Altman proposed distinguishing between semantic and syntactic components of genre *(Altman, 1999)*. The semantic dimension, according to Altman, encompasses the basic 'building blocks' of the genre: characteristic traits of characters, typical locations of action, recognizable images, and elements of iconography *(Altman, 1999, pp. 21-22)*. The syntactic dimension, conversely, pertains to the ways these semantic elements are organized, revealing semantic structures, thematic dominants, and narrative patterns formed in their interaction *(Altman, 1999, pp. 21-22)*. Alongside these narrative-thematic elements, the dominant visual style, characteristic features of sound design and musical accompaniment, and the overall tone and mood of the work are analyzed *(How to Master Movie Genres: The Ultimate Guide For 2025, 2025; Film Genre Conventions to Know for Film Aesthetics, n.d.)*.

Defining the concept of 'interactive cinema' constitutes a complex task, due to its inherent hybridity and the significant diversity of forms existing at the intersection of cinema, video games, and new media. The term itself is sometimes perceived as debatable [or 'contentious'] as it combines the traditionally passive receptive model of film viewing with the active participatory engagement characteristic of gaming practices *(Veale, 2012)*. Due to this diversity, 'interactive cinema' is often considered in scholarly literature as an umbrella term uniting various forms, technologies, and purposes for the application of interactivity.

Despite this, it is possible to distinguish a series of key characteristics inherent in most forms of interactive cinema. The central feature is, undoubtedly, interactivity – an immanent property of the media text that enables user interaction with it *(Cruz, 2019)*. A second important characteristic emerges as non-linearity or narrative branching. This non-linearity can be implemented with varying degrees of complexity – from binary choices to complex systems with numerous variables and conditions. A third key characteristic is user agency. This concept denotes the degree of control and significance of influence that the user exerts over the narrative world and the development of depicted events *(Murray, 1997)*. The sense of agency serves as an important factor in user engagement and immersion. However, it should be noted that interactivity can both enhance immersion, increasing the level of engagement and the sense of personal influence on events, and disrupt it, if the interaction mechanisms are clumsy [or 'awkward'], interrupt the narrative flow, or too explicitly indicate the artificiality of the constructed experience *(Ryan, 2001, 2015)*.

Traditional cinema, as previously noted, is characterized primarily by a passive receptive model of audience perception. The viewer acts as an observer of unfolding events, lacking the ability to influence their course. The narrative is typically linear; even when non-linear narrative techniques such as flashbacks are employed, the overall sequence remains fixed by the author, and the story's ending is predetermined by the director and screenwriter, who exercise complete control over the narrative process, visual execution, and potential emotional impact on the viewer. The primary mode of interaction here is viewing.

In contrast to cinema, video games require active player participation. They are defined as systems in which players are engaged in an artificial conflict, governed by rules, that leads

to a measurable outcome *(Salen & Zimmerman, 2003)*. The player exerts deliberate effort to influence this outcome by interacting with the game's rules and its virtual world *(Juul, 2005)*. The structure of video games is often non-linear, and the outcome depends on the player's skills, strategic decisions, and actions. The central elements here are player agency and gameplay mechanics. Although many contemporary video games possess a distinct narrative component, the interplay between ludic (gameplay) and narrative elements can be complex. Meanwhile, the primary mode of interaction is play, which can shape specific participant identities such as 'gamer' and 'player' *(Perron, 2003)*.

Occasionally, the phenomenon of so-called ludonarrative dissonance may be observed, wherein the actions performed by the player within the gameplay contradict the themes or character traits presented in the narrative *(Hocking, 2007)*. The consequence of this can be a disruption of immersion and the integrity of the work's perception, when, for example, a character portrayed as a pacifist is compelled to resort to excessive violence to progress through game levels, or a serious dramatic narrative is interrupted by arcade-style gameplay sections. Although this phenomenon is more characteristic of video games with complex mechanics, a similar tension can arise in interactive cinema if the choices offered to the player or the required actions align poorly with the character's developmental logic or the stated genre conventions, creating a sense of artificiality or inconsistency.

Interactive cinema, in turn, attempts to synthesize features of both discussed phenomena. Although some researchers consider interactive films a specific game genre *(Perron, 2007)*, one can note the active use of cinematic aesthetics and expressive means in such projects compared to video games. At the same time, the transformation of the narrative component by key elements of interactivity leads to the creation of a branching structure with multiple potential paths and endings.

