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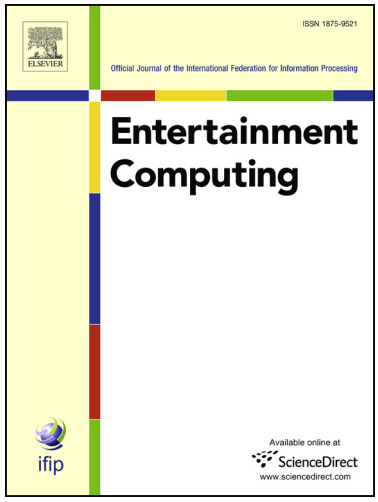

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Storytelling Variants Based on Semiotic Relations

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ABSTRACT

An intriguing phenomenon in human storytelling – inexhaustible source of inspiration for digital storytelling – is our ability to still recognize a story that the narrator has felt free to change to a considerable extent. However, observing how folktales have appeared and disseminated through different countries along the centuries, we may notice that our favorite stories have evolved no less dramatically in the course of the oral storytelling tradition. In this paper, taking Little Red Riding Hood as example, we review a small number of variants of this universally cherished story, in an attempt to understand how variants emerge. Our study is founded on the classification of types and motifs contained in the Index of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson, and examines the hypothesis that variants are often the consequence of type interactions, which we propose to characterize in terms of semiotic relations associated with the so-called four master tropes. The paper presents our analysis of the variant-formation phenomenon and describes the implementation of a computational system capable of generating new variants by applying the proposed semiotic relations.

Keywords: Narrative Generation, Folktales, Tale Types, Tale Motifs, Semiotic Relations, Interactive Storytelling.

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