Acknowledgements

When a player for the National Football League makes a touch down, they very often do one of two things. Some, like Jamal Anderson of the Atlanta Falcons, jump up and down, do a dance, slap the hands of the fans in the stands, spike the ball, and leap into the arms of his teammates. Others, like Robert Edwards of the New England Patriots will simply drop to their knees and pray, thanking God for blessing him with enough strength and speed to weave in and out of ten 280 pound guys who want to introduce his face to the astroturf. Still other players after making a touchdown will do both – first pray, then celebrate. When Kevin Brooks of the MIT Media Lab finishes a dissertation, he is the same way – first give thanks, then celebrate.

First I want to thank God, who has sustained me through these, the best and toughest years of my life, and without whom my face would be deep in something much worse than astroturf. Secondly, I have a bunch of people to thank. These are the people who have been nothing less than instruments of the Divine in order get me through these years and this research. They are also the people whom I have danced with, whose hands I have slapped, and into whose arms I have leapt. I am still looking around for something safe I can spike. Thank you all.

Thanks to Stephan Brooks, my oldest son and most expert electronic gaming advisor. I thank all three of my children to whom this document is dedicated. I know it has been a burden with me in school these many years. I can tell because I hear you on the phone with your friends, "No, you can't come over. My dad's writing his thesis." Thanks go to my mom Carolyn and my sister Sharon, who once told me during a memorable cross country 3-way phone call, "What do you mean you're not going to MIT!? DO IT, Kevin. You can't buy this!" Thank God I learned to listen to the wisdom of black women.

Through the years of completing this research I have fought, talked, laughed, and thought with many friends about narrative, computers, and everything in between. So many have helped, on so many levels, that I cannot mention them all here. But if I had to name just a few, I would have to start with my advisor, Glorianna Davenport. Thank you so much – I am glad I stayed. Of course, I have the best committee members one could hope for in Janet Murray and Brian Smith. Thank you for supporting

my work and dreams. During my history at the Media Lab, I have received incredible help and support from Renya Onasick, Frank Nack, my old and new fellow grad students of the Interactive Cinema Group: Ryan Evens, Mark Halliday, Dave Kung, Dave Tames, Eddie Elliot, Scott Higgins, Gilberte Houbart, Brian Bradley, Freedom Baird, Barbara Barry, Pengkai Pan and Paul Nemoroffsky. Linda Peterson, the Media Lab's academic administrator and person-of-supreme-power, has been a good friend and tremendous help to me over the long years.

Special thanks go to Carol Strohecker, from whom I have learned invaluable lessons about thinking and learning, and with whom I have raised just a little bit of research project hell in the most enjoyable way possible. Thanks go to one of the most creative people I know, Arjan Schütte, who came up with the term "metalinear narrative" during a group brain storming session. I have also had great conversations about narrative and technology with Heidi Gitelman. Thanks also go to Heidi for pointing me to Anthony Young-Garner, one of my undergraduate programmers whom I also thank later.

In the last three years of this research, my life has been tremendously influenced by my adopted storytelling family in the Boston, Massachusetts area, and most especially by one Dr. Hugh Morgan-Hill, better known as Brother Blue. Because of him and my adopted family, I now know why I write, why I tell, why I share my life and research, "As storytellers, we are called to change the world."

Every MIT Media Lab thesis acknowledgments section includes a definition of a very important acronym: UROP - Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program. These are undergrads who offer research assistance to graduate students and professors. It is said that no code would be written at the Media Lab were it not for UROPs. I can truthfully say that my code would not have been written without my fine UROPs. I would like to thank Cecil Esquivel, my first UROP, who wrote code for me during a time when the project was so new that the whole thing could fit on a floppy; Eric King who did an enormous amount of early Prograph programming for me, but who still refused to work *for* me; Justin Kent, who designed the database and was the first UROP to dive bravely and expertly into mTropolis; Kunal K. Surana who (hopefully) learned something about life; Anthony Young-Garner, who wrote more working code than I have ever seen in my life; and Daniel Vlasic, the undisputed champion bug eradicator.

If my software looks good, it is only because of the talent of Angela Perkins, my friend and expert graphic designer. I will always cherish our conversations together when red was never just red and any old graphic object was never just functional. Thank you. If this document looks good, it is only because of the editing efforts of Laura Packer and the sharp eyes and tireless efforts of Meredith Lesly, my dissertation production manager and talented Mac-neighbor.

This intellectual endeavor has received enormous emotional support from my lab sister Paula Hooper, from Betsy Brown, my oldest and dearest friend at the Media Lab, Joey Talbert, my friend and personal cheerleader, and Laura Packer, from whom I have learned to relax and breath the life of a storyteller. Thank you all.

The Agent Stories software has benefited greatly from the testing efforts of a number of people. Early interface testers Meredith Lesly and Charlotte Burgess helped me distinguish between bugs and features. Later testers/writers who responded to my call for help and who generously contributed their time and creative process were Glorianna Davenport, Teresa Castro, Raelinda Woad, Ian Thal, John Bowker, and Laura Packer.

Thanks also are due to the Motorola Corporation for supporting this research and accepting this researcher as a Motorola Fellow for two years.

I would like to thank the people responsible for the cab voucher program at the Media Lab. It has benefited me countless times, allowing me to work the hours I needed to while balancing family and grad school. I would also like to thank the many cab drivers who have taken me home in the wee small hours, like: the guy who drove me home one week before my general exams and told me that he had left MIT during his general exams and now drives a cab; like the guy who felt compelled to tell me about his struggle with narcolepsy while driving 50 miles an hour on Memorial Drive; and the many drivers who taught me that the white and yellow dashed lane markers in the middle of the road are merely a driving suggestion, not a mandate.

Finally, I deeply regret that Dr. David Morgan of Motorola is not here to see this document. What is printed on these pages bears the mark of his dreams and genius. No words could express how much I miss him. Just when I thought running was the best I could do, Dave taught me to fly. This document is dedicated to him.