Such a branching structure, sometimes visualized using flowcharts, as in the game *Detroit: Become Human (2018)*, poses significant challenges for narrative design. The primary task becomes ensuring narrative coherence and the logical sequence of events within each individual branch and between them *(Ryan, 2001, 2015)*. Questions arise regarding ensuring the meaningfulness and emotional satisfaction of each possible protagonist path, as well as aligning multiple plotlines with a unified thematic or ideological focus of the work. These issues require meticulous script planning and, in some cases, the use of specialized technological solutions, such as drama management systems ('drama managers') *(Szilas, 2003)* or designing the narrative based on the principle of main and side plotlines (A-Plot/B-Plot).

Non-linearity also significantly impacts the traditional mechanisms for controlling pacing and suspense in narrative. Whereas in linear cinema the director exercises complete control over the narrative rhythm and the timing of key information reveals, in an interactive work, the pace can vary depending on the user's decision-making speed. The option to replay an episode or choose an alternative path potentially reduces the tension associated with the sense of inevitability. At the same time, the act of choosing itself, especially under time constraints or with uncertain consequences, can become a new, specific source of suspense for the participant.

A deeper level of transformation concerns narrative causality and methods of theme development. A traditional narrative is typically built upon a clear cause-and-effect chain. Interactivity, in contrast, introduces a multiplicity of such chains: Choice X might lead to Event Y, whereas Choice Z leads to Event W. This requires authors either to ensure thematic coherence and resonance between different narrative branches, or to transform the very process of choice and its consequences into the central theme of the work, as implemented, for example, in *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch (2018)* in its exploration of free will and responsibility. The thematic

core of the work no longer unfolds along a single line but must either resonate across multiple potential paths or be constituted by the very structure of interactive engagement.

Some researchers also point to the inherent tension between narrative logic and database logic in interactive works *(Manovich, 2001)*. Interactive products can be viewed as structured collections (databases) of discrete content elements (scenes, dialogues, choice options) from which the user forms their own unique sequence. Lev Manovich contrasts database logic, where each element is potentially equivalent, with traditional narrative logic, which entails sequential development and rigid cause-and-effect relationships. In many interactive works, this tension is evident: the aspiration to provide the user with access to a broad database of possibilities can conflict with the necessity of maintaining a coherent, sequential, and compelling narrative.

Interactivity profoundly changes not only the plot structure but also the very nature and functioning of characters within the narrative. Whereas in traditional cinema, characters typically follow a predetermined authorial trajectory with fixed developmental arcs, in interactive cinema, their actions, decisions, interpersonal relationships, and, ultimately, narrative fate are directly shaped or significantly influenced by the choices of the viewer/participant. This transforms the character from a passive object of observation into a dynamic node of interaction, whose path can vary significantly across different playthrough iterations, as clearly demonstrated by the example of the three protagonists in *Detroit: Become Human (2018)*.

The central concept explaining this transformation is, once again, agency. As defined by Janet Murray, agency is "the satisfying power to take meaningful action and see the results of our decisions and choices" *(Murray, 1997)*. In the context of interactive cinema, agency means that the participant gains the ability to act – often through an avatar or on behalf of a character – and to observe the consequences of these actions within the narrative world. However, as noted earlier, agency in interactive works is often limited or illusory. Authors retain significant control over the overall narrative structure by offering choices that may lead to predetermined outcomes or by creating situations where the player's actual influence is minimal *(Rose & Zytko, 2020)*. This tension between the promised freedom of choice and the actual systemic limitations can lead to a specific, ambivalent perception of the character: whether they are perceived as a fully-fledged protagonist with their own volition, or rather as a puppet in the hands of the player and/or developer. Understanding these limitations is crucial for analyzing the interactive experience and its impact on character perception.

