[This talk anticipated an audience of videodisc designers and producers: that is, people interested in the creative process, educational psychology, instructional design, and computer programming.]

Hello. Glad to be here. [etc.]
I'd like to transport you from the heart of America [Nebraska] to the heart of Eastern Europe: Budapest.

10802	*bridge*
12974	*sweep*
09450	*split*
42133	*lady conductor*
14355	*on-board*
08616	*"A Different Train" title*

"A Different Train of Thought" is **a beginning application
in the genre of interactive narrative.**
It poses a question:

How is it possible to tell a story through an inherently random-access medium?

Our concept of a story is of something defined by a beginning, a middle, and an end.
But **the videodisc by nature undermines this kind of linearity.**

We take advantage of this phenomenon
in considering **possibilities for "personalization"** in educational applications...
but **how do we create a new kind of "story"** that can best be told through this new medium?

SHOW SLIDES OF GREEK VASES AND MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPTS

Those of you who familiar with Janson's "History of Art"   *[1970. NY: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.]*
may remember his discussion of the **evolution of Greek vase designs:**

As **developing technology** enabled trade to grow and flourish,
exposure to different cultures increased,
and representational styles merged
as the **need for new or different kinds of storytelling** emerged.

The two Homeric epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*,
exemplify the new narrative complexity that the evolving culture demanded.

Existing vase designs, with their emphasis on geometric and decorative patterns,
could not satisfactorily capture that complexity.

The new stories demanded a **shift of emphasis,
resulting in a new style** for vase design:

Figures became the point of emphasis,
now large and detailed enough that the decorative patterns between them
no longer interfered with the understanding of the narrative.

A change in the form of representation

In order to appreciate and extend our own new creations,
we must, like our ancient and medieval predecessors,
again **alter our concept of "story"**.

Such a revolutionary--or perhaps evolutionary--attempt begins slowly
and emerges through example.

08616   *"Different Train" title*

In 1985, I proposed to work with interactive videodisc
by establishing **a storyline** in the traditional sense,

but **embedding within it**
images of the thoughts of different characters.

The result is not really a representation of different points of view
(though at times it may seem that way),
but a unique kind of **character development**
and perhaps a **visual simulation of "stream of consciousness"**.

I took myself to Budapest
with a consumer-format VHS camera and a generous friend,
and we videotaped scenes of family life, city streets, and the military presence.

Then, with a group of actors in New York,
we re-enacted for the camera events of a particular story--
about a train ride, one night, through part of Eastern Europe.

Then, with the help of
the MIT Film/Video Section,
the Council for the Arts at MIT,
and Digital Techniques, Inc.,

I developed a low-budget (DRAW) videodisc
and orchestrated through a computer program
an **initial example of an interactive movie**.

SHOW 3/4" TAPE 1 of 2 (slow narration)

THEN RETURN TO 08616 "Different Train" title

The usefulness of this presentation
as a **model for the design of other interactive-video applications**
has to do with two considerations:
structure,
and the signalling of possibilities for interaction.

Pertinent features of this movie's structure are:

Educational psychology--or any psychology--
makes use of symbols
through metaphors, analogies, and individuals' ways of representing ideas to themselves,
based on previous experience and imaginings of the future.

Instructional design relies on symbols such as
icons, messages to the "learner", and
ways of signalling possibilities for interaction.

Computer programming is perhaps nothing
if not an exploration of symbolic activity.
The design and use of computer languages,
the algebraic expression of concept-relationships,
the varied uses of the keyboard--
all are exercises in the very human process of representation.

As we look at **current trends within our culture**,
we see a greater and growing tendency toward "self-reflection"--
we see many expressions of the desire to "know thyself" in the Shakespearean sense.

To open an issue of *Time* or *Newsweek*,
to scan the *New York Times* or any number of books or journals
is to see reference after reference to **"artificial intelligence"**,
"brain science", and questions about
how we think, or what it means to "know".

We see Woody Allen,
either literally "on the couch"
or simply talking to us through his images and characters,
and we become his "analyst"
in the midst of **the everyday activity of seeing a film.**

Sherry Turkle offers an explanation
for the widespread acceptance of such an activity:

"...when we **reflect** on the social impact of psychoanalysis,
it makes more sense to speak of the development of a psychoanalytic culture
than to talk about the truth of particular psychoanalytic ideas.
What fueled the development of a psychoanalytic culture
is not the validity of psychoanalysis as a science,
but the power of its psychology of everyday life.
Freud's theory of dreams, jokes, puns, and slips
allows people to take it up as a fascinating plaything.
The theory is evocative.
It gives people new ways to think about themselves."

[1978. Psychoanalytic Politics: Freud's French Revolution. Cambridge: The MIT Press. p.24(?).]

"A Different Train of Thought"
invites this kind of self-reflection

Sara, the French lieutenant's woman, is in the "virtual text",
that **meta-area of suspended disbelief** that each viewer must create.

About the film, Buzzard says:

"Apprised of cinematic trickery and of movie making in general,
a viewer enjoys a pleasant sense of distance from the crises in this text
and his/her position as a mere spectator is affirmed.
At the same time, however, the narrative structure has been at work on him/her,
encouraging the making of a virtual text.
To do so involves a suspension of the self-conscious act of watching a movie.
The experience of these two roles--one in and one out of the film--
indicates the viewer has been able to enjoy the figure-ground perceptual phenomenon....
Up until the final shot, however,
he/she has not been asked to experience the moment when figure becomes ground,
when object and virtual text meet."

["Viewer-response" and the Reflexive Narrative: Closing the Gap between Theory and Pedagogy.
Unpublished paper obtained through the MIT Foreign Languages and Literatures Section.]

I suggest that "A Different Train of Thought"
is situated precisely at that moment.
The **player's stream of consciousness**
becomes as important--
even more important--
than that of the characters in the movie.

I suggest that interactive technologies
as media for art, entertainment, and education
invite self-reflection as an element common to all of the applications,

to such an extent that the boundaries between these realms
are becoming fuzzier and fuzzier...

and, I suggest that as designers of presentations in such media
we must consider our own
conscious and subconscious processes of thought and feeling,
in addition to those of the people for whom the presentations are being created:

more and more,
they are the ones who are really the makers of those presentations.

Extra time:

Show other parts of the disc ("thought-images"): 30767 Budapest/dreams; 00140 family.

Frequently raised questions:

contrast with "Rashomon"
programming strategy ("random" within structure)
form/content nesting: military occupation like rape like player's touch