The introduction of interactivity necessitates the reconsideration and adaptation of traditional cinematic stylistic devices. The traditional visual language of cinema, encompassing shot composition, camera movement, angles, and editing strategies, historically evolved to serve primarily linear narratives with a fixed or authorially controlled point of view. The interactive environment calls into question the direct and unaltered application of these established conventions *(Murray, 1997)*. Consequently, maintaining visual integrity and stylistic unity amidst narrative branching becomes a significant challenge for direction and editing. This is particularly true for ensuring smooth, 'seamless' transitions between different video fragments in FMV-format works, where the pursuit of such continuity, unlike in earlier examples, often becomes a priority *(Night Watch: An Analysis of Late Shift, 2018)*. This aspiration towards intuitive visual navigation and the inconspicuousness of transitions can, in turn, limit the use of more expressive or complex authorial visual and editing techniques inherent in traditional cinema.

Sound design in the interactive environment also acquires expanded functions compared to its role in traditional cinema. Sound not only creates atmosphere, conveys emotions, and underscores action, but also often performs important interactive tasks: it can serve as direct

acoustic feedback to user actions, signal available choice options, enhance immersion through the dynamic reaction of the sound environment to the player's presence or actions, and also be used for navigation and attention management in non-linear spaces or virtual environments *(Collins, 2013; Collins, 2008)*. This interaction, where user actions directly generate or modify sound events, contributes to deeper immersion and enhanced identification. At the same time, the variability of pace and event sequence poses challenges for traditional methods of music composition and sound accompaniment organization, requiring more flexible, adaptive, and often procedural audio solutions.

Perhaps the most prominent stylistic innovation of interactive cinema is the user interface (UI). Interface elements (graphical choice menus, countdown timers, text prompts, interactive icons) become not merely a technical means of interaction, but an integral part of the work's visual and, to some extent, stylistic system. Lev Manovich introduces the concept of the 'cultural interface', describing how the conventions of the computer graphical interface (windows, menus, buttons) are integrated with the conventions of previous media (cinema, print) to organize access to and interaction with cultural information *(Manovich, 2001)*. UI design in interactive cinema must address several objectives: it must clearly and unambiguously present choice options, be intuitively understandable to the user, and, at the same time, minimally interfere with the narrative flow and immersive experience so as not to disrupt the effect of immersion *(The importance of storytelling in UI/UX design, 2023; Yurtseven, 2023)*.

An important aspect of interactivity's influence on the genre specificity of audiovisual works is the creation of an internal tension between the aspiration for narrative immersion and the necessity of conscious participation and interaction by the user, which aligns more closely with the logic of video games. Traditional cinema, as a rule, aims to achieve a state of immersion where the viewer becomes maximally absorbed in the fictional world, temporarily abstracting from reality and the medium itself as an intermediary *(Ryan, 2001)*. In contrast, many video games, especially those requiring skill development and strategic thinking, often induce a state of 'flow' *(Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)*.

Interactive cinema finds itself in a complex position between these two poles of medial experience. It employs cinematic means to create a convincing and immersive narrative world but simultaneously requires the viewer/participant to periodically interrupt the state of passive contemplation to make active choices via the interface. The very act of choosing, the necessity of analyzing the proposed options, and physically interacting with control elements inevitably remind the user of the artificial, constructed nature of the experience and their own role as an active participant. This can lead to a disruption of narrative immersion, destroying the sense of continuity and the 'invisibility' of the medium. Therefore, a key task for developers of interactive cinema becomes the meticulous design of interaction aimed at minimizing this potential dissonance. This inherent tension between immersion and interactivity, it seems, also influences the process of genre transformation, as different genres may react and adapt differently to such an 'intermittent', participatory mode of audience engagement.

A detailed analysis of specific interactive audiovisual works allows for tracing the mechanisms of genre convention transformation in practice and illustrating the theoretical propositions outlined above. For this purpose, three representative case studies were selected – the television series episode *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch (2018)*, the FMV film *Late Shift (2017)*, and the video game *Detroit: Become Human (2018)* – considering their representativeness as prominent contemporary examples of interactive narratives, as well as the diversity of their presented platforms and technologies (ranging from streaming to AAA games), the variability of interactive mechanics (from binary choices to complex gameplay), and the difference in source

genre models (psychological thriller/sci-fi, crime thriller, sci-fi/drama), which enables the study of the adaptation of different conventions. Thus, the selected case studies illustrate the diversity of approaches to integrating interactivity into narrative forms and provide a basis for a nuanced comparative analysis of this integration's impact on genre characteristics.

A comparison of the interactive mechanics employed in these works reveals significant differences, stemming from both the specifics of the technological platforms and the established creative objectives. *Bandersnatch* offers the user a relatively simple system of explicit binary choices at defined moments in the plot; however, it supplements this with complex meta-narrative elements, notably plot loops, recursive structures, and the direct thematization of external control over the character. *Late Shift*, striving for the maximum preservation of the cinematic experience within the crime thriller genre, utilizes a mechanic of rapid real-time choices with a limited timer, compelling the participant to react instantaneously, thereby maintaining genre tension, and aims to ensure 'seamless' transitions between scenes. In contrast, *Detroit: Become Human*, as a representative of the contemporary game industry, demonstrates the broadest spectrum of interactive possibilities: the player controls the actions of three different protagonists, makes choices in dialogue systems, directly interacts with objects in the game environment, participates in Quick Time Events (QTE) scenes, utilizes unique character abilities for situation analysis, and gains access to a visualization of the complex network of plot branches. These differences in the implementation of interactivity directly influence the ways in which key genre elements are transformed.

An examination of the plot structures in the three case studies reveals variability in the approaches to implementing non-linearity. In *Bandersnatch*, branching and recursion become not merely tools of variability, but the central element constituting the work's meaning within the genres of psychological thriller and science fiction; the structure itself transforms into a thematic statement on free will and determinism, undermining the convention of protagonist reliability and their perception of reality, characteristic of the psychological thriller genre. *Late Shift* retains a recognizable plot structure of a crime thriller (robbery, pursuit, protagonist's moral dilemmas); however, the multiplicity of choices generates seven different final outcomes for the story. The real-time choice mechanic is used here as a means of maintaining genre suspense, simulating the necessity for quick decisions in critical situations, although the pursuit of 'seamless' transitions may at times negate classic editing techniques for building tension. *Detroit: Become Human* presents an exceedingly complex system of intertwined plotlines for three characters in a science-fiction setting. Here, interactivity allows for the exploration of classic sci-fi conventions (artificial intelligence, dystopia, social commentary) through the variability of character paths (e.g., the choice between peaceful protest and violent android uprising), where player decisions have long-term consequences and can lead to radically different resolutions, both for individual characters and for the overall state of the depicted world.

In terms of character evolution and the implementation of user agency, the analyzed works also demonstrate different models. *Bandersnatch* explicitly thematizes the problem of agency, calling into question the player's actual control over events and transforming the protagonist, Stefan, into an object of external manipulation. This undermines the conventional identification with the hero and their subjectivity, typical of psychological thrillers, making the player complicit in his suffering *(Yurtseven, 2023; Rose & Zytko, 2020)*. *Late Shift* provides the player with the opportunity to determine the actions of the main character, Matt; however, the nature of the choices is often assessed as primarily pragmatic, dictated by the circumstances of a typical crime thriller (escape, survival), rather than as choices that deeply reveal the inner world or allow for significant alteration of the character archetype *(Night Watch: An Analysis of*

Late Shift, 2018). In contrast, *Detroit: Become Human* grants the player significant agency in shaping the moral character and subsequent fate of all three protagonists. This allows for active exploration of themes such as consciousness, freedom, and responsibility through the decisions made and their consequences, modifying classic dramatic character arcs (the hero's journey, moral decline, redemption) depending on player actions.

The stylistic decisions employed in the analyzed works also reflect their hybrid nature and medial origins. *Bandersnatch* retains the visual stylistics and atmosphere of its parent television series, *Black Mirror*, using somber color palettes, unsettling music, and specific camera angles to enhance the thematic (technophobia, mental disorders) and meta-narrative aspects characteristic of the anthology. *Late Shift* maximally emulates the aesthetics of a realistic cinematic thriller (use of handheld camera, dynamic editing in action scenes), relying on FMV technology and striving for the visual inconspicuousness of interactive 'seams' so as not to disrupt conventional cinematic perception. *Detroit: Become Human*, in turn, utilizes advanced computer graphics and motion capture technologies to create the high-quality cinematic visuals characteristic of high-budget video games. However, it simultaneously integrates distinct graphical user interface elements (object highlighting, choice diagrams, QTE markers), which, although serving interaction purposes, also visually emphasize the interactive, 'game-like' nature of the experience, distinguishing it from traditional cinematic stylistics.

Based on the comparative analysis presented above, the key characteristics of the discussed case studies are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1.

Comparative Analysis of Interactive Work Case Studies

Aspect of Analysis	*Black Mirror: Bandersnatch* (2018)	*Late Shift* (2017)	*Detroit: Become Human* (2018)
Platform / Origin	Streaming (Netflix) / TV Series Episode	Independent Film / FMV Technology	AAA Video Game / Game Engine
Source Genre (Primary)	Psychological Thriller / Science Fiction	Crime Thriller	Science Fiction Drama
Interactive Mechanics	Binary choices, Recursion, Metanarrative	Timed choices, 'Seamless' transitions	Dialogues, Exploration, QTEs, Control of 3 protagonists, Choice diagram
Plot Structure	Branching, Recursive, Convergent	Branching (7 endings), Linear core	Complex branching, Intertwined lines, Variable consequences
Agency Implementation	Thematized, Limited, Illusory	Pragmatic, Genre-constrained	Significant, Impacts character morality/fate, Variable relationships
Stylistic Approach	*Black Mirror* series aesthetics, Metanarrative	Realistic crime thriller, 'Seamlessness'	Cinematic graphics (AAA), Distinct game UI
Transformation of Genre Conv.	Thematization of control (thriller), Deconstruction of free will (sci-fi), Undermining of identification	Suspense enhancement via timed-choice, Preservation of thriller plot	In-depth exploration of sci-fi themes via choice, Dramatic arcs dependent on player

Thus, it can be stated that the influence of interactivity on genre conventions is neither universal nor homogeneous. The nature and depth of the transformation depend significantly on the specifics of the implemented interaction mechanics, the capabilities and limitations of the technological platform, as well as on the conventions of the source genre towards which the work gravitates.

3. Conclusions

Therefore, the conducted research allows us to assert that interactive cinema functions as a complex hybrid media form, rather than as a single, clearly defined genre according to traditional film studies criteria. Its key characteristics include the introduction of interactivity, the development of non-linear or branching narrative structures, and the provision of a certain degree of user agency. These features create a specific inherent tension between the aspiration for narrative immersion, characteristic of cinema, and the necessity of conscious interaction with the interface and game mechanics.

The research confirmed that an understanding of traditional cinematic genre conventions serves as a necessary basis for analyzing their transformation in the interactive environment. The main mechanisms through which interactivity impacts key components of genre structure were identified. Firstly, plot structures undergo fundamental restructuring, becoming branched, which necessitates new strategies for ensuring narrative coherence. Secondly, characters are transformed into dynamic entities whose development and fate are co-created by the user, which brings the issues of agency, identification, and the moral dimension to the forefront. Thirdly, traditional stylistic elements, such as cinematography and editing, are adapted; sound design acquires interactive functions, and the key innovation becomes the user interface, which is integrated into the visual and functional system of the work.

Analysis of the specific examples (*Black Mirror: Bandersnatch, Late Shift, Detroit: Become Human*) demonstrated that the nature and depth of this transformation depend on the complex interplay between the technological capabilities of the specific platform, which determines the available toolkit of interactivity, and the conventions of the source cinematic genre (thriller, science fiction, etc.), which influence the manner in which these tools are applied to achieve a specific narrative and aesthetic effect. Thus, it can be argued that the genre specificity of interactive cinema lies not so much in the formation of a new independent genre as in the very process of profound transformation of existing cinematic genre conventions under the influence of interactive mechanics and technological platforms. Interactivity acts not merely as a formal added element, but as a fundamental factor that restructures narrative logic, the system of relationships between 'author – character – audience/participant', and the very audiovisual language of the work.

The scientific novelty of the work lies in the comprehensive analysis of the specific mechanisms of this transformation at the level of plot, character, and style in interactive cinema. In contrast to a simple assertion of the phenomenon's hybridity, the research details precisely how interactivity reshapes established genre structures, enabling a more systematic understanding of the specifics of genre formation processes in this dynamic media environment.

The conducted research opens prospects for further scholarly inquiries in several directions. In-depth study of the influence of emerging technologies appears warranted, particularly virtual (VR) and augmented (AR) reality, as well as generative artificial intelligence (AI), on the further evolution of interactive narratives and their genre characteristics. Analysis of the specific transformation of other cinematic genres when adapted to the interactive format also merits particular attention.